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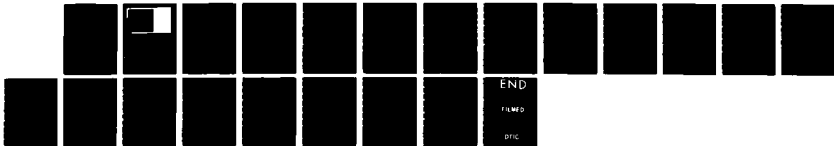
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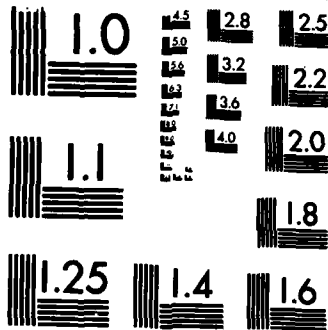
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Haim Brezis and Luc Oswald

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ABSTRACT

This document

We give a new proof of Véron's result concerning the classification of isolated singularities for the equation $-\Delta u + u^p = 0$. We also establish that the singular behavior at a point can be prescribed and determines uniquely the solution (under fixed boundary conditions).

delta sub P The authors

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*Keywords : nonlinear elliptic equations ;
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SIGNIFICANCE AND EXPLANATION

Nonlinear elliptic equations with isolated singularities occur in physical problems with point sources. A good example is the Thomas-Fermi theory of atoms and molecules which leads to the equation $-\Delta u + u^{3/2} = 0$ in

$$\mathbb{R}^3 \setminus \bigcup_{i=1}^k \{a_i\}.$$

The points $\{a_i\}$ correspond to the location of positive nuclei of charge m_i . Near a_i the solution u has a singular behavior equivalent to $m_i E(x - a_i)$ where E is the fundamental solution of $-\Delta$, i.e. $E(x) = (4\pi|x|)^{-1}$. A striking result of L. Véron provides a complete classification of all singular solutions, and shows that isolated singularities of nonlinear problems are quite rigid. In this paper we present a new proof of Véron's result based on a simple scaling argument. We also establish that the singular behavior at a point can be prescribed very much like a boundary condition and determines uniquely the solution.

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SINGULAR SOLUTIONS FOR SOME SEMILINEAR ELLIPTIC EQUATIONS

Haïm Brezis and Luc Oswald

Dedicated to Jim Serrin on his sixtieth birthday

1. Introduction

Let $B_R = \{x \in \mathbb{R}^N; |x| < R\}$ with $N > 2$. Consider a function u which satisfies

$$(1) \quad \begin{cases} u \in C^2(B_R \setminus \{0\}), \quad u > 0 \text{ on } B_R \setminus \{0\}, \\ -\Delta u + u^p = 0 \text{ on } B_R \setminus \{0\}. \end{cases}$$

We are concerned with the behavior of u near $x = 0$. There are two distinct cases:

1) When $p > N/(N-2)$ and ($N > 3$) it has been shown by Brezis - Véron [9] that u must be smooth at 0 (See also Baras-Pierre [1] for a different proof). In other words, isolated singularities are removable.

2) When $1 < p < N/(N-2)$ there are solutions of (1) with a singularity at $x = 0$. Moreover all singular solutions have been classified by Véron [22]. We recall his result:

Theorem 1 Assume $1 < p < N/(N-2)$ and u satisfies (1). Then one of the following holds:

(i) either u is smooth at 0,

(ii) or $\lim_{x \rightarrow 0} u(x)/E(x) = c$ where c is a constant which can take any value in the interval $(0, \infty)$,

(iii) or $\lim_{x \rightarrow 0} |u(x) - l(p, N)|x|^{-2/(p-1)}| = 0$.

Here $E(x)$ denotes the fundamental solution of $-\Delta$ and $l = l(p, N)$ is the (unique) positive constant C such that $C|x|^{-2/(p-1)}$ satisfies (1) - more precisely

$$l = l(p, N) = \left[\frac{-2}{(p-1)} \left(\frac{2p}{p-1} - N \right) \right]^{1/(p-1)} .$$

We shall first present a proof of Theorem 1 which is simpler than the original proof of Véron. In particular, it does not make use of Fowler's results [10] for the Emden differential equation. Instead, it relies on some simple scaling argument (see the proof of Lemma 5) which is similar to the one used by Kamin-Feletier [12] for parabolic equations.

Next, we emphasize that a singular behavior such as (ii) or (iii) can be prescribed together with a boundary condition, and these determine uniquely the solution.

More precisely, let Ω be a smooth bounded domain in \mathbb{R}^N with $0 \in \Omega$ and let $\varphi > 0$ be a smooth function defined on $\partial\Omega$. We consider the problem

$$(2) \quad \begin{cases} u \in C^2(\bar{\Omega} \setminus \{0\}), & u > 0 \text{ on } \Omega \setminus \{0\} , \\ -\Delta u + u^p = 0 & \text{on } \Omega \\ u = \varphi & \text{on } \partial\Omega . \end{cases}$$

Theorem 2 Assume $1 < p < N/(N-2)$. Then:

- (i) There is a unique solution u_0 of (2) which belongs to $C^2(\bar{\Omega})$.
- (ii) Given any constant $c \in (0, +\infty)$ there is a unique solution u_c of (2) which satisfies

$$\lim_{x \rightarrow 0} u(x)/E(x) = c .$$

- (iii) There is a unique solution u_∞ of (2) which satisfies

$$\lim_{x \rightarrow 0} |x|^{2/(p-1)} u(x) = l(p, N)$$

In addition, $\lim_{c \rightarrow 0} u_c = u_0$ and $\lim_{c \rightarrow \infty} u_c = u_\infty$.

Singular solutions of (1) occur in the Thomas-Fermi theory with $N = 3$ and $p = 3/2$ (see e.g. [13] for a detailed exposition). Other results dealing with singular solutions

of nonlinear elliptic equations have been obtained by a number of authors: J. Serrin [20], [21], Véron and Vazquez (See the exposition in [23]), P. L. Lions [14], W. M. Ni-J. Serrin [16]. Semilinear parabolic equations with isolated singularities have been considered by Brezis - Friedman [5], Brezis - Peletier - Terman [8], Kamin - Peletier [12], Oswald [18].

2. Some preliminary facts

We recall some known results dealing with functions u satisfying (1).

Set $\alpha = 2/(p-1)$ (for $1 < p < \infty$).

Lemma 1 Assume $u \in C^2(B_R)$ satisfies (1).

Then

$$u(0) < C(p,N)/R^\alpha$$

where $C(p,N)$ is defined by $C(p,N) = \text{Max} \{2\alpha N, 4\alpha(\alpha+1)\}^{1/(p-1)}$.

The proof of Lemma 1 uses a comparison function U of the same type as in Osserman [17] (or Loewner - Nirenberg [15]), namely set

$$U(x) = \frac{C(p,n) R^\alpha}{(R^2 - |x|^2)^\alpha} \quad \text{on } B_R.$$

A direct computation shows that

$$-AU + U^p > 0 \quad \text{on } B_R.$$

By the maximum principle we see that

$$u < U \quad \text{on } B_R$$

and in particular $u(0) < U(0)$.

Lemma 2 Assume u satisfies (1) with $1 < p < N/(N-2)$. Then, for

$0 < |x| < R/2$, we have

$$u(x) < \frac{l(p,N)}{|x|^\alpha} \left(1 + \frac{C(p,N)}{l(p,N)} \left(\frac{|x|}{R} \right)^\beta \right)$$

where $\beta = 2\alpha + 2 - N > \alpha$.

Lemma 2 is established in Brezis - Lieb [6] (proposition A.4) for the special case where $N = 3$ and $p = 3/2$. The proof in the general case is just the same.

Lemma 3 Assume $1 < p < N/(N-2)$ and let $c > 0$ be a constant. Then, there is a unique function u satisfying

$$(3) \quad \begin{cases} u \in L^p(\mathbb{R}^N) \cap C^2(\mathbb{R}^N \setminus \{0\}), \\ u > 0 \quad \text{on} \quad \mathbb{R}^N \setminus \{0\}, \\ -\Delta u + u^p = c\delta \quad \text{on} \quad \mathbb{R}^N \end{cases}$$

We set $u = W_c$.

Lemma 3, as well as Lemma 4 below, are due to Benilan - Brezis (unpublished); the ingredients for the proofs may be found in [2], [3], [4] (and also [1] and [11]).

Finally, we assume that Ω is a smooth bounded domain in \mathbb{R}^N with $0 \in \Omega$ and that $\varphi > 0$ is a smooth function defined on $\partial\Omega$.

Lemma 4 Assume $1 < p < N/(N-2)$ and let $c > 0$ be a constant.

Then, there is a unique function u satisfying

$$(4) \quad \begin{cases} u \in L^p(\Omega) \cap C^2(\bar{\Omega} \setminus \{0\}) \\ u > 0 \quad \text{on} \quad \Omega \setminus \{0\} \\ -\Delta u + u^p = c\delta \quad \text{on} \quad \Omega \\ u = \varphi \quad \text{on} \quad \partial\Omega. \end{cases}$$

3. A Scaling Argument

An important step in the proof of Theorem 1 is the following

Lemma 5 Assume $1 < p < N/(N-2)$. Then we have

$$\lim_{c \rightarrow \infty} W_c(x) = \ell |x|^{-\alpha} \equiv W_\infty(x) .$$

Proof It is clear (by comparison) that $W_c(x)$ is a nondecreasing function of c .

Moreover we have

$$W_c(x) < \ell |x|^{-\alpha}$$

(by letting $R \rightarrow \infty$ in Lemma 2). Therefore $\lim_{c \rightarrow \infty} W_c(x) = W_\infty(x)$ exists pointwise (for

$x \neq 0$) and $W_\infty(x) < \ell |x|^{-\alpha}$. The uniqueness of the solution of (3) implies that $W_c(x)$ is radial and so is $W_\infty(x)$. Next, we observe that the function

$$u(x) = k^\alpha W_c(kx) \quad (k > 0)$$

satisfies

$$-\Delta u(x) + u^p(x) = k^{\alpha p} c \delta(kx) = k^{\alpha p - N} c \delta(x) .$$

It follows, again by uniqueness, that

$$k^\alpha W_c(kx) = W_{\frac{c}{k^{\alpha p - N}}}(x) .$$

As $c \rightarrow \infty$ we see that

$$k^\alpha W_\infty(kx) = W_\infty(x) .$$

Choosing $k = 1/|x|$ we obtain

$$W_\infty(x) = W_\infty\left(\frac{x}{|x|}\right) |x|^{-\alpha} = c |x|^{-\alpha}$$

where $c > 0$ is some constant.

Finally we note that since

$$-\Delta W_c + W_c^p = 0 \quad \text{in } \mathcal{D}'(\mathbb{R}^N \setminus \{0\})$$

and

$$W_c \rightarrow W_\infty \quad \text{in } L^p_{loc}(\mathbb{R}^N \setminus \{0\}),$$

it follows that

$$-\Delta w_\infty + w_\infty^p = 0 \text{ in } \mathcal{D}'(\mathbb{R}^N \setminus \{0\}).$$

This determines the value of the constant C to be $C = 1$.

There is a similar result in balls: Set $u = v_c$ to be the unique solution of problem (4) with $\Omega = B_R$.

Lemma 6 Assume $1 < p < N/(N-2)$. Then we have $v_\infty(x) \equiv \lim_{c \rightarrow \infty} v_c(x)$ exists pointwise on $B_R \setminus \{0\}$ and moreover

$$w_\infty(x) - \ell R^{-\alpha} < v_\infty(x) < w_\infty(x) \text{ on } B_R.$$

Proof It is again clear (by comparison) that $v_c(x)$ is a nondecreasing function of c .

Also we have

$$(5) \quad 0 < v_c(x) < w_c(x).$$

It follows from (4) and (5) that

$$-\Delta(w_c - v_c) < 0 \text{ on } B_R,$$

and consequently $\sup_{B_R} (w_c - v_c) < \sup_{\partial B_R} (w_c - v_c) < \sup_{\partial B_R} w_c = \ell R^{-\alpha}$.

The conclusion follows by letting $c \rightarrow \infty$.

4. Proof of Theorem 1

Throughout this section we suppose $1 < p < N/(N-2)$. Assume u satisfies (1) and set

$$c = \limsup_{x \rightarrow 0} u(x)/E(x) .$$

We distinguish three cases:

Case (i) $c = 0$

Case (ii) $0 < c < \infty$

Case (iii) $c = \infty$.

Cases (i) and (ii).

Here, the main ingredient is the following:

Lemma 7 In cases (i) and (ii) the function u belongs to $L^p_{loc}(B_R)$ and satisfies

$$-\Delta u + u^p = c_0 \delta \text{ in } \mathcal{D}'(B_R)$$

for some constant c_0 .

Proof It is clear that $u \in L^p_{loc}(B_R)$ since $E \in L^p_{loc}(B_R)$ and $c < \infty$.

We now use the same argument as in [7]: set

$$T = -\Delta u + u^p \in \mathcal{D}'(B_R) .$$

Since the support of T is contained in $\{0\}$, it follows from a classical result about distributions (see [19]) that

$$(6) \quad T = \sum_{0 \leq |a| < m} c_a D^a(\delta) .$$

We claim that $c_a = 0$ when $|a| > 1$. Indeed let $\zeta \in \mathcal{D}(B_R)$ be any fixed function such that $(-1)^{|a|} D^a \zeta(0) = c_a$ for every a with $|a| < m$. Multiplying (6) through by $\zeta_\epsilon(x) = \zeta(x/\epsilon)$ we obtain

$$-\int u \Delta \zeta_\epsilon + \int u^p \zeta_\epsilon = \sum_{0 \leq |a| < m} c_a^2 \epsilon^{-|a|} .$$

An easy computation - using the estimate $u < CE$ - shows that

$$\begin{cases} |f u \Delta \zeta_\varepsilon| < C & \text{when } N > 3 \\ |f u \Delta \zeta_\varepsilon| < C |\log \varepsilon| + C & \text{when } N = 2. \end{cases}$$

Since $\int u^p \zeta_\varepsilon \rightarrow 0$ as $\varepsilon \rightarrow 0$, we conclude that $c_\alpha = 0$ for $|\alpha| > 1$. Therefore we obtain

$$-\Delta u + u^p = c_0 \delta \quad \text{in } \mathcal{D}'(B_R)$$

We conclude the proof of Theorem 1 in cases (i) and (ii) with the help of the following:

Lemma 8 Assume $u \in C^2(B_R \setminus \{0\}) \cap L^p_{loc}(B_R)$ satisfies

$$\begin{cases} u > 0 & \text{on } B_R, \\ -\Delta u + u^p = c_0 \delta & \text{in } \mathcal{D}'(B_R) \end{cases}$$

for some constant c_0 .

We have

(i) if $c_0 = 0$, then u is smooth on B_R ,

(ii) if $c_0 \neq 0$, then $\lim_{x \rightarrow 0} u(x)/E(x) = c_0$.

Proof

(i) Assume $c_0 = 0$. Since u is subharmonic it follows that $u \in L^\infty_{loc}(B_R)$ and thus $\Delta u \in L^\infty_{loc}(B_R)$. We deduce that $u \in C^1(B_R)$ and then $u \in C^2(B_R)$. In fact $u \in C^\infty(B_R)$ since, by the strong maximum principle, we have either $u \equiv 0$ or $u > 0$ or B_R .

(ii) Assume $c_0 \neq 0$. By the maximum principle we have

$$u < c_0 E + C \quad \text{on } B_{R/2}$$

and therefore

$$\begin{aligned} -\Delta u &> c_0 \delta - (c_0 E + C)^p \\ &> c_0 \delta - C(E^p + 1) \quad \text{on } B_{R/2} \end{aligned}$$

An elementary computation leads to

$$u(x) > c_0 E - o(E) \quad \text{as } x \rightarrow 0.$$

and we conclude that $\lim_{x \rightarrow 0} u(x)/E(x) = c_0$.

Remark 1 Assume $c_0 \neq 0$. The argument above provides in fact an estimate for $|u - c_0 E|$ as $x \rightarrow 0$. More precisely we have

a) If $N = 2$ and $1 < p < \infty$ or $N = 3$ and $1 < p < 2$, then

$$|u - c_0 E| < C \quad \text{on } B_{R/2}$$

b) If $N = 3$ and $p = 2$, then

$$|u(x) - c_0 E(x)| < C(|\log|x|| + 1) \quad \text{on } B_{R/2}$$

c) If $N = 3$ and $2 < p < 3$ or $N > 4$ and $1 < p < N/(N-2)$ then

$$|u(x) - c_0 E(x)| < C|x|^{2-(N-2)p} \quad \text{on } B_{R/2}$$

and consequently

$$\left| \frac{u(x)}{E(x)} - c_0 \right| < C|x|^v \quad \text{on } B_{R/2}$$

with $v = N - (N-2)p > 0$.

Proof of Theorem 1 in the case (iii)

We first recall a result of Véron [22] (Lemma 1.5):

Lemma 9 Assume u satisfies (1). Then, there is a constant C (depending only as p and N) such that

$$\sup_{|x|=r} u(x) < C \inf_{|x|=r} u(x) \quad \text{for } 0 < r < R/2.$$

The conclusion of Lemma 9 is a simple consequence of Harnack's inequality and the estimate of Lemma 1 - see [22] for the details.

We may now complete the proof of Theorem 1 with the help of the following:

Lemma 10 Assume u satisfies (1) and $\limsup_{x \rightarrow 0} u(x)/E(x) = \infty$. Then

$$|u(x) - \ell|x|^{-\alpha}| < C|x|^\gamma \quad \text{on } B_{R/2}$$

for some constants $C = C(p, N, R)$ and $\gamma = \gamma(p, N) > 0$.

Proof By Lemma 2 we already have the estimate

$$u(x) < l|x|^{-\alpha} + C|x|^{\gamma} \text{ on } B_{R/2}$$

with

$$\gamma = \beta - \alpha = \alpha + 2 - N > 0.$$

We now establish an estimate from below. Let $x_n \rightarrow 0$ be such that $\lim u(x_n)/E(x_n) = \infty$.

Set $r_n = |x_n|$, so that we obtain from Lemma 9

$$(7) \quad \inf_{|x|=r_n} u(x)/E(x) \xrightarrow{n \rightarrow \infty} \infty.$$

We recall that V_c is the unique solution of (4) when $\Omega = B_R$, so that

$$V_c < cE \text{ on } B_R.$$

Given any constant $c > 0$, we see (by (7)) that

$$u(x) > cE(x) \text{ for } |x| = r_n \text{ and } n \text{ large enough.}$$

Therefore we obtain

$$u(x) > V_c(x) \text{ for } |x| = r_n \text{ and } n \text{ large enough.}$$

Applying the maximum principle in the domain $\{x \in \mathbb{R}^N; r_n < |x| < R\}$ we find that

$$u(x) > V_c(x) \text{ for } r_n < |x| < R \text{ and } n \text{ large enough.}$$

As $n \rightarrow \infty$ we conclude that

$$u(x) > V_c(x) \text{ on } B_R \setminus \{0\}$$

and as $c \rightarrow \infty$ we see that

$$u(x) > V_\infty(x) \text{ on } B_R \setminus \{0\}.$$

In Lemma 6 we had the estimate

$$V_\infty(x) > l(|x|^{-\alpha} - R^{-\alpha}).$$

However it is not good enough to deduce conclusion (iii) of Theorem 1. We need a better estimate from below for $V_\infty(x)$; we claim that

$$(8) \quad V_\infty(x) > l|x|^{-\alpha} \left(1 - \left(\frac{|x|}{R}\right)^\beta\right) \text{ on } B_R,$$

where β is defined in Lemma 2.

Clearly, it suffices to establish (8) for $R = 1$. The function V_α is radial and so we write $V_\alpha(r)$. We define the function v on $(0,1)$ by the relation

$$v(r^\beta) = l^{-1} r^\alpha V_\alpha(r)$$

so that $0 < v < 1$ on $(0,1)$, $v(1) = 0$ and $v(0) = 1$. Using the relation $-\Delta V_\alpha + V_\alpha^\beta = 0$ it is easy to deduce (as in the proof of Proposition A.4 [6]) that

$$-\beta^2 t^2 v''(t) + l^{p-1} v(t) (v^{p-1}(t) - 1) = 0 \quad \text{for } t \in (0,1).$$

Consequently v is concave and thus we have

$$v(t) > 1 - t \quad \forall t \in (0,1),$$

that is (8).

Remark 2 Véron [22] obtains in case (iii) an estimate of the form

$$|u(x) - l|x|^{-\alpha}| < C|x|^\delta \quad \text{with an exponent } \delta \text{ which is better than } \gamma = \beta - \alpha.$$

5. Proof of Theorem 2.

Case (i) is classical.

Case (ii) The existence of a solution follows from Lemma 4 and 8.

Suppose now u satisfies (2) and $\lim_{x \rightarrow 0} u(x)/E(x) = c$. We deduce from Lemma 7 and 8 that $-\Delta u + u^p = c\delta$; uniqueness follows from Lemma 4.

Case (iii) We denote by u_c the unique solution of (4) given by Lemma 4. We claim that

$u_\infty = \lim_{c \rightarrow \infty} u_c$ has all the required properties.

Indeed $u_c(x)$ is a nondecreasing function of c . Fix $R > 0$ such that $2R < \text{dist}(0, \partial\Omega)$. By Lemma 1 we have

$$u_c(x) < C(p, N)R^{-\alpha} \quad \text{for } |x| = R.$$

The maximum principle applied in the region

$$\Omega_R = \{x \in \Omega; |x| > R\}$$

shows that, in Ω_R ,

$$u_c(x) < \text{Max} \left\{ \sup_{\partial\Omega} \varphi, C(p, N)R^{-\alpha} \right\}.$$

Therefore $u_\infty(x) = \lim_{c \rightarrow \infty} u_c(x)$ exists and u_∞ satisfies (2). By comparison on B_R we have

$$v_c < u_c \quad \text{on } B_R$$

and as $c \rightarrow \infty$ we obtain $v_\infty < u_\infty$ on B_R .

It follows that $\lim_{x \rightarrow 0} |u_\infty(x) - l|x|^{-\alpha}| = 0$ (by Lemma 6 and Theorem 1).

We turn now the question of uniqueness. Suppose u_1 and u_2 satisfy (2) and $\lim_{x \rightarrow 0} |x|^\alpha u_i(x) = l$ for $i = 1, 2$. Lemma 10 implies that

$$|u_1(x) - u_2(x)| < C|x|^\gamma \quad \text{on } B_R$$

On the other hand we have

$$-\Delta(u_1 - u_2) + u_1^p - u_2^p = 0 \quad \text{on } \Omega \setminus \{0\}$$

Applying the maximum principle in Ω_R we

$$\max_{\Omega_R} |u_1 - u_2| < \max_{\partial B_R} |u_1 - u_2| < CR^Y$$

and then we let $R \rightarrow 0$ to conclude that $u_1 = u_2$.

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20. ABSTRACT (Continue on reverse side if necessary and identify by block number) We give a new proof of Véron's result concerning the classification of isolated singularities for the equation $-\Delta u + u^p = 0$. We also establish that the singular behavior at a point can be prescribed and determines uniquely the solution (under fixed boundary conditions).		

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