

A Nonlinear Mercerian Theorem

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Submitted by Joseph D. Ward

Received July 15, 1998

We show that convergence of $x(t)$ as $t \rightarrow \infty$ may be deduced from the limiting behavior of certain functions involving $x(t)$ and its Cesàro averages. Dynamical systems methods are used to derive this “Mercerian-type” result. © 1999 Academic Press

We consider averages of a continuous function $x: [0, \infty) \rightarrow \mathbb{R}$. Let $\phi: [0, \infty) \rightarrow [0, \infty)$ be continuous and strictly increasing to infinity. The Cesàro averages of x with respect to ϕ are defined by

$$y(t) = \frac{1}{\phi(t)} \int_0^t x(u) d\phi(u) \quad (t > 0) \quad (1)$$

so that $y: (0, \infty) \rightarrow \mathbb{R}$ is also continuous. [In the most common case $\phi(t) = t$, so $y(t) = t^{-1} \int_0^t x(u) du$.] We are interested in the relationship between the limiting behavior of $x(t)$ and $y(t)$ as $t \rightarrow \infty$. The basic “Abelian” result, that if $x(t) \rightarrow c$ for some $c \in \mathbb{R}$ then $y(t) \rightarrow c$, is easy to verify. The direct converse is false, but there is a well-known theorem of “Tauberian” type, see [1], [4], that $y(t) \rightarrow c$ implies $x(t) \rightarrow c$ provided that x satisfies a Tauberian condition:

$$\lim_{\lambda \searrow 1} \liminf_{t \rightarrow \infty} \inf_{t \leq u \leq \phi^{-1}(\lambda \phi(t))} [x(u) - x(t)] \geq 0. \quad (2)$$

The classical “Mercerian” theorem states that if, for some $0 < \lambda < 1$, the linear combination $\lambda x(t) + (1 - \lambda)y(t) \rightarrow c$, then $x(t) \rightarrow c$ without any additional condition. This theorem has given rise to many other results of similar character, such as in [1], [2], [5], [6]. However, these are *linear*

Mercerian theorems, which have as hypotheses a linear relationship between x and its image under some linear transformation.

Here we consider *nonlinear* analogues. We use a dynamical systems method to show that the convergence of almost any function of $x(t)$ and $y(t)$ is enough to imply convergence of $x(t)$. For example, our theorem shows that if $x(t)^3 - y(t)^2 \rightarrow 4$ then $x(t) \rightarrow 2$. A specific instance of the theorem has applications to fractal dimensions and Minkowski measurability, see [3].

Comparing (1) at t_1 and t gives, for $t_1 > t$,

$$\begin{aligned} y(t_1) - y(t) &= \frac{1}{\phi(t_1)} \int_t^{t_1} x(u) d\phi(u) + \frac{1}{\phi(t_1)} \int_0^t x(u) d\phi(u) - y(t) \\ &= \frac{1}{\phi(t_1)} \int_t^{t_1} x(u) d\phi(u) + y(t) \left(\frac{\phi(t) - \phi(t_1)}{\phi(t_1)} \right) \\ &= \frac{1}{\phi(t_1)} \int_t^{t_1} [x(u) - y(t)] d\phi(u). \end{aligned} \quad (3)$$

[Note that if ϕ is absolutely continuous then differentiating (1) gives $(\phi y)' = \phi' x$ so

$$y'(t) = \frac{\phi'(t)}{\phi(t)} (x(t) - y(t)); \quad (4)$$

however, using (3) avoids the requirement of absolute continuity.] In particular, if $x(t) > y(t)$ then $y(t)$ is increasing at t and if $x(t) < y(t)$ then $y(t)$ is decreasing at t . We think of $\mathbf{x}(t) = (x(t), y(t))$ as the position at time t of a point moving in the x - y plane, so this means that when $\mathbf{x}(t)$ is above the diagonal line $D = \{(x, x) : x \in \mathbb{R}\}$ it is moving downwards and when $\mathbf{x}(t)$ is below D it is moving upwards, an observation crucial to our approach.

A further useful consequence of (3) is that, if there exists $t_0 > 0$ and $\epsilon > 0$ such that

$$|x(t) - y(t)| \geq \epsilon \quad \text{for all } t \geq t_0, \quad (5)$$

then $y(t)$ must be unbounded. To see this assume that $x(t) - y(t) \geq \epsilon$ for $t \geq t_0$. Then (3), together with the inequality $1 - x \geq -\frac{1}{2} \log x$ for $\frac{1}{2} \leq x$

≤ 1 , implies that

$$\begin{aligned} y(t_1) - y(t) &\geq \frac{(\phi(t_1) - \phi(t))\epsilon}{2\phi(t_1)} = \frac{\epsilon}{2} \left(1 - \frac{\phi(t)}{\phi(t_1)} \right) \\ &\geq \frac{\epsilon}{4} (\log \phi(t_1) - \log \phi(t)) \end{aligned} \quad (6)$$

for $t_1 \geq t \geq t_0$ with t_1 sufficiently close to t . Using compactness and summing over sufficiently small intervals gives (6) for all $t_1 \geq t \geq t_0$. A similar argument applies if $x(t) - y(t) \leq -\epsilon$ for $t \geq t_0$.

We will assume a limiting relationship as $t \rightarrow \infty$ between $x(t)$ and its average $y(t)$ given in terms of a continuous function $F: \mathbb{R}^2 \rightarrow \mathbb{R}$. We will require that F satisfies a condition at the points of intersection of the diagonal D and a level set $F^{-1}(c) = \{(x, y): F(x, y) = c\}$. We say that F is *good* at $\mathbf{x}_0 = (x_0, y_0) \in \mathbb{R}^2$ if, given $F(\mathbf{x}_0) = c$, there is a neighborhood of \mathbf{x}_0 in which the level set $F^{-1}(c)$ is a continuously differentiable curve with slope $\lambda(\mathbf{x}_0)$ at \mathbf{x}_0 with $\lambda(\mathbf{x}_0) \neq 0$. [We allow $\lambda(\mathbf{x}_0) = \infty$ corresponding to a vertical tangent.]

By the implicit function theorem, a continuously differentiable function F is good at \mathbf{x}_0 if $\partial F(\mathbf{x}_0)/\partial x \neq 0$, so “almost all” continuously differentiable functions are good at any given finite set of points. Thus a great many functions F satisfy the requirements of the following theorem.

THEOREM. *Let $F: \mathbb{R}^2 \rightarrow \mathbb{R}$ be continuous, let c be a real number such that $F^{-1}(c) \cap D$ is finite with $F(x, x)$ bounded away from c as $x \rightarrow \pm\infty$, and assume that F is good at all $\mathbf{x}_0 \in F^{-1}(c) \cap D$. Let $x: [0, \infty) \rightarrow \mathbb{R}$ be continuous and let y be defined by (1). If*

$$F(x(t), y(t)) \rightarrow c \quad \text{as } t \rightarrow \infty \quad (7)$$

then either

- (a) *for all sufficiently large t we have either $x(t) \geq y(t) \rightarrow \infty$ or $x(t) \leq y(t) \rightarrow -\infty$, or*
- (b) *$x(t) \rightarrow x_0$ as $t \rightarrow \infty$ for some $x_0 \in \mathbb{R}$ satisfying $F(x_0, x_0) = c$.*

Note that in many situations, part (a) of the conclusion may be excluded by examining F or $x(t)$.

To prove the theorem we regard $\mathbf{x}(t) = (x(t), y(t))$ as a nonautonomous dynamical system in the plane with t as time. We first prove a lemma which describes the trajectories $\mathbf{x}(t)$ near good points of $F^{-1}(c) \cap D$. There are essentially different cases depending on the local form of $F^{-1}(c)$ near the good point $\mathbf{x}_0 = (x_0, x_0)$; these are illustrated in Fig. 1.

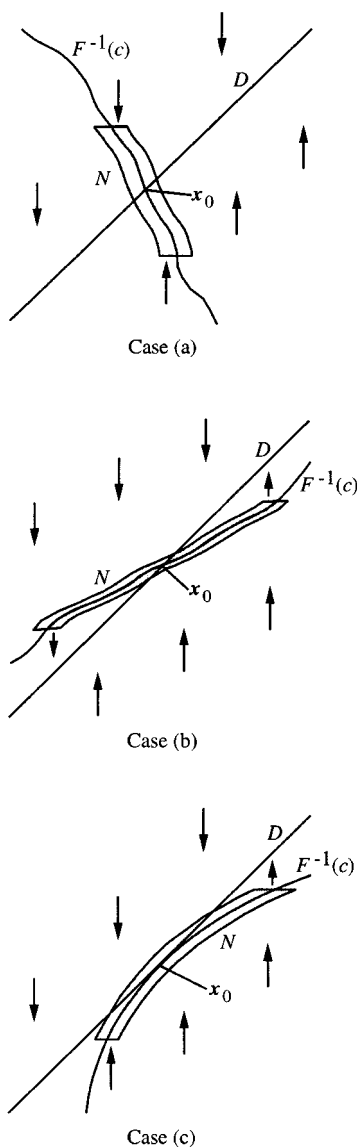


FIG. 1. The neighborhood N of x_0 in the three cases. The arrows indicate the vertical component of motion of the trajectory $x(t)$.

We write $D^- = \{(x, y) \in \mathbb{R}^2 : x > y\}$ and $D^+ = \{(x, y) \in \mathbb{R}^2 : x < y\}$ for the open half-spaces below and above the diagonal D . Similarly, we write L_a for the horizontal line with equation $x = a$ and L_a^- and L_a^+ for the open half-spaces below and above L_a .

Case (a): At \mathbf{x}_0 the curve $F^{-1}(c)$ crosses D from $D^- \cap L_{x_0}^-$ to $D^+ \cap L_{x_0}^+$. This always occurs if $1 < \lambda(\mathbf{x}_0) \leq \infty$ or $-\infty < \lambda(\mathbf{x}_0) < 0$ and may occur if $\lambda(\mathbf{x}_0) = 1$. Intuitively, the lemma shows in this case that \mathbf{x}_0 is "stable" in the sense that if $\mathbf{x}(t)$ is close to \mathbf{x}_0 at a sufficiently large t then the trajectory remains close to \mathbf{x}_0 for all subsequent t .

Case (b): At \mathbf{x}_0 the curve $F^{-1}(c)$ crosses D from $D^+ \cap L_{x_0}^-$ to $D^- \cap L_{x_0}^+$. This always occurs if $0 < \lambda(\mathbf{x}_0) < 1$ and may occur if $\lambda(\mathbf{x}_0) = 1$. In this case the lemma implies that either $\mathbf{x}(t)$ approaches \mathbf{x}_0 fairly rapidly or eventually moves away from \mathbf{x}_0 for good.

Case (c): At \mathbf{x}_0 the curve $F^{-1}(c)$ touches D but does not cross D . This requires $\lambda(\mathbf{x}_0) = 1$. Here the lemma implies that when t is large $\mathbf{x}(t)$ always approaches and departs from near \mathbf{x}_0 on the same side of D .

LEMMA. Suppose (7) holds for some $c \in \mathbb{R}$. Let $\mathbf{x}_0 \in F^{-1}(c) \cap D$ and suppose that F is good at \mathbf{x}_0 . Then there is a base of closed neighborhoods \mathcal{N} of \mathbf{x}_0 as follows:

In Case (a): for all $N \in \mathcal{N}$ there exists $t_N > 0$ such that if $t_1 \geq t_N$ and $\mathbf{x}(t_1) \in N$ then $\mathbf{x}(t) \in N$ for all $t \geq t_1$.

In Case (b): for all $N \in \mathcal{N}$ there exists $t_N > 0$ such that if $t_1 \geq t_N$ and $\mathbf{x}(t_1) \notin N$ then $\mathbf{x}(t) \notin N$ for all $t \geq t_1$.

In Case (c): for all $N \in \mathcal{N}$ there exists $t_N > 0$ and $\delta_N > 0$ such that either every entry of the trajectory $\mathbf{x}(t)$ to N after time t_N is across $D_- \cap L_{x_0 - \delta_N}$ and every exit from N is across $D_- \cap L_{x_0 + \delta_N}$, or every entry of the trajectory $\mathbf{x}(t)$ to N after time t_N is across $D_+ \cap L_{x_0 + \delta_N}$ and every exit from N is across $D_- \cap L_{x_0 - \delta_N}$.

Proof of Lemma. Write $F^{-1}(c)_\epsilon$ for the closed ϵ -neighborhood of $F^{-1}(c)$, that is the union of all closed discs of radius ϵ with centres in $F^{-1}(c)$. Let $S_{x_0, \delta}$ denote the closed horizontal strip $\{(x, y) : x_0 - \delta \leq y \leq x_0 + \delta\}$. The required neighborhoods of \mathbf{x}_0 will be the connected components of $F^{-1}(c)_\epsilon \cap S_{x_0, \delta}$ that contain \mathbf{x}_0 , where δ is sufficiently small and $\epsilon = \epsilon(\delta)$ is chosen suitably. Thus the neighborhoods will be narrow "bands" around part of $F^{-1}(c)$ through \mathbf{x}_0 .

Since F is good at $\mathbf{x}_0 = (x_0, x_0)$, the slope of $F^{-1}(c)$ near \mathbf{x}_0 is nonzero, so by choosing appropriate δ_0 and η_0 sufficiently small, there are coordinate rectangles $R = [x_0 - \eta_0, x_0 + \eta_0] \times [x_0 - \delta_0, x_0 + \delta_0]$ and $R' = [x_0 + \frac{1}{3}\eta_0, x_0 + \frac{1}{3}\eta_0] \times [x_0 - \delta_0, x_0 + \delta_0]$ in which $F^{-1}(c)$ is of the following form: the set $F^{-1}(c) \cap R$ has a single connected component which

is a differentiable curve crossing R from bottom to top, with slope bounded away from 0, with $F^{-1}(c) \cap R \subset R'$, and such that $F^{-1}(c) \cap D \cap R$ is the single point \mathbf{x}_0 .

Thus for all $0 < \delta \leq \frac{1}{2}\delta_0$ the set $F^{-1}(c) \cap R$ intersects each of the lines $L_{x_0-\delta}$ and $L_{x_0+\delta}$ at a single point inside R' that is not on D . With $F^{-1}(c)_\epsilon$ as the ϵ -neighborhood of $F^{-1}(c)$, we choose $\epsilon = \epsilon(\delta) < \min\{\frac{1}{2}\delta_0, \frac{1}{3}\eta_0\}$ sufficiently small to ensure that $F^{-1}(c)_\epsilon \cap R'' \cap L_{x_0-\delta}$ and $F^{-1}(c)_\epsilon \cap R'' \cap L_{x_0+\delta}$ are closed subintervals of $L_{x_0-\delta}$ and $L_{x_0+\delta}$, respectively, which do not intersect D , where $R'' = [x_0 - \frac{2}{3}\eta_0, x_0 + \frac{2}{3}\eta_0] \times [x_0 - \delta_0, x_0 + \delta_0]$.

For each such $\delta \leq \frac{1}{2}\delta_0$ we set $N = N(\delta) = F^{-1}(c)_\epsilon \cap R'' \cap S_{x_0, \delta}$, where $S_{x_0, \delta}$ is the strip $\{(x, y) : x_0 - \delta \leq y \leq x_0 + \delta\}$. Thus N has the form of a 'band' about $F^{-1}(c) \cap R \cap S_{x_0, \delta}$ stretching from its floor $F^{-1}(c)_\epsilon \cap R'' \cap L_{x_0-\delta}$ to its ceiling $F^{-1}(c)_\epsilon \cap R'' \cap L_{x_0+\delta}$. In fact N is the connected component of $F^{-1}(c)_\epsilon \cap S_{x_0, \delta}$ containing \mathbf{x}_0 .

We take \mathcal{N} to be the collection of all neighborhoods $\{N(\delta)\}$ constructed in this way for $0 < \delta \leq \frac{1}{2}\delta_0$. For $N \in \mathcal{N}$ we write δ_N for the value of δ such that $N = N(\delta_N)$.

Using (7) and the compactness of R , we may choose t_N such that for all $t \geq t_N$ for which $\mathbf{x}(t) \in R$ we have $\mathbf{x}(t) \in F^{-1}(c)_\epsilon$ [where $\epsilon = \epsilon(\delta_N)$]. In particular, if the trajectory $\mathbf{x}(t)$ enters or leaves N at time $t \geq t_N$ it must do so by crossing either the floor or ceiling of N .

We use this fact to check that these basic neighborhoods N of \mathbf{x}_0 satisfy the conclusion of the lemma in each of the three cases.

Case (a): If $N \in \mathcal{N}$ and $\mathbf{x}(t_1) \in N$ for some $t_1 \geq t_N$, the trajectory $\mathbf{x}(t)$ cannot enter N without crossing its floor in an downward direction or its ceiling in an upward direction, which is impossible, since the floor is in D^- and the ceiling is in D^+ , see Fig. 1(a). We conclude that $\mathbf{x}(t)$ remains in N for all $t \geq t_1$.

Case (b): If $N \in \mathcal{N}$ and $\mathbf{x}(t_1) \notin N$ where $t_1 \geq t_N$, the trajectory $\mathbf{x}(t)$ cannot enter N without crossing its floor in an upward direction or its ceiling in a downward direction, which is impossible, since the floor is in D^+ and the ceiling is in D^- , see Fig. 1(b). We conclude that $\mathbf{x}(t) \notin N$ for all $t \geq t_1$.

Case (c): If the curve $F^{-1}(c)$ lies in D_- near \mathbf{x}_0 , then for all $N \in \mathcal{N}$ the floor of N is a subinterval of $D_- \cap L_{x_0-\delta}$ and the ceiling of N is a subinterval of $D_- \cap L_{x_0+\delta_N}$ and the conclusion follows. Similarly, if the curve $F^{-1}(c)$ lies in D_+ near \mathbf{x}_0 , we reach the alternative conclusion. ■

Proof of Theorem. We split the proof into two cases: when $y(t)$ is eventually monotonic and when $y(t)$ is oscillatory.

Case (i). There exists t_1 such that $\mathbf{x}(t) = (x(t), y(t))$ does not strictly cross the diagonal line D for $t \geq t_1$. By the remark after (3), $y(t)$ is monotonic for $t \geq t_1$. For such t , if $y(t)$ is unbounded and increasing then $(x(t), y(t))$ is below D , so $x(t) \geq y(t) \rightarrow \infty$. Similarly if $y(t)$ is unbounded and eventually decreasing then $x(t) \leq y(t) \rightarrow -\infty$, leading to conclusion (a) of the theorem.

If $y(t)$ is bounded, there exists $x_0 \in \mathbb{R}$ such that $y(t) \rightarrow x_0$ as $t \rightarrow \infty$. We claim that $F(x_0, x_0) = c$. Assume not: by continuity of F there exist $\delta > 0$ and a coordinate square S with side length $4\epsilon > 0$ and center (x_0, x_0) , such that $|F(x, y) - c| \geq \delta > 0$ for all $(x, y) \in S$, so by (7) there exists $t_2 \geq t_1$ such that $(x(t), y(t)) \notin S$ for all $t \geq t_2$. Since $y(t) \rightarrow x_0$ this would require that, for all sufficiently large t , we have $|x(t) - x_0| \geq 2\epsilon$ and thus $|x(t) - y(t)| \geq \epsilon$, which by the remark at (5) would contradict the boundedness of $y(t)$.

Thus for some x_0 with $F(x_0, x_0) = c$, we have $y(t) \rightarrow x_0$, so $\text{dist}(\mathbf{x}(t), L_{x_0}) \rightarrow 0$ where L_{x_0} is the horizontal line $y = x_0$. Since F is good at $\mathbf{x}_0 = (x_0, x_0) \in D$, the point \mathbf{x}_0 is an isolated point of $L_{x_0} \cap F^{-1}(c)$. Since $F(x(t), y(t)) \rightarrow c$, either $x(t) \rightarrow x_0$ or $\liminf_{t \rightarrow \infty} |x(t) - x_0| > 0$, an alternative which is again disallowed by (5).

Case (ii). The point $\mathbf{x}(t) = (x(t), y(t))$ goes strictly above D and also strictly below D for arbitrarily large t . Write S for the set of limit points of $\mathbf{x}(t)$ on D , that is

$$S = \{\mathbf{x} \in D : \text{there exists } t_i \nearrow \infty \text{ with } \mathbf{x}(t_i) \rightarrow \mathbf{x}\}.$$

Since $F(\mathbf{x}(t)) \rightarrow c$ and $F(x, x)$ is bounded away from c for large x , we have $S \subset F^{-1}(c) \cap D$, so S is nonempty and (by hypothesis) is finite.

By hypothesis, F is good at all $\mathbf{x}_0 = (x_0, x_0) \in S$. Suppose case (a) pertains at some $\mathbf{x}_0 \in S$ and let \mathcal{N} be the base of neighborhoods of \mathbf{x}_0 given by the lemma. For all $N \in \mathcal{N}$ we have $\mathbf{x}(t) \in N$ for arbitrarily large t and so, by case (a) of the lemma, for all sufficiently large t . Thus $\mathbf{x}(t) \rightarrow \mathbf{x}_0$, giving $x(t) \rightarrow x_0$.

Now suppose case (b) applies at some $\mathbf{x}_0 \in S$ and let \mathcal{N} be the base of neighborhoods of \mathbf{x}_0 given by the lemma. If $\mathbf{x}(t) \nrightarrow \mathbf{x}_0$ then there exists $N \in \mathcal{N}$ such that $\mathbf{x}(t) \notin N$ for arbitrarily large t and so, by case (b) of the lemma, for all sufficiently large t , contradicting that \mathbf{x}_0 is a limit point of $\mathbf{x}(t)$. Thus again $\mathbf{x}(t) \rightarrow \mathbf{x}_0$ and $x(t) \rightarrow x_0$.

Otherwise, case (c) pertains to all the points S . Let $S = \{\mathbf{x}_1, \dots, \mathbf{x}_n\}$, and for each $i = 1, \dots, n$ let N_i be a basic neighborhood of \mathbf{x}_i as given by the lemma, satisfying case (c) of the conclusion. We may choose these neighborhoods small enough to have pairwise disjoint projections onto the y -axis. Using (7) there is a time $t_0 \geq \max_{i=1, \dots, n} \{t_{N_i}\}$ such that, if $t \geq t_0$,

the trajectory $\mathbf{x}(t)$ cannot cross D outside $\bigcup_{i=1}^n N_i$. Moreover, by case (c) of the lemma, $\mathbf{x}(t)$ enters and leaves each N_i on the *same* side of D . Thus $y(t)$ is monotonic for all $t \geq t_0$ such that $\mathbf{x}(t) \notin \bigcup_{i=1}^n N_i$. In particular there exists some integer i and time $t_1 \geq t_0$ such that $\mathbf{x}(t) \in N_i$ for all $t \geq t_1$, so in fact S consists of a single point, $\mathbf{x}_0 = (x_0, x_0)$ say, at which case (c) holds.

Let N be a member of the base of neighborhoods \mathcal{N} of \mathbf{x}_0 given by the lemma. Again by (7) there exists $t_2 \geq t_N$ such that $\mathbf{x}(t)$ does not cross D outside N when $t \geq t_2$, and therefore $y(t)$ is monotonic outside N . Thus, by case (c) of the lemma, if $\mathbf{x}(t)$ leaves N after time t_2 it cannot re-enter N , contradicting that $\mathbf{x}_0 \in S$. We conclude that for all $N \in \mathcal{N}$ we have $\mathbf{x}(t) \in N$ for all sufficiently large t , so $\mathbf{x}(t) \rightarrow \mathbf{x}_0$ and $x(t) \rightarrow x_0$. ■

Note that some condition on F on the diagonal D is necessary for the validity of the theorem. For example, if $F^{-1}(c)$ has horizontal tangents at points on D then $\mathbf{x}(t)$ could be asymptotic to a loop straddling the diagonal D . In particular the result fails if $F(x, y) = y$ when $F^{-1}(c) = L_c$; the hypothesis (7) reduces to $y(t) \rightarrow c$ and we are back with the Tauberian situation, requiring a condition such as (2) for the convergence of $x(t)$. Similarly, if $F^{-1}(c) \cap D$ contains an interval then the limit set of $\mathbf{x}(t)$ could be a subinterval of D . (Some results related to the case where $y(t)/x(t) \sim c$ are discussed in [1, Chapt. 5].)

The conditions on F can certainly be weakened or varied. For instance if $F^{-1}(c) \cap D$ contains a single point (x_0, x_0) and the horizontal line L_{x_0} contains no interval of the form $[x_0 - \delta, x_0]$ or $[x_0, x_0 + \delta]$ for all $\delta > 0$, then the same conclusion follows. If it is known that $x(t)$ [and thus $y(t)$] is bounded then the requirements that $F^{-1}(c) \cap D$ is finite and that $F(x, x)$ is bounded away from c for large x may be dropped, since we may work in a bounded region of the plane with the local finiteness of $F^{-1}(c) \cap D$ following from the goodness of F at all $\mathbf{x}_0 \in F^{-1}(c) \cap D$.

The theorem may be used to deduce other asymptotic behavior of functions. For example, taking $\alpha > -1$ and setting $\phi(t) = t^{\alpha+1}$ and $f(t) = x(t)t^\alpha$, hypothesis (7) becomes

$$F\left(f(t)t^{-\alpha}, (\alpha+1)t^{-\alpha-1} \int_0^t f(u) du\right) \rightarrow c. \quad (8)$$

Provided F satisfies the conditions of the theorem, we may conclude that if f is continuous and satisfies (8) then $f(t)t^{-\alpha}$ converges to $-\infty$, to ∞ or to some x_0 satisfying $F(x_0, x_0) = c$.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

I thank Professor N. H. Bingham for a talk that inspired this investigation and for many helpful comments.

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