Abelian

Cesàro means

Laplace transform

Power series

3. Tauberian

Entire

functions Lambert kernel

4. Question pause

5. Intrinsic

Central attraction

Extremal attraction

Mercerian theorems

Converse Abelian

References

Necessary Regular Variation

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Contents I

- 1. Regular variation
- 2. Abelian theorems

means

Laplace transform Power

series

3. Tauberia:

Entire functions Lambert

kernel
4.
Question

pause 5.

5. Intrinsic roles

attraction Extremal

attraction
Mercerian

- 1. Regular variation
- 2. Abelian theorems
 - Cesàro means
 - Laplace transform
 - Power series
- 3. Tauberian theorems
 - Entire functions
 - Lambert kernel
- 4. Question pause
- 5. Intrinsic roles
 - Central attraction
 - Extremal attraction
 - Mercerian theorems
- 6. Converse Abelian theorems

Abelian theorems Cesàro means

Laplace transform

Power series

3. Tauberia: theorems

Entire functions

Lambert kernel

4. Question pause

5. Intrinsic roles

Central attraction Extremal attraction

Mercerian theorems

6. Converse Abelian theorems

References

Abstract

Regular variation is a convenient description for asymptotic behaviour of functions, allowing a connection to be made between input and output in Abelian or Tauberian contexts. However in some areas regular variation is more than convenient, it is essential, characterising all possible asymptotics for the problem. Examples from probability, complex analysis and number theory will be presented.

1. Regular variation I

1. Regular variation

Abelian theorems

Cesàro means

Laplace transform

Power series

Tauberian theorems

Entire functions Lambert kernel

4. Question

5. Intrinsic

Central attraction

Extremal attraction Mercerian

6. Converse Abelian theorems

Definition 1.1.

A function $f:(a,\infty)\to(0,\infty)$ (where $a\geq 0$) is called regularly varying of index $\alpha\in\mathbb{R}$, notation $f\in R_{\alpha}$, if it is measurable and

for all
$$\lambda > 0$$
, $\lim_{x \to \infty} \frac{f(\lambda x)}{f(x)} = \lambda^{\alpha}$.

The slowly varying functions are the regularly varying functions of index 0, forming the class R_0 .

- Examples of slowly varying functions are all eventually positive rational functions of $\ln = \log_e$ and its iterates.
- ℓ denotes a generic slowly varying function.

Proposition 1.2.

 $f \in R_{\alpha}$ if and only if $\ell(x) := x^{-\alpha} f(x) \in R_0$.

Abelian theorems

Cesàro means Laplace transform

Power

3. Tauberian theorems

Entire functions

Lambert kernel

4. Question pause

5. Intrinsic roles

Central attraction Extremal

attraction
Mercerian

o. Converse Abelian theorems

References

2. Abelian theorems I

A typical Abelian theorem gives conditions under which

$$f(x) \sim cx^{\rho}\ell(x)$$
 as $x \to \infty$ (I)

implies

$$k * f(x) \sim c\check{k}(\rho)x^{\rho}\ell(x) \quad \text{as } x \to \infty.$$
 (II)

Here the *Mellin transform* of $k:(0,\infty)\to\mathbb{R}$ is given for $z\in\mathbb{C}$, where it exists, by

$$\check{k}(z) := \int_0^\infty t^{-z} k(t) \, \frac{dt}{t},$$

and the *Mellin convolution* of two such functions k and f is given, for $x \in \mathbb{R}$, by

$$k * f(x) := \int_0^\infty k\left(\frac{x}{t}\right) f(t) \frac{dt}{t} = \int_0^\infty f\left(\frac{x}{t}\right) k(t) \frac{dt}{t}.$$

2. Abelian theorems I

variation 2.

Abelian theorems

Laplace

transfor Power

3. Tauberia:

Entire functions

Lambert kernel

4. Question

5. Intrinsic roles

Central attraction
Extremal

attraction
Mercerian

6. Converse Abelian theorems

Theorem 2.1 ([Arandelović, 1976]).

Let $\check{k}(z)$ exist in the strip $\sigma \leq \Re z \leq \tau$, where $\sigma < \rho < \tau$, and let $f:(0,\infty) \to \mathbb{R}$ be measurable, with $f(x)/x^{\sigma}$ bounded on every interval (0,a] for a>0. Then (I) implies (II).

Proof.

[Bingham, Goldie & Teugels, 1989, pp. 201-2].

In (I) and (II) the constant c can be any real number. All cases c > 0 are equivalent, as are all cases c < 0. When c = 0 the result says that $f(x) = o(x^{\rho}\ell(x))$ implies $k * f(x) = o(\check{k}(\rho)x^{\rho}\ell(x))$, both as $x \to \infty$.

Abelian

Cesàro means

Laplace transform

Power

3. Tauberia:

theorems Entire

functions Lambert kernel

4. Question pause

5. Intrinsic

roles Central attraction

Extremal attraction Mercerian

6. Converse Abelian

References

2. Abelian theorems: Cesàro means I

For $\alpha > 0$ the Cesàro mean of order α of f is given by

$$C_{\alpha}(f)(x) = \frac{1}{\Gamma(\alpha)x^{\alpha}} \int_{0}^{x} (x-t)^{\alpha-1} f(t) dt \quad \text{for } x > 0.$$

Set

$$k(x) := \frac{\mathbf{1}_{[1,\infty)}(x)}{x\Gamma(\alpha)} \left(1 - \frac{1}{x}\right)^{\alpha - 1};$$

then $k * f = C_{\alpha}(f)$. This k has Mellin transform

$$\check{k}(z) = \frac{\Gamma(z+1)}{\Gamma(z+\alpha+1)}$$
 for $\Re z > -1$.

Theorem 2.1 thus gives that for all $c \in \mathbb{R}$ and $\rho > -1$, $f(x) \sim cx^{\rho}\ell(x)$ implies

$$C_{\alpha}(f)(x) \sim c \frac{\Gamma(\rho+1)}{\Gamma(\rho+\alpha+1)} x^{\rho} \ell(x)$$
 as $x \to \infty$.

2. Abelian theorems: Cesàro means I

variation

Abelian theorems

Cesàro means

Laplace transform Power

series

3. Tauberia:

Entire functions Lambert

4. Question

kernel

5. Intrinsic

Central attraction Extremal attraction

Mercerian

6.
Converse
Abelian
theorems

The case $\alpha = 1$ is the familiar 'Cesàro average':

$$C_1(f)(x) = x^{-1} \int_0^x f(t) dt.$$

For this case the result is that, again for all $c \in \mathbb{R}$ and $\rho > -1$, $f(x) \sim cx^{\rho} \ell(x)$ implies

$$C_1(f)(x) \sim \frac{cx^{\rho}\ell(x)}{(\rho+1)}$$
 as $x \to \infty$.

Abelian theorems

Cesàro means

Laplace transform

Power

3. Tauberia

theorems Entire functions

Lambert kernel

4. Question pause

5. Intrinsic

Central attraction

Extremal attraction

Mercerian theorems

o. Converse Abelian theorems

References

2. Abelian theorems: Laplace transform I

Define the Laplace transform \hat{f} by

$$\hat{f}(s) := s \int_0^\infty e^{-st} f(t) dt,$$

i.e. with an extra factor s. If $f \in BV_{loc}[0,\infty)$ and f(0-)=0 then

$$\hat{f}(s) = \int_{[0,\infty)} e^{-st} df(t),$$

so we have defined the Laplace-Stieltjes transform of f. The integral then converges in $\Re s > \sigma$, where possibly $\sigma = \infty$. Set

$$k(x) := x^{-1}e^{-1/x},$$

then $k * f(x) = \hat{f}(1/x)$. And

$$\check{k}(z) = \Gamma(1+z) \text{ for } \Re z > -1.$$

The Theorem thus gives that for all $c \in \mathbb{R}$ and $\rho > -1$, $f(x) \sim cx^{\rho} \ell(x)$ implies

$$\hat{f}(s) \sim \frac{c\Gamma(1+\rho)}{s^{\rho}} \ell\left(\frac{1}{s}\right) \quad \text{as } s \downarrow 0.$$

2. Abelian theorems: power series I

Given coefficients $(a_n)_{n=0}^{\infty}$, let

$$f(x) := \sum_{n=0}^{\lfloor x \rfloor} a_n$$

where $\lfloor x \rfloor$ denotes the largest integer not exceeding x. Set $u := e^{-1/x}$ in the latter example; then

$$\hat{f}\left(\frac{1}{x}\right) = \sum_{n=0}^{\infty} a_n u^n.$$

The Theorem thus says that if

$$\sum_{k=0}^{n} a_k \sim c n^{\rho} \ell(n) \quad \text{as } n \to \infty,$$

where $c \in \mathbb{R}$ and $\rho > -1$, then

$$\sum_{n=0}^{\infty} a_n u^n \sim \frac{c\Gamma(1+\rho)}{(-\ln u)^{\rho}} \ell\left(\frac{1}{-\ln u}\right) \quad \text{as } u \uparrow 1.$$

1. Regular variation

2. Abelian theorems

means Laplace

Power series

3. Tauberian

Entire functions

Lambert kernel

4. Question pause

5. Intrinsic roles

Central attraction Extremal attraction

Mercerian theorems

Abelian

Cesàro means

Power series

theorems

- Entire functions Lambert
- 4. Question

pause 5.

- roles
- attraction Extremal
- $\begin{array}{c} {\rm attraction} \\ {\rm Mercerian} \end{array}$
- theorems
- Converse Abelian

References

2. Abelian theorems: power series II

Because $-\ln u \sim 1-u$ as $u\uparrow 1$ we may replace $-\ln u$ by 1-u in the right-hand side; replacing the argument of ℓ by an asymptotic equivalent involves the Uniform Convergence Theorem for slowly varying functions [Bingham, Goldie & Teugels, 1989, Theorem 1.2.1]. We thus gain the neater conclusion that

$$\sum_{n=0}^{\infty} a_n u^n \sim c\Gamma(1+\rho) \frac{\ell(1/(1-u))}{(1-u)^{\rho}} \quad \text{as } u \uparrow 1.$$

3. Tauberian theorems I

We want $(II) \Longrightarrow (I)$.

Exercise 3.1.

$$(k * f)^{\vee}(z) = \check{k}(z)\check{f}(z) \text{ for } \Re z = \rho.$$

So to get information about f from k * f, need

$$\check{k}(z) \neq 0 \quad \text{for } \Re z = \rho,$$
(W)

that is, k is a Wiener kernel.

We also need a condition on f. To see this, consider for example the Cesàro mean: if $f(x) = (-1)^{\lfloor x \rfloor}$ then $x^{-1} \int_0^x f \to 0$ as $x \to \infty$, but $f(x) \not\to 0$.

So impose one of

$$\lim_{\lambda \downarrow 1} \liminf_{x \to \infty} \inf_{y \in [x, \lambda x]} \frac{y^{-\rho} f(y) - x^{-\rho} f(x)}{\ell(x)} \ge 0 \qquad \text{(so = 0)}, \tag{SD}$$

$$\lim_{\lambda \downarrow 1} \limsup_{x \to \infty} \sup_{y \in [x, \lambda x]} \frac{|y^{-\rho} f(y) - x^{-\rho} f(x)|}{\ell(x)} = 0.$$
 (SO)

These are extended versions of **slow decrease** (SD) and **slow oscillation** (SO).

1. Regular variation

Tauberian theorems

3. Tauberian theorems I

1. Regular

Abelian theorems

Cesàro means Laplace transform

Power series

3. Tauberian theorems

Entire functions

Lambert kernel

4. Question pause

5. Intrinsic roles

Central attraction Extremal

attraction Mercerian

6. Converse

References

Theorem 3.2 ([Bingham & Teugels, 1979]).

Assume the conditions of Theorem 2.1, plus (W), plus

- either (SO)
- or $k \ge 0$ and (SD).

Then (II) \Longrightarrow (I).

The case $\ell \equiv 1$ is:

Theorem 3.3 (Wiener-Pitt Theorem).

Assume (W). If f is bounded and measurable, and of slow decrease:

$$\lim_{\lambda\downarrow 1} \liminf_{x\to\infty} \inf_{t\in [1,\lambda]} \bigl(f(tx)-f(x)\bigr) \geq 0 \quad (hence=0),$$

then

$$k * f(x) \rightarrow c\check{k}(0)$$
 implies $f(x) \rightarrow c$.

3. Tauberian theorems I

Example 3.4 (Cesàro means).

An Abel-Tauber theorem: for $\rho > -1$, $f(x) \sim cx^{\rho} \ell(x)$ as $x \to \infty$ if and only if

$$C_{\alpha}(f)(x) = \frac{1}{\Gamma(\alpha)x^{\alpha}} \int_{0}^{x} (x-t)^{\alpha-1} f(t) dt \sim c \frac{\Gamma(\rho+1)}{\Gamma(\rho+\alpha+1)} x^{\rho} \ell(x).$$

Example 3.5 (Laplace transforms).

An Abel-Tauber theorem: for $\rho > -1$, $f(x) \sim cx^{\rho} \ell(x)$ as $x \to \infty$ if and only if

$$\hat{f}(s) := s \int_0^\infty e^{-st} f(t) dt \sim \frac{c\Gamma(1+\rho)}{s^{\rho}} \ell\left(\frac{1}{s}\right) \text{ as } s \downarrow 0.$$

1. Regular variation

2. Abelian theorems

means Laplace

transfor: Power

Tauberian theorems

Entire functions

Lambert kernel

4. Question pause

5. Intrinsic roles

attraction Extremal

attraction Mercerian

6. Converse Abelian theorems

_ .

Power series

Tauberia theorems

Entire functions

Lambert kernel

4. Question pause

5. Intrinsic roles

Central attraction Extremal

Mercerian

6. Converse Abelian

References

3. Tauberian theorems: entire functions I

Example 3.6 (Entire functions).

Let f be entire, with maximal function

$$M(r) := \sup_{|z| \le r} |f(z)| = \sup_{|z| = r} |f(z)|.$$

Definition 3.7.

The **order** of f is

$$\rho := \limsup_{r \to \infty} \frac{\ln \ln M(r)}{\ln r}.$$

Theorem 3.8 (Proximate Order Theorem [Valiron, 1913]).

If f is entire with order $\rho < \infty$ then there exists $\ell \in R_0$ with

$$\limsup_{r \to \infty} \frac{\ln M(r)}{r^{\rho} \ell(r)} = 1.$$

3. Tauberian theorems: entire functions I

Definition 3.9.

f has completely regular growth if

$$\lim_{r \to \infty}^* \frac{\ln|f(re^{i\theta})|}{r^{\rho}\ell(r)} = h(\theta) \text{ for all } \theta,$$

where \lim^* means limit as $r \to \infty$ avoiding an exceptional set of density 0. The zeros of f have **angular density** if

$$\frac{\sum_{n} \mathbf{1}\{|z_n| \le r, \ \theta \le \arg z_n \le \theta'\}}{r^{\rho}\ell(r)} \to D(\theta, \theta') \quad \text{as } r \to \infty.$$

Levin-Pfluger theory connects these two notions.

The simplest case is when $0 < \rho < 1$. Then

$$f(z) = cz^m \prod_{1}^{n} \left(1 - \frac{z}{z_n}\right)$$

where $c \neq 0, 0 < |z_1| \leq |z_2| \leq \cdots$

1. Regular variation

2. Abelian theorems

means Laplace

transform

3. Tauberian

Entire

Lambert kernel

4. Question pause

5. Intrinsic

roles Central attraction

Extremal attraction Mercerian

Abelian theorems

theorems Cesàro

means Laplace transform

Power series

3. Tauberia: theorems

Entire functions

Lambert kernel

4. Question pause

5. Intrinsic

Central attraction Extremal

attraction Mercerian theorems

6. Converse Abelian theorems

References

3. Tauberian theorems: entire functions II

Without loss of generality, take m=0, c=1. Consider the case when the zeros z_1, z_2, \ldots are negative reals. Then

$$\ln f(z) = \int_0^\infty \frac{z/t}{1 + z/t} \, n(t) \, \frac{dt}{t} \quad \text{for arg } z \neq \pi,$$

where $n(t) := \sum_{0}^{\infty} \mathbf{1}\{|z_n| \leq t\}$ is the zero-counting function. Then

$$\ln f(re^{i\theta}) = e^{i\theta} k_{\theta} *^{M} n(r),$$

where $k_{\theta}(x) = x/(1 + xe^{i\theta})$, so that

$$\check{k}_{\theta}(s) = \frac{\pi e^{i\theta(s-1)}}{\sin \pi s}$$
 for $0 < \Re s < 1$ and $\theta \neq \pi$.

Theorems 2.1 and 3.2 thus give the Levin-Pfluger result that for each $\theta \in (-\pi, \pi)$, $n(r) \sim cr^{\rho} \ell(r)$ as $r \to \infty$ if and only if

$$\ln f(re^{i\theta}) \sim \frac{c\pi r^{\rho} e^{i\theta\rho} \ell(r)}{\sin \pi \rho}.$$

3. Tauberian theorems: Lambert kernel I

Example 3.10 (Lambert kernel).

Here

$$k(t) = t \frac{d}{dt} \frac{1}{t(e^{1/t} - 1)}.$$

This has $\check{k}(z) = z\Gamma(1+z)\zeta(1+z)$, non-zero on $\Re z = 0$. Its use is to get a proof of the Prime Number Theorem, as follows.

Definition 3.11.

von Mangoldt's function is

$$\Lambda(x) := \begin{cases} \ln p & \text{if } n = p^k \text{ for some } k = 1, 2, \dots, \\ 0 & \text{if not.} \end{cases}$$

One can prove (see for example [Widder, 1941]) that

$$\sum_{n=1}^{\infty} \frac{\Lambda(n) - 1}{x(e^{n/x} - 1)} \to -2\gamma \quad \text{as } x \to \infty.$$

1. Regular variation

2. Abelian theorems

means Laplace

transform Power

3. Tauberian theorems

Entire functions Lambert

kernel

4. Question

5. Intrinsic

Central attraction Extremal attraction

Mercerian theorems
6.
Converse

D - f - ...

l. Regular

Abelian

Cesàro means Laplace

transform Power series

3. Tauberia:

Entire functions

Lambert kernel

4. Question pause

5. Intrinsic

Central attraction Extremal

Mercerian

6. Converse Abelian

References

3. Tauberian theorems: Lambert kernel II

The left-hand side is k * f(x) where

$$f(x) := \sum_{n=1}^{\lfloor x \rfloor} \frac{\Lambda(n) - 1}{n}.$$

Theorem 3.2 then gives that $f(x) \to -2\gamma$ as $x \to \infty$. This is equivalent (see for example [Hardy & Wright, 1979]) to

Theorem 3.12 (Prime Number Theorem).

$$\sum_{p \le x} 1 \sim \frac{x}{\ln x} \quad as \ x \to \infty.$$

4. Question pause I

1. Regular variation

Abelian theorems

Cesàro means Laplace

Power series

3.
Tauberia

Entire functions Lambert kernel

4. Question pause

5. Intrinsic roles
Central attraction
Extremal

6. Converse Abelian theorems

Mercerian

Let us ask the following questions:

- Why regular variation?
- Are the conditions right?

We have partly answered the first of these above by giving instances where regular variation plays an important role, necessary for full understanding. We complete our answer in the next Section by giving results from probability theory and analysis where regular variation plays an intrinsic role: it can't be avoided.

We answer the second question in Section 6 by discussing Converse Abelian Theorems.

5. Intrinsic roles: central attraction I

means Laplace

transform Power

series

Entire

Lambert

kernel

Central attraction

Extremal

Mercerian

References

Definition 5.1.

A probability law G is **stable** if there exists a law F such that with X_1 , X_2, \ldots independent $\sim F$, and $S_n := X_1 + \cdots + S_n$, there exist $a_n > 0$ and b_n with

$$\frac{S_n}{a_n} - b_n \stackrel{L}{\longrightarrow} G,$$

where \xrightarrow{L} denotes convergence in law. Then we say that F is attracted to

Theorem 5.2 (Domain of Attraction Theorem).

F is attracted to Gaussian laws if and only if the truncated variance $V(x) := \int_{-x}^{x} t^2 dF(t)$ is slowly varying.

F is attracted to a non-Gaussian law G if and only if $1 - F(x) + F(-x) \in R_{-\alpha}$ for some $0 < \alpha < 2$, and there exists

$$\lim_{x \to \infty} \frac{1 - F(x)}{1 - F(x) + F(-x)}.$$

5. Intrinsic roles: extremal attraction I

Definition 5.3.

A probability law G is **extreme-stable** (**extremal**) if there exists a law F such that with X_1, X_2, \ldots independent $\sim F$, and $M_n = \max(X_1, \ldots, X_n)$, there exist $a_n > 0$ and b_n with

$$\frac{M_n}{a_n} - b_n \stackrel{L}{\longrightarrow} G.$$

Then we say that $F \in D(G)$.

Theorem 5.4 (Fisher-Tippett-Gnedenko Theorem).

For some a > 0, b, G(ax + b) is one of

$$\Phi_{\alpha}(x) := \begin{cases}
0 & (x < 0), \\ \exp(-x^{-\alpha}) & (x \ge 0),
\end{cases} & where \ \alpha > 0;$$

$$\Psi_{\alpha}(x) := \begin{cases}
\exp(-(1 - x)^{\alpha}) & (x < 0), \\ 1 & (x \ge 0),
\end{cases} & where \ \alpha > 0;$$

$$\Lambda(x) := \exp(-e^{-x}).$$

Abelian

Laplace

Power

Entire Lambert kernel

attraction

Extremalattraction Mercerian

theorems

5. Intrinsic roles: extremal attraction II

1. Regular

Abelian theorems

Cesàro means

Laplace transform

Power series

Tauberia theorems

Entire functions

Lambert kernel

4. Question

5. Intrinsic roles

Central attraction

Extremal attraction

Mercerian theorems

o. Converse Abelian theorems

References

Theorem 5.5 (Extremal Attraction Theorem [Gnedenko, 1943, de Haan, 1970]).

 $f \in D(\Phi_{\alpha})$ if and only if $1 - F \in R_{-\alpha}$.

 $f \in D(\Psi_{\alpha})$ if and only if $F(x_{+}) = 1$ and $1 - F(x_{+} - x^{-1}) \in R_{-\alpha}$.

 $F \in D(\Lambda)$ if and only if $H(x) := -\ln(1 - F(x))$ has inverse $H \leftarrow with$

$$\lim_{x \to \infty} \frac{H^{\leftarrow}(x+u) - H^{\leftarrow}(x)}{\ell(e^x)} = u \quad \text{for all } u > 0,$$

for some slowly varying ℓ .

5. Intrinsic roles: Mercerian theorems I

If $c \neq 0$, (I) and (II) imply

$$\frac{k * f(x)}{f(x)} \to a \quad \text{as } x \to \infty, \tag{III}$$

where $a = \check{k}(\rho)$. Here is a converse:

Theorem 5.6 (Drasin-Shea-Jordan Theorem [Drasin & Shea, 1976, Jordan, 1974]).

Let k be a real kernel and let (a,b) be the maximal open interval such that $\check{k}(z)$ converges absolutely in $a<\Re z< b$. Assume that $\check{k}'(\rho)$ and $\check{k}''(\rho)$ are not both 0, that k is monotone on $[\rho,b)$ and zero on (0,1), and that

$$\check{k}(z) \neq \check{k}(\rho) \text{ for } \Re z = \rho \text{ and } z \neq \rho.$$

Let $f \ge 0$ be locally bounded on $[0, \infty)$, have finite order $\rho \in (a, b)$, and have bounded decrease:

$$\liminf_{x \to \infty} \inf_{\mu \in [1,\lambda]} \frac{f(\mu x)}{f(x)} > 0$$

for some (equivalently all) $\lambda > 1$. Then (III) implies $a = \check{k}(\rho)$ and $f \in R_{\rho}$.

1. Regular variation

Abelian theorems

Cesàro means Laplace

transforr Power

3. Tauberian theorems

Entire functions Lambert

kernel
4.

Question pause

5. Intrinsic roles

attraction Extremal attraction

 $\begin{array}{c} {\rm Mercerian} \\ {\rm theorems} \end{array}$

6.
Converse
Abelian
theorems

_ .

Abelian theorems

means
Laplace
transform

Power series

3. Tauberian theorems

Entire functions Lambert kernel

4. Question pause

5. Intrinsic

Central attraction

Extremal attraction Mercerian

6. Converse Abelian theorems

References

6. Converse Abelian theorems I

The Wiener-Pitt Theorem needs the Wiener condition (W) on k, and for f to be locally bounded and of slow decrease. The extra condition for Theorem 3.2 is

$$\check{k}(z)$$
 exists for $\sigma \leq \Re z \leq \tau$, for some $\sigma < \rho < \tau$.

This cannot be omitted:

Theorem 6.1 (Converse Abelian Theorem [Arandelović, 1976]).

Let $R_{\rho}^{o} := \{ f \in R_{\rho} : f \text{ locally bounded on } (0, \infty), O(x^{\rho}) \text{ as } x \downarrow 0 \}$. The following are equivalent:

$$k * f(x) = O(f(x))$$
 as $x \to \infty$, for all $f \in R_{\rho}^{o}$;
 $\check{k}(z)$ exists for $\rho - \delta \leq \Re z \leq \rho + \delta$, for some $\delta > 0$.

The proof needs:

Proposition 6.2 ([Vuilleumier, 1963]).

If f is such that $f(x)\ell(x) = O(1)$ as $x \to \infty$, for every non-decreasing slowly varying ℓ , then $x^{\alpha}f(x) = O(1)$ as $x \to \infty$, for some $\alpha > 0$.

6. Converse Abelian theorems II

Proof.

Let us show that if $\limsup_{x\to\infty} x^{\alpha} |f(x)| = \infty$ for each $\alpha > 0$, then also $\limsup_{x\to\infty} \ell(x)|f(x)| = \infty$ for some non-decreasing $\ell \in R_0$.

Set $a_0 := 1$.

Because $\limsup x^{1/k}|f(x)| = \infty$ for each $k = 1, 2, \ldots$, we may successively find a_1, a_2, \ldots such that $a_k \ge a_{k-1} + 1$ and $a_k^{1/k}|f(a_k)| \ge k$ for $k = 1, 2, \ldots$

Define $\varepsilon(a_k) := 1/k$, and complete $\varepsilon(x)$ so as to be continuous and piecewise-linear.

Then $\varepsilon(x) \downarrow 0$ as $x \to \infty$, while $\limsup_{x \to \infty} x^{\varepsilon(x)} |f(x)| = \infty$. Set $\ell(x) := \exp \int_1^x \varepsilon(y) y^{-1} dy$, then ℓ is slowly varying, and

$$\ell(x)|f(x)| = |f(x)| \exp \int_1^x \varepsilon(y) \frac{dy}{y} \ge x^{\varepsilon(x)}|f(x)|$$

is unbounded as $x \to \infty$.

1. Regular variation

2. Abelian theorems

means Laplace

transform Power

3. Tauberian theorems

Entire functions Lambert kernel

4. Question pause

5. Intrinsic roles

Central attraction Extremal

attraction
Mercerian

References I

- Laplace transform
- Power series
- Entire
- functions Lambert kernel

- attraction
- Extremal Mercerian

References

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Abelian

Power

Entire functions Lambert

kernel

attraction Extremal

Mercerian