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STABILITY IS NOT OPEN

by Kai CIELIEBAK, Urs FRAUENFELDER & Gabriel P. PATERNAIN (*)

ABSTRACT. — We give an example of a symplectic manifold with a stable hypersurface such that nearby hypersurfaces are typically unstable.

RÉSUMÉ. — Nous donnons un exemple d'une variété symplectique contenant une hypersurface stable telle que les hypersurfaces voisines sont instables.

1. Introduction

A closed hypersurface Σ in a symplectic manifold (M,Ω) is called stable if a neighbourhood of Σ can be foliated by hypersurfaces whose characteristic foliations are conjugate. Here the characteristic foliation on a hypersurface Σ is defined by the 1-dimensional distribution $\ker(\Omega|_{\Sigma})$. Stability was introduced in [12] as a condition on hypersurfaces for which the Weinstein conjecture can be proved. More recently, it has attained importance as the condition needed for the compactness results underlying Symplectic Field Theory [7, 2, 5] and Rabinowitz Floer homology [3, 4].

Let us consider, in a fixed symplectic manifold (M,Ω) , the space \mathcal{HS} of closed hypersurfaces equipped with the C^{∞} -topology and its subset \mathcal{SHS} of stable hypersurfaces. It is easy to see that \mathcal{SHS} is not closed: For example, the horocycle flow on a hyperbolic surface defines a hypersurface which is unstable but the smooth limit of stable ones; see [4] for many more examples. On the other hand, \mathcal{SHS} contains open components, e.g. those corresponding to hypersurfaces of contact type. This prompted the question whether the set \mathcal{SHS} is actually open in \mathcal{HS} . The result of this paper shows that this is not the case.

Keywords: Stability, Hamiltonian structure, characteristic foliation. *Math. classification:* 53D40, 53D25.

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THEOREM 1.1. — There exists a stable closed hypersurface Σ in a symplectic 6-manifold such that nearby hypersurfaces are typically unstable in the following sense: There exists a neighbourhood of Σ in \mathcal{HS} which contains an open dense set consisting of unstable hypersurfaces.

The theorem continues to hold if the C^{∞} topology is replaced by the C^k topology for some $k \geq 2$ and hypersurfaces are only assumed to be of class C^k .

The theorem can be rephrased in terms of stable Hamiltonian structures [2, 5, 6]. A two-form ω on an odd-dimensional manifold Σ is called a Hamiltonian structure if it is closed and maximally nondegenerate in the sense that its kernel distribution is one-dimensional. It is called stable if there exists a one-form λ such that $\lambda|_{\ker \omega} \neq 0$ and $\ker \omega \subset \ker d\lambda$. Then a hypersurface Σ in a symplectic manifold (M,Ω) is stable iff $\Omega|_{\Sigma}$ defines a stable Hamiltonian structure, and every stable Hamiltonian structure arises as a stable hypersurface in some symplectic manifold [5]. Now Theorem 1.1 can be rephrased as follows: There exists a stable Hamiltonian structure ω on a closed 5-manifold Σ such that nearby Hamiltonian structures with the same cohomology class as ω are typically unstable.

Theorem 1.1 has implications on the foundations of holomorphic curve theories such as Symplectic Field Theory [7, 2, 5] and Rabinowitz Floer homology [3, 4]. For the construction of those theories one needs to perturb a given stable Hamiltonian structure to make all closed characteristics nondegenerate. Theorem 1.1 suggests that such a perturbation may not be possible within the class of stable Hamiltonian structures (see also [6] for a result pointing in the same direction). In Rabinowitz Floer homology this problem can be overcome in the following way [4]: One chooses an additional Hamiltonian perturbation of the Rabinowitz action functional. For a generic small perturbation the Rabinowitz action functional becomes Morse, but for the perturbed action functional one might lose compactness. However, one can still define a boundary operator by taking into account only gradient flow lines close to the original ones. We wonder if a similar strategy can be applied to SFT as well.

2. Preliminaries on Anosov Hamiltonian structures

Anosov Hamiltonian structures. Recall that the flow ϕ_t of a vector field F on a closed manifold Σ is Anosov if there is a splitting $T\Sigma = \mathbb{R}F \oplus E^s \oplus E^u$ and positive constants λ and C such that for all $x \in \Sigma$

$$|d_x \phi_t(v)| \leqslant C e^{-\lambda t} |v| \text{ for } v \in E^s \text{ and } t \geqslant 0,$$

$$|d_x \phi_{-t}(v)| \leqslant C e^{-\lambda t} |v| \text{ for } v \in E^u \text{ and } t \geqslant 0.$$

If an Anosov vector field F is rescaled by a positive function its flow remains Anosov [1, 15]. It will be useful for us to know how the bundles E^s and E^u change when we rescale F by a smooth positive function $r: \Sigma \to \mathbb{R}_+$. Let $\widetilde{\phi}$ be the flow of rF and \widetilde{E}^s its stable bundle. Then (cf. [15])

(2.1)
$$\widetilde{E}^{s}(x) = \{ v + z(x, v) F(x) \colon v \in E^{s}(x) \},$$

where z(x, v) is a continuous 1-form (i.e. linear in v and continuous in x). Moreover, if we let l = l(t, x) be (for fixed x) the inverse of the diffeomorphism

$$t \mapsto \int_0^t r(\phi_s(x))^{-1} \, ds$$

then

(2.2)
$$d\widetilde{\phi}_t(v+z(x,v)F(x)) = d\phi_l(v) + z(\phi_l(x), d\phi_l(v))F(\phi_l(x)).$$

This shows that for closed Σ the flow $\widetilde{\phi}_t$ is again Anosov. There is a similar expression for \widetilde{E}^u . It is clear from the discussion above that the weak bundles $\mathbb{R}F \oplus E^s$ and $\mathbb{R}F \oplus E^u$ do not change under rescaling of F (the strong bundles $E^{s,u}$ are indeed affected by rescaling as we have just seen).

Let (Σ, ω) be a Hamiltonian structure. We say that the structure is *Anosov* if the flow of any vector field F spanning $\ker \omega$ is Anosov.

We say that an Anosov Hamiltonian structure satisfies the 1/2-pinching condition or that it is 1-bunched [10, 9] if for any vector field F spanning $\ker \omega$ with flow ϕ_t there are functions $\mu_f, \mu_s \colon \Sigma \times \mathbb{R}_+ \to \mathbb{R}_+$ such that

- $\lim_{t\to\infty} \sup_{x\in\Sigma} \frac{\mu_s(x,t)^2}{\mu_f(x,t)} = 0;$
- $\mu_f(x,t)|v| \leq |d\phi_t(v)| \leq \mu_s(x,t)|v|$ for all $x \in \Sigma$, t > 0 and $v \in E^s(x)$, and $\mu_f(x,t)|v| \leq |d\phi_{-t}(v)| \leq \mu_s(x,t)|v|$ for all $x \in \Sigma$, t > 0 and $v \in E^u(\phi_t x)$.

We remark that the 1/2-pinching condition is invariant under rescaling. Indeed, consider the flow $\widetilde{\phi}_t$ of rF. It is clear from (2.1) and (2.2) that there is a positive constant κ such that

$$\frac{1}{\kappa}\mu_f(x,l(t,x))|\tilde{v}| \leqslant |d\widetilde{\phi}_t(\tilde{v})| \leqslant \kappa\mu_s(x,l(t,x))|\tilde{v}|$$

for t > 0 and $\tilde{v} \in \widetilde{E}^s$ (with a similar expression for \widetilde{E}^u). We know that given $\varepsilon > 0$, there exists T > 0 such that for all $x \in \Sigma$ and all t > T we have

$$\frac{\mu_s(x,t)^2}{\mu_f(x,t)} < \varepsilon.$$

On the other hand, there exists a > 0 such that $l(t, x) \ge at$ for all $x \in \Sigma$ and t > 0. Hence, if we choose t > T/a we have

$$\frac{\mu_s(x, l(t, x))^2}{\mu_f(x, l(t, x))} < \varepsilon$$

for all $x \in \Sigma$. Therefore

$$\lim_{t \to \infty} \sup_{x \in \Sigma} \frac{\mu_s(x, l(t, x))^2}{\mu_f(x, l(t, x))} = 0$$

and thus $\widetilde{\phi}_t$ is also 1/2-pinched.

Hence the Anosov property as well as the 1/2-pinching condition are invariant under rescaling and thus intrinsic properties of the Hamiltonian structure. One of the main consequences of the 1/2-pinching condition is that the weak bundles $\mathbb{R}F \oplus E^s$ and $\mathbb{R}F \oplus E^u$ are of class C^1 [9, Theorem 5] (see also [11]).

Stable Anosov Hamiltonian structures. Suppose now (Σ, ω) is a stable Anosov Hamiltonian structure satisfying the 1/2-pinching condition. Let λ be a stabilizing 1-form and R the Reeb vector field defined by $i_R\omega = \lambda_0$ and $\lambda(R) = 1$. Invariance under the flow implies that ω and λ both vanish on E^s and E^u . Since the flow ϕ_t of R is Anosov and $E^s \oplus E^u = \ker \lambda$ which is C^{∞} , it follows that $E^s = \ker \lambda \cap (\mathbb{R}F \oplus E^s)$ and E^u must be C^1 . Under these conditions we can introduce the Kanai connection [13] which is defined as follows.

Let I be the (1,1)-tensor on Σ given by I(v)=-v for $v\in E^s$, I(v)=v for $v\in E^u$ and I(R)=0. Consider the symmetric non-degenerate bilinear form given by

$$h(X,Y):=\omega(X,IY)+\lambda\otimes\lambda(X,Y).$$

The pseudo-Riemannian metric h is of class C^1 and thus there exists a unique C^0 affine connection ∇ such that:

- (1) h is parallel with respect to ∇ ;
- (2) ∇ has torsion $\omega \otimes R$.

This connection has the following desirable properties [8, 13]: it is invariant under ϕ_t and the Anosov splitting is invariant under ∇ (i.e. if X is any section of $E^{s,u}$ then $\nabla_v X \in E^{s,u}$ for any v).

The other good consequence of the 1/2-pinching condition, besides C^1 smoothness of the bundles, is the following lemma (cf. [13, Lemma 3.2]).

Lemma 2.1. —
$$\nabla(d\lambda) = 0$$
.

Proof. — Suppose τ is any invariant (0,3)-tensor annihilated by R. We claim that τ must vanish. To see this, consider for example a triple of vectors (v_1, v_2, v_3) where $v_1, v_2 \in E^s$ but $v_3 \in E^u$. Then there is a constant C > 0 such that for all $t \ge 0$

$$|\tau_x(v_1, v_2, v_3)| = |\tau_{\phi_t x}(d\phi_t(v_1), d\phi_t(v_2), d\phi_t(v_3))|$$

$$\leq C\mu_s(x, t)^2 \mu_f(x, t)^{-1} |v_1| |v_2| |v_3|.$$

By the 1/2-pinching condition the last expression tends to zero as $t \to \infty$ and therefore $\tau_x(v_1, v_2, v_3) = 0$. The same will happen for other possible triples (v_1, v_2, v_3) when we let $t \to \pm \infty$.

Since $d\lambda$ and ∇ are ϕ_t -invariant, so is $\nabla(d\lambda)$. Since $i_R d\lambda = 0$, $\nabla(d\lambda)$ is also annihilated by R (to see that $\nabla_R(d\lambda) = 0$ use that $d\lambda$ is ϕ_t -invariant and that $\nabla_R = L_R$). Hence by the previous argument applied to $\tau = \nabla(d\lambda)$ we conclude that $\nabla(d\lambda) = 0$ as desired.

Quasi-conformal Anosov Hamiltonian structures. Let ϕ_t be an Anosov flow on Σ endowed with a C^0 -Riemannian metric. Consider the following functions on $\Sigma \times \mathbb{R}$:

$$K^{s}(x,t) = \frac{\max\{|d\phi_{t}(v)| : v \in E^{s}(x), |v| = 1\}}{\min\{|d\phi_{t}(v)| : v \in E^{s}(x), |v| = 1\}},$$

$$K^{u}(x,t) = \frac{\max\{|d\phi_{t}(v)| \colon v \in E^{u}(x), \ |v| = 1\}}{\min\{|d\phi_{t}(v)| \colon v \in E^{u}(x), \ |v| = 1\}}.$$

The flow ϕ_t is said to be *quasi-conformal* if K^u and K^s are both bounded on $\Sigma \times \mathbb{R}$. This property is clearly independent of the choice of Riemannian metric used to define K^s and K^u . Moreover it is shown in [18, Proposition 3.5] that quasi-conformality is independent of times changes, thus it makes sense to talk about quasi-conformal Anosov Hamiltonian structures. The next theorem will be useful for us.

THEOREM 2.2 ([18], Theorems 1.3 and 1.4). — Let ϕ_t be a topologically mixing Anosov flow with dim $E^s \ge 2$ and dim $E^u \ge 2$. If ϕ_t is quasiconformal, then the weak bundles are C^{∞} .

Recall that ϕ_t is topologically mixing if for any two nonempty open sets U and V in Σ , there is a compact set $K \subset \mathbb{R}$ such that for every $t \in \mathbb{R} \setminus K$ we have $\phi_t(U) \cap V \neq \emptyset$. Recall also that ϕ_t is said to be transitive if there is a dense orbit. Our Anosov flows will always be transitive since they preserve a smooth volume form [14, Chapter 18].

3. A theorem

THEOREM 3.1. — Let (Σ, ω) be a 1/2-pinched Anosov Hamiltonian structure with $[\omega] \neq 0$, but $[\omega^2] = 0$. Suppose in addition that Σ fibres over a closed 3-manifold with fibres diffeomorphic to S^2 and transversal to the weak subbundles. Then, if (Σ, ω) is stable, the weak subbundles must be C^{∞} .

Proof. — The proof of this theorem is very much inspired by the proof of Theorem 2 in [13]. We first make the following observation:

• E^s (E^u) cannot contain a nontrivial proper continuous subbundle. Indeed since $\mathbb{R}R \oplus E^u$ is transversal to the fibres of the fibration $\Sigma \to M$ by 2-spheres, we can write $T\Sigma = V \oplus \mathbb{R}R \oplus E^u$ where V is the vertical subbundle of the fibration. Using this splitting we may define an isomorphism $E^s \mapsto V$ and since the tangent bundle of S^2 does not admit a nontrivial proper continuous subbundle, the same holds for E^s (and E^u).

Next we observe that the stabilizing 1-form λ cannot be closed. Indeed, write $\omega^2 = d\tau$ and note that if λ was closed, then the volume form $\lambda \wedge d\tau$ would be exact, which is absurd.

Since ω is non-degenerate, there exists a smooth bundle map $L \colon E^s \oplus E^u \to E^s \oplus E^u$ such that for sections X, Y of $E^s \oplus E^u$

$$d\lambda(X,Y) = \omega(LX,Y) = \omega(X,LY).$$

The map L is invariant under ϕ_t and preserves the decomposition $E^s \oplus E^u$, i.e. $L = L^s + L^u$, where $L^s \colon E^s \to E^s$ and $L^u \colon E^u \to E^u$. In particular, L commutes with I. By Lemma 2.1, the 1/2-pinching condition implies that $\nabla(d\lambda) = 0$ and thus L is parallel with respect to ∇ . Note that by transitivity of ϕ_t , the characteristic polynomial of L^s_x is independent of $x \in \Sigma$. Let $\rho \in \mathbb{C}$ be an eigenvalue of L^s . Consider $A := L^s - \Re(\rho) \operatorname{Id}$. Note that A cannot be zero: Otherwise $d\lambda = c \omega$ for a constant $c \in \mathbb{R}$; since λ is not closed, $c \neq 0$, which in turns implies $[\omega] = 0$, contradicting the hypotheses of the theorem.

Clearly A^2 has $\mu:=-\Im(\rho)^2$ as an eigenvalue. Let $H\subset E^s$ denote the eigenspace of the eigenvalue μ . Since L^s is parallel it has the same dimension at every point $x\in \Sigma$ and since E^s cannot contain a nontrivial proper continuous subbundle, we deduce that $H=E^s$. Hence $A^2=\mu$ Id. Moreover $\mu\neq 0$, otherwise ker A would be a nontrivial proper continuous subbundle of E^s . Therefore we have proved that

$$\mathbb{J}^s := \frac{1}{\Im(\rho)} (L^s - \Re(\rho) \operatorname{Id})$$

defines a parallel almost complex structure on E^s of class C^1 invariant under ϕ_t . Similarly we obtain an almost complex structure \mathbb{J}^u on E^u .

Now choose a Riemannian metric on E^s (resp. E^u) which is invariant under \mathbb{J}^s (resp. \mathbb{J}^u). By declaring E^s , E^u and $\mathbb{R}R$ orthogonal and R with norm 1, we obtain a metric (of class C^1) on Σ such that with respect to this metric

$$\frac{\max\{|d\phi_t(v)|\colon v\in E^s(x),\ |v|=1\}}{\min\{|d\phi_t(v)|\colon v\in E^s(x),\ |v|=1\}}=1,$$

for all $t \in \mathbb{R}$ and $x \in \Sigma$. This is because ϕ_t preserves \mathbb{J}^s and E^s has rank two. Similarly for E^u . This shows that (Σ, ω) is a quasi-conformal Anosov Hamiltonian structure.

Finally we note that if a transitive Anosov flow is not topologically mixing, then by a theorem of J. Plante [17] it must be a suspension with constant return function. In particular, this implies that there is a closed 1-form β such that $\beta(R) > 0$. The same argument above that proved that λ cannot be closed shows that such a β cannot exist. Hence ϕ_t is topologically mixing and by Theorem 2.2 the weak bundles must be C^{∞} .

Remark 3.2. — Note that the proof above only requires λ to be of class C^2 .

4. The example

Let Γ be a discrete group of isometries of \mathbb{H}^3 such that $M := \Gamma \setminus \mathbb{H}^3$ is a closed orientable hyperbolic 3-manifold. We consider the geodesic flow acting on the unit sphere bundle SM and let α be the canonical contact 1-form.

The space of invariant 2-forms of the geodesic flow of $M = \Gamma \setminus \mathbb{H}^3$ has dimension two [13, Claim 3.3]. It is spanned by the 2-form $d\alpha$ and the additional 2-form ψ which we now describe. Given a unit vector $v \in T_x\mathbb{H}^3$, let $i(v)\colon T_x\mathbb{H}^3 \to T_x\mathbb{H}^3$ be the linear map defined by i(v)(v) = 0 and i(v) rotates vectors in $\{v\}^{\perp}$ by $\pi/2$ according to the orientation of \mathbb{H}^3 . Any vector $\xi \in T_vS\mathbb{H}^3$ can be written as $\xi = (\xi_H, \xi_V)$ with the usual identification of horizontal and vertical components (cf. [16]). Define $J_v\colon T_vS\mathbb{H}^3 \to T_vS\mathbb{H}^3$ as

(4.1)
$$J_v(\xi_H, \xi_V) = (i(v)\xi_V, i(v)\xi_H).$$

Then

(4.2)
$$\psi_v(\xi,\eta) := d\alpha_v(J_v\xi,\eta) = \langle i(v)\xi_V,\eta_V \rangle - \langle i(v)\xi_H,\eta_H \rangle.$$

Clearly this construction descends to SM where we use the same notation $(\psi, \alpha, \text{ etc.})$ In a moment we will check that ψ is invariant under ϕ_t , but

before we do so, let us describe the stable and unstable bundles of ϕ_t and the action of $d\phi_t$ on them. Recall that $d\phi_t(\xi_H, \xi_V) = (Y(t), \dot{Y}(t))$ where Y is the unique Jacobi field (along the geodesic $\pi\phi_t(v)$, where $\pi \colon SM \to M$ is foot-point projection) with initial conditions (ξ_H, ξ_V) . Solving the Jacobi equation $\ddot{Y} - Y = 0$ we find:

$$E^{s}(v) = \{(w, -w) \colon w \perp v\},\$$

$$E^{u}(v) = \{(w, w) \colon w \perp v\}.$$

Note that J leaves E^s and E^u invariant. Moreover

$$d\phi_t(w, -w) = e^{-t}(e_w(t), -e_w(t)),$$

$$d\phi_t(w, w) = e^{t}(e_w(t), e_w(t)),$$

where $e_w(t)$ is the parallel transport of w along the geodesic $\pi\phi_t(v)$. Since $e_{i(v)w}(t) = i(\pi\phi_t v)e_w(t)$ we see that $d\phi_t$ preserves J. Since $d\alpha$ is also ϕ_t invariant, it follows that ψ is invariant. Note that $i_R\psi = 0$ for the Reeb vector field R of α .

LEMMA 4.1. — The invariant 2-form ψ is closed but not exact. The 4-form ψ^2 is exact and (SM, ψ) is a stable Hamiltonian structure with stabilizing 1-form α and Reeb vector field R.

Proof. — The 3-form $d\psi$ is invariant under ϕ_t and is annihilated by R. Then the proof of Lemma 2.1 shows that $d\psi = 0$ (obviously ϕ_t is 1/2-pinched). In order to show that $[\psi] \neq 0$, consider S_x the 2-sphere of unit vectors in $T_x\mathbb{H}^3$. A tangent vector $\xi \in T_vS_x$ has the form $\xi = (0, w)$ where $w \perp v$. If we take two tangent vectors $\xi = (0, w)$, $\eta = (0, u) \in T_vS_x$, from (4.1) and (4.2) we see that

$$\psi_v(\xi,\eta) = \langle i(v)w, u \rangle.$$

This implies that

$$\int_{S_x} \psi \neq 0$$

and thus $[\psi] \neq 0$. Consider now the invariant 4-form ψ^2 and the invariant 5-form $\alpha \wedge \psi^2$. By transitivity, there is a constant k such that $\alpha \wedge \psi^2 = k \alpha \wedge (d\alpha)^2$. Contracting with R we see that ψ^2 must be $k (d\alpha)^2$ and therefore exact. Finally, it is immediate from the definition (4.2) of ψ that its restriction to $E^s \oplus E^u = \ker \alpha$ is non-degenerate. Hence (SM, ψ) is a Hamiltonian structure with stabilizing 1-form α and Reeb vector field R.

Now let $X := SM \times (-\varepsilon, \varepsilon)$ and $\tau \colon X \to SM$ the obvious projection. Define $\omega_X := d(r\tau^*\alpha) + \tau^*\psi$, where $r \in (-\varepsilon, \varepsilon)$. For ε small enough (X, ω_X) is a symplectic manifold and r = 0 is the stable hypersurface (SM, ψ) . We have now come to our main result which implies Theorem 1.1 in the introduction.

Theorem 4.2. — A typical hypersurface $\Sigma \subset X$ near SM is not stable.

Proof. — Consider a hypersurface Σ near r=0 and let ω be ω_X restricted to Σ . By Lemma 4.1, $[\omega] \neq 0$, but $[\omega^2] = 0$. Since SM fibres over M with fibres given by 2-spheres transveral to the weak bundles the same holds true for Σ (recall that under perturbations the stable and unstable bundles vary continuously). Finally we note that (Σ, ω) is 1/2-pinched. Indeed, recall that for the geodesic flow of M, we have

$$|d\phi_t(\xi)| = e^{-t}|\xi| \text{ for } \xi \in E^s,$$

$$|d\phi_t(\xi)| = e^t|\xi| \text{ for } \xi \in E^u.$$

Thus for a flow φ_t which is C^1 close to ϕ_t we get

$$\frac{1}{C}|\xi|e^{-At} \leqslant |d\varphi_t(\xi)| \leqslant C|\xi|e^{-at} \text{ for } \xi \in E^s \text{ and } t \geqslant 0,$$

$$\frac{1}{C}|\xi|e^{-At} \leqslant |d\varphi_{-t}(\xi)| \leqslant C|\xi|e^{-at} \text{ for } \xi \in E^u \text{ and } t \geqslant 0,$$

where all the constants C, A, a are close to 1. Thus (Σ, ω) is 1/2-pinched.

We can now apply Theorem 3.1 to conclude that if Σ near r=0 is stable, then the weak bundles must be C^{∞} . However, a theorem of Hasselblatt [10, Corollary 1.10] asserts that an open and dense set of symplectic Anosov systems does not have weak bundles of class $C^{2-\varepsilon}$. Thus a typical hypersurface Σ near r=0 cannot be stable.

Remark 4.3. — It is possible to prove the last theorem without appealing to Theorem 2.2. An inspection of the proof of Theorem 3.1 shows that since $d\phi_t$ preserves \mathbb{J} , all the closed orbits are actually 2-bunched in the terminology of [10], and the local perturbation argument in [10, Section 4] implies that an open and dense set of symplectic Anosov systems does not have all closed orbits being 2-bunched (this fact is actually used in the proof of [10, Corollary 1.10] quoted above). Of course, the conclusion of Theorem 3.1 is stronger if we use Theorem 2.2.

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