

An extension of Whitney approximation theorem

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ABSTRACT

The classical Whitney approximation theorem states that a smooth function $f : \mathbb{R}^n \rightarrow \mathbb{R}$ can be approximated by analytic functions. We prove that these analytic functions approximating f can be taken as *real* holomorphic functions on the whole space \mathbb{C}^n .

Key words: Whitney approximation theorem, approximation by analytic functions

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1. Introduction

In 1934 H. Whitney proved that a smooth function $f : \mathbb{R}^n \rightarrow \mathbb{R}$ can be approximated by analytic functions, cf. [7]. This result is known as Whitney approximation theorem and is of fundamental importance in the study of differentiable and analytic manifolds. We refer to [1] or the survey [6] and the many references therein for applications and generalizations of it.

The aim of this paper is to extend Whitney approximation theorem proving that the analytic functions approximating f can be taken as *real* holomorphic functions on \mathbb{C}^n .

In other words, the classical Whitney approximation theorem asserts that the ring $\mathcal{O}(\mathbb{R}^n)$ of analytic functions on \mathbb{R}^n is a dense subset of the space $C^m(\mathbb{R}^n)$ of real-valued functions on \mathbb{R}^n with respect to the so called Whitney topology. In this paper, we found a strictly smaller ring which is also a dense subset of $C^m(\mathbb{R}^n)$. This is the ring

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of *real* holomorphic functions, denoted as $\mathcal{O}_{\mathbb{R}}(\mathbb{C}^n)$, whose elements are holomorphic functions on \mathbb{C}^n which are invariant under conjugation or, alternatively, real analytic functions on \mathbb{R}^n which can be extended analytically to \mathbb{C}^n .

Real holomorphic functions are of interest in the study of real analytic sets, that is, subsets of \mathbb{R}^n defined as the zero set of some real analytic functions. For example, the full normalization of some real analytic sets can have complex parts, see [4], and then real analytic functions which can be extended analytically to these complex parts arise. Real holomorphic functions also appear in the solution of Hilbert 17th problem for non-coherent analytic surfaces, cf. [2].

2. Preliminaries

We consider in \mathbb{R}^n the usual topology. Given a compact subset $K \subset \mathbb{R}^n$, an integer $p \in \mathbb{N}$ and a function $f \in C^m(\mathbb{R}^n)$, the seminorm $\|f\|_p^K$ of $f \in C^m(\mathbb{R}^n)$ is defined as:

$$\|f\|_p^K = \sum_{|\alpha| \leq p} \frac{1}{\alpha!} \sup_{x \in K} |D^\alpha f(x)|,$$

where we use the standard notations

$$D^\alpha f = \frac{\partial^{|\alpha|} f}{\partial x_1^{\alpha_1} \dots \partial x_n^{\alpha_n}}, \quad \alpha = (\alpha_1, \dots, \alpha_n) \in \mathbb{N}^n, \quad |\alpha| = \alpha_1 + \dots + \alpha_n$$

and we suppose $|\alpha| \leq m \leq \infty$.

A fundamental system of neighborhoods of $f \in C^m(\mathbb{R}^n)$ in the *weak topology* is the collection:

$$\{g \in C^m(\mathbb{R}^n) \mid \|f - g\|_p^K < \varepsilon\},$$

where K is a compact subset of \mathbb{R}^n , $p \in \mathbb{N}$ (of course, $p \leq m$) and ε is a positive real number. Intuitively, we can say that in the weak topology two functions are close if in a compact subset K the values of both functions and of their p first derivatives are close.

As \mathbb{R}^n is not compact, the closeness of functions at infinity is not controlled by the weak topology. For that reason, we introduce the *Whitney topology* as a limit of the weak topology. In this topology, a fundamental system of neighborhoods of $f \in C^m(\mathbb{R}^n)$ is given by the sets:

$$\{g \in C^m(\mathbb{R}^n) \mid \|f - g\|_{m_1}^{K_1} < \varepsilon_1, \dots, \|f - g\|_{m_i}^{K_i} < \varepsilon_i, \dots\},$$

where $\{m_i\}$ is a sequence of positive integers ($m_i \leq m, \forall i$), $\{\varepsilon_i\}$ is an arbitrary sequence of positive real numbers and the K_i are compact subsets of \mathbb{R}^n verifying $K_i \subset V_i$ for some locally finite covering $\{V_i\}$ of \mathbb{R}^n (that is, $\bigcup V_i = \mathbb{R}^n$ and every point of \mathbb{R}^n has a neighborhood which intersects only finitely many sets in the covering). Now, we can state the

Theorem 2.1. (*Classical Whitney approximation theorem*) *Consider the sequences $\{K_i\}$, $\{m_i\}$ and $\{\varepsilon_i\}$ as above, and let $f \in C^m(\mathbb{R}^n)$. Then there exists an analytic function $g \in \mathcal{O}(\mathbb{R}^n)$ such that*

$$\|f - g\|_{m_i}^{K_i} < \epsilon_i, \quad \text{for each } i \geq 1.$$

The proof can be found in the paper of H. Whitney, cf. [7], or in the book by R. Narasimhan [5]. A similar theorem is proved in [3] for analytic submanifolds of \mathbb{R}^n . An immediate corollary of this theorem is the following:

Corollary 2.2. *The ring $\mathcal{O}(\mathbb{R}^n)$ of analytic functions on \mathbb{R}^n is a dense subset of the space $C^m(\mathbb{R}^n)$ with respect to the Whitney topology.*

3. Extended Whitney approximation theorem

First we are going to see how to approximate in the weak topology a smooth function f having compact support (that is, a function $f \in C^m(\mathbb{R}^n)$ such that the closure of $\{x \in \mathbb{R}^n \mid f(x) \neq 0\}$ is a compact set) by an analytic function. This can be achieved by convolution with a suitable exponential function. For the proof of this key lemma we will closely follow the proof of lemma 1.6.1 in [5]. A similar result can be also found in [1].

Lemma 3.1. *Let $f \in C^m(\mathbb{R}^n)$ be a function with compact support, $0 \leq m < \infty$. For $\lambda > 0$, set:*

$$g_\lambda(x) \equiv I_\lambda(f)(x) := c\lambda^{\frac{n}{2}} \int_{\mathbb{R}^n} f(y)e^{-\lambda\|x-y\|^2} dy$$

where $c = \pi^{-\frac{n}{2}}$, so that $c\lambda^{\frac{n}{2}} \int_{\mathbb{R}^n} e^{-\lambda\|x\|^2} dx = 1$. Then

$$g_\lambda \in \mathcal{O}(\mathbb{R}^n) \quad \text{and} \quad \lim_{\lambda \rightarrow \infty} \|g_\lambda - f\|_m^{\mathbb{R}^n} = 0.$$

Proof. By a change of variables, we can write $g_\lambda(x)$ in the form:

$$g_\lambda(x) = c\lambda^{\frac{n}{2}} \int_{\mathbb{R}^n} f(x-y)e^{-\lambda\|y\|^2} dy$$

and so, for any $\alpha \in \mathbb{N}^n$ such that $|\alpha| \leq m$, we have

$$D^\alpha g_\lambda(x) = c\lambda^{\frac{n}{2}} \int_{\mathbb{R}^n} (D^\alpha f)(x-y)e^{-\lambda\|y\|^2} dy = c\lambda^{\frac{n}{2}} \int_{\mathbb{R}^n} (D^\alpha f)(y)e^{-\lambda\|x-y\|^2} dy$$

Therefore,

$$D^\alpha g_\lambda(x) - D^\alpha f(x) = c\lambda^{\frac{n}{2}} \int_{\mathbb{R}^n} (D^\alpha f(y) - D^\alpha f(x))e^{-\lambda\|x-y\|^2} dy.$$

Now, since f has compact support and $|\alpha| \leq m < \infty$ there is $M > 0$ such that

$$|D^\alpha f(y)| < M \quad \text{for all } y.$$

Also, given $\epsilon > 0$ there exists $\delta > 0$ such that

$$|D^\alpha f(y) - D^\alpha f(x)| < \epsilon/2 \quad \text{for } \|x - y\| < \delta.$$

Thus

$$\begin{aligned}
|D^\alpha g_\lambda(x) - D^\alpha f(x)| &= c\lambda^{\frac{n}{2}} \left| \int_{\|x-y\|<\delta} (D^\alpha f(y) - D^\alpha f(x)) e^{-\lambda\|x-y\|^2} dy \right. \\
&\quad \left. + \int_{\|x-y\|\geq\delta} (D^\alpha f(y) - D^\alpha f(x)) e^{-\lambda\|x-y\|^2} dy \right| \\
&\leq \frac{1}{2} \epsilon c\lambda^{\frac{n}{2}} \int_{\mathbb{R}^n} e^{-\lambda\|x-y\|^2} dy + 2Mc\lambda^{\frac{n}{2}} \int_{\|x-y\|\geq\delta} e^{-\lambda\|x-y\|^2} dy
\end{aligned}$$

As $c\lambda^{\frac{n}{2}} \int_{\mathbb{R}^n} e^{-\lambda\|x-y\|^2} dy = 1$ and

$$\begin{aligned}
c\lambda^{\frac{n}{2}} \int_{\|x-y\|\geq\delta} e^{-\lambda\|x-y\|^2} dy &= c\lambda^{\frac{n}{2}} \int_{\|x-y\|\geq\delta} e^{-\frac{1}{2}\lambda\|x-y\|^2} e^{-\frac{1}{2}\lambda\|x-y\|^2} dy \\
&\leq e^{-\frac{1}{2}\lambda\delta^2} c\lambda^{\frac{n}{2}} \int_{\mathbb{R}^n} e^{-\frac{1}{2}\lambda\|x-y\|^2} dy = e^{-\frac{1}{2}\lambda\delta^2} 2^{\frac{n}{2}},
\end{aligned}$$

we have

$$|D^\alpha g_\lambda(x) - D^\alpha f(x)| \leq \frac{1}{2} \epsilon + 2Me^{-\frac{1}{2}\lambda\delta^2} 2^{\frac{n}{2}}.$$

We can choose λ as large as needed, so

$$\sup_{x \in \mathbb{R}^n} |D^\alpha g_\lambda(x) - D^\alpha f(x)| \rightarrow 0 \quad \text{as } \lambda \rightarrow \infty.$$

Finally, as f has compact support and x appears only in the analytic function $e^{-\lambda\|x-y\|^2}$, then

$$g_\lambda(x) = c\lambda^{\frac{n}{2}} \int_{\text{supp } f} f(y) e^{-\lambda\|x-y\|^2} dy$$

is an analytic function on \mathbb{R}^n , that is, $g_\lambda \in \mathcal{O}(\mathbb{R}^n)$. Even more, as the function $e^{-\lambda\|x-y\|^2}$ is holomorphic on \mathbb{C}^n , $g_\lambda(x)$ is also holomorphic on \mathbb{C}^n . \square

We recall that a complex-valued function $f : \mathbb{C}^n \rightarrow \mathbb{C}$ is *holomorphic* on \mathbb{C}^n if each point $w = (w_1, \dots, w_n) \in \mathbb{C}^n$ has an open neighborhood U , $w \in U$, such that the function f has a power series expansion

$$f(z) = \sum_{\nu_1, \dots, \nu_n=0}^{\infty} a_{\nu_1 \dots \nu_n} (z_1 - w_1)^{\nu_1} \dots (z_n - w_n)^{\nu_n}, \quad a_{\nu_1 \dots \nu_n} \in \mathbb{C}$$

which converges for all $z = (z_1, \dots, z_n) \in U$. The set of all functions holomorphic on \mathbb{C}^n is called the ring of holomorphic functions and is denoted by $\mathcal{O}(\mathbb{C}^n)$.

We say that a holomorphic function $f \in \mathcal{O}(\mathbb{C}^n)$ is *real* if it is invariant under complex conjugation, that is, if $f(\bar{z}) = \overline{f(z)}$ for every $z \in \mathbb{C}^n$. The set of all real holomorphic functions is denoted as $\mathcal{O}_{\mathbb{R}}(\mathbb{C}^n)$.

Remark 3.2. The ring $\mathcal{O}_{\mathbb{R}}(\mathbb{C}^n)$ is contained in the ring of analytic functions on \mathbb{R}^n , $\mathcal{O}(\mathbb{R}^n)$. In fact, real holomorphic functions can be identified with real analytic functions on \mathbb{R}^n which can be extended analytically to \mathbb{C}^n . It can be checked that real holomorphic functions can be also characterized as holomorphic functions on \mathbb{C}^n which take real values on \mathbb{R}^n .

It is easy to see that the ring $\mathcal{O}_{\mathbb{R}}(\mathbb{C}^n)$ is strictly smaller than $\mathcal{O}(\mathbb{R}^n)$. For example, the real analytic function $\frac{1}{x_1^2+1}$ is not real holomorphic.

Before proving the approximation theorem we need the following technical lemma.

Lemma 3.3. *Let U_p , $p \geq 1$, be the open (complex) subset of \mathbb{C}^n :*

$$U_p = \text{Int} \left\{ z \in \mathbb{C}^n \mid \text{Re} \left[\sum_{k=1}^n (z_k - x_k)^2 \right] > \frac{1}{2}, \forall x \in \mathbb{R}^n \text{ such that } \|x\| \geq p+1 \right\},$$

where $z = (z_1, \dots, z_n) \in \mathbb{C}^n$, $x = (x_1, \dots, x_n) \in \mathbb{R}^n$, $\text{Re}(\zeta)$ denotes the real part of the complex number ζ and Int denotes the interior with respect to the usual topology in \mathbb{C}^n . Then

$$\bigcup_{p \geq 1} U_p = \mathbb{C}^n.$$

Proof. To have an idea of how the U_p are, in figure 1 we can see the shape that they have in dimension 1.

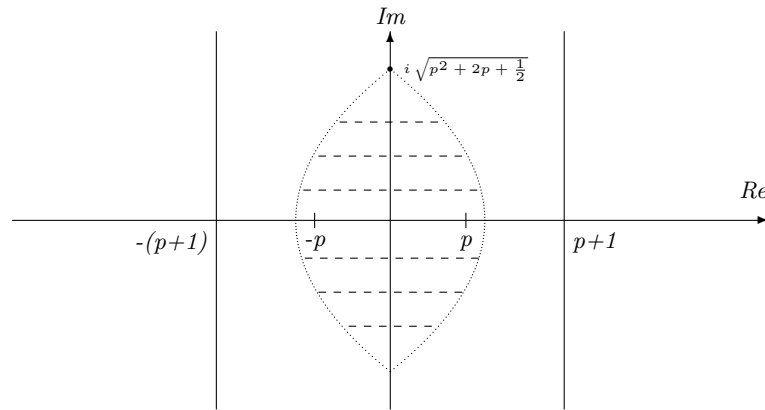


Figure 1

Take $z \in \mathbb{C}^n$ and we will prove that $z \in U_p$ for some p . We write $z = (z_1, \dots, z_n) = (a_1 + ib_1, \dots, a_n + ib_n)$, $a_i, b_i \in \mathbb{R}$. Thus we have

$$\text{Re} \left[\sum_{k=1}^n (z_k - x_k)^2 \right] = \text{Re} \left[\sum_{k=1}^n (a_k + ib_k - x_k)^2 \right] = \text{Re} \left[\sum_{k=1}^n \left((a_k - x_k)^2 - b_k^2 + 2(a_k - x_k)b_k i \right) \right]$$

$$= \sum_{k=1}^n \left((a_k - x_k)^2 - b_k^2 \right) = \sum_{k=1}^n (a_k - x_k)^2 - \sum_{k=1}^n b_k^2$$

We search for $p \in \mathbb{N}$ such that for every $x = (x_1, \dots, x_n) \in \mathbb{R}^n$ verifying $\|x\| \geq p+1$:

$$\sum_{k=1}^n (a_k - x_k)^2 - \sum_{k=1}^n b_k^2 > \frac{1}{2}.$$

If we consider points $a = (a_1, \dots, a_n)$ and $b = (b_1, \dots, b_n)$ of \mathbb{R}^n , the previous inequality can be rewritten as:

$$\|a - x\|^2 > \frac{1}{2} + \|b\|^2. \quad (1)$$

Take p such that

$$p+1 > \|a\| + \|b\| + 1.$$

If $\|x\| \geq p+1$ then $\|a - x\| \geq p+1 - \|a\| > 1 + \|b\|$ and inequality (1) is satisfied. Hence for this p the point z is in U_p , so that the lemma is proved. \square

Now we can prove our main theorem. Without loss of generality, in the definition of the Whitney topology we take the sequence of compact sets $K_i = \{x \in \mathbb{R}^n \mid i-1 \leq \|x\| \leq i\}$. Our proof follows the classical one of [5], but our particular election of the sequence $\{K_i\}$ allow us to prove that the approximating function is, in fact, a real holomorphic function.

Theorem 3.4. (*Extended Whitney approximation theorem*) *Let $f \in C^m(\mathbb{R}^n)$, $0 \leq m \leq \infty$, and let $K_i = \{x \in \mathbb{R}^n \mid i-1 \leq \|x\| \leq i\}$. Let $\{m_i\}$ be an arbitrary sequence of positive integers ($m_i \leq m$) and $\{\epsilon_i\}$ any sequence of strictly positive real numbers. Then there exists a real holomorphic function $g \in \mathcal{O}_{\mathbb{R}}(\mathbb{C}^n)$ verifying that*

$$\|f - g\|_{m_i}^{K_i} < \epsilon_i$$

for each $i \geq 1$.

Proof. Since for any subset $S \subset \mathbb{R}^n$ and any pair of integers $k \leq k'$ we have the inequality $\|f\|_k^S \leq \|f\|_{k'}^S$, for the proof of the theorem we can suppose $m_{p+1} \geq m_p$, for every $p \geq 1$.

The following property of seminorms will be used: if $\varphi, \psi \in C^m(\mathbb{R}^n)$ and $S \subset \mathbb{R}^n$, then we have that:

$$\|\varphi\psi\|_k^S \leq \|\varphi\|_k^S \|\psi\|_k^S.$$

We take a sequence of functions $\varphi_p \in C^\infty(\mathbb{R}^n)$, $p \geq 1$, with compact support, such that $\varphi_p(x) = 1$ if $x \in K_p$ and $\varphi_p(x) = 0$ if $x \notin \{y \in \mathbb{R}^n \mid p - \frac{3}{2} \leq \|y\| \leq p + \frac{1}{2}\}$. Corollary 1.2.6 of [5] assures that such functions φ_p exist.

Let

$$M_p = 1 + \|\varphi_p\|_{m_p}^{\mathbb{R}^n}.$$

Note that $1 < M_p < \infty$, because φ_p has compact support.

Take a sequence $\{\delta_p\}$ of positive numbers such that $\delta_{p+1} \leq \delta_p/2$ and

$$\sum_{q \geq p} \delta_q M_{q+1} \leq \frac{1}{4} \epsilon_p, \quad \text{for } p \geq 1.$$

For example, we can take $\delta_p = \frac{1}{4} \frac{\epsilon_1 \dots \epsilon_p}{2^p M_2 \dots M_{p+1}}$, as we can suppose that $\epsilon_i < 1, \forall i \geq 1$. We define $B_p := \{x \in \mathbb{R}^n \mid \|x\| \leq p\}$, so that $B_p = \bigcup_{i=1}^p K_i$. By lemma 3.1, there exists $\lambda_1 > 0$ such that if $g_1 := I_{\lambda_1}(\varphi_1 f)$, then

$$\|g_1 - \varphi_1 f\|_{m_1}^{B_1} < \delta_1.$$

Also, by lemma 3.1, there exists $\lambda_2 > 0$ such that if $g_2 := I_{\lambda_2}(\varphi_2(f - g_1))$, then

$$\|g_2 - \varphi_2(f - g_1)\|_{m_2}^{B_2} < \delta_2.$$

By induction, we define $\lambda_p > 0$ and g_p such that if $g_p := I_{\lambda_p}(\varphi_p(f - g_1 - \dots - g_{p-1}))$, then

$$\|g_p - \varphi_p(f - g_1 - \dots - g_{p-1})\|_{m_p}^{B_p} < \delta_p. \quad (2)$$

As $\varphi_p = 0$ in a neighbourhood of B_{p-2} , (2) implies that

$$\|g_p\|_{m_p}^{B_{p-2}} < \delta_p. \quad (3)$$

The function we are looking for is $g := \sum_{q=1}^{\infty} g_q$. First, we are going to prove that $g \in C^{m_p}(\mathbb{R}^n)$ for every p .

As $\varphi_p(x) = 1$ in a neighbourhood of K_p , from (2) we have that

$$\|f - g_1 - \dots - g_p\|_{m_p}^{K_p} < \delta_p. \quad (4)$$

Substituting p by $p+1$ in (2), using (4) and that $m_p \leq m_{p+1}$, we have:

$$\|g_{p+1}\|_{m_p}^{K_p} \leq \|\varphi_{p+1}(f - \sum_{q=1}^p g_q)\|_{m_p}^{K_p} + \|g_{p+1} - \varphi_{p+1}(f - \sum_{q=1}^p g_q)\|_{m_p}^{K_p}$$

$$\leq \|\varphi_{p+1}\|_{m_p}^{\mathbb{R}^n} \|f - \sum_{q=1}^p g_q\|_{m_p}^{K_p} + \|g_{p+1} - \varphi_{p+1}(f - \sum_{q=1}^p g_q)\|_{m_{p+1}}^{B_{p+1}} \leq M_{p+1} \delta_p + \delta_{p+1}$$

and

$$\|g_{p+1}\|_{m_p}^{B_p} \leq \|g_{p+1}\|_{m_p}^{B_{p-1}} + \|g_{p+1}\|_{m_p}^{K_p} \leq \delta_{p+1} + (M_{p+1} \delta_p + \delta_{p+1})$$

$$= M_{p+1} \delta_p + 2\delta_{p+1} \leq M_{p+1} \delta_p + \delta_p \leq 2\delta_p M_{p+1}.$$

Therefore

$$\|\sum_{q>p} g_q\|_{m_p}^{B_p} \leq 2 \sum_{q>p} \delta_q M_{q+1} < \frac{1}{2} \epsilon_p, \quad (5)$$

which implies that, for every p ,

$$g = \sum_{q=1}^{\infty} g_q \in C^{m_p}(\mathbb{R}^n).$$

Now, using (4) and (5) we see that g approximates f as desired:

$$\|f - g\|_{m_p}^{K_p} \leq \|f - \sum_{q=1}^p g_q\|_{m_p}^{K_p} + \|\sum_{q>p} g_q\|_{m_p}^{K_p} < \delta_p + \frac{1}{2} \epsilon_p < \epsilon_p.$$

Finally, we will see that, with an adequate choice of the λ_p , the function g is analytic over \mathbb{C}^n , that is, g is a real holomorphic function.

As seen in lemma 3.1 the function $g_r(x)$ is analytic on \mathbb{R}^n and, moreover, it can be extended holomorphically to \mathbb{C}^n by the same formula

$$g_r(z) = c\lambda_r^{n/2} \int_{\text{supp } \varphi_r} \varphi_r(y) \left(f(y) - \sum_{q=1}^{r-1} g_q(y) \right) e^{-\lambda_r \sum_{i=1}^n (z_i - y_i)^2} dy.$$

We take open (complex) subsets U_p of \mathbb{C}^n as in lemma 3.3. If $y \in \text{supp } \varphi_r$, with $r > p + 2$, then $\|y\| \geq p + 1$ and for $z \in U_p$ we have that

$$\text{Re} \left[\sum_{j=1}^n (z_j - y_j)^2 \right] > \frac{1}{2},$$

so

$$|g_r(z)| \leq c\lambda_r^{n/2} e^{-\lambda_r/2} \int_{\text{supp } \varphi_r} \left| \varphi_r(y) \left(f(y) - \sum_{q=1}^{r-1} g_q(y) \right) \right| dy \leq c\lambda_r^{n/2} e^{-\lambda_r/2} H_r \quad (6)$$

where H_r depends only of $\lambda_1, \dots, \lambda_{r-1}$, because g_q depends only on the λ_j with $j \leq q$. Thus, we can choose inductively, the λ_q large enough to assure that

$$\sum_{q \geq 1} \lambda_q^{n/2} e^{-\lambda_q/2} H_q < \infty.$$

With this choice of the $\{\lambda_q\}$, we have from (6) that the series

$$g(z) = \sum g_q(z)$$

converges uniformly over each U_p for every p . In fact, for any $z \in U_p$ we have

$$|g(z)| \leq \sum_{q=1}^{p+2} \sup_{z \in U_p} |g_q(z)| + \sum_{q=p+3}^{\infty} \lambda_q^{n/2} e^{-\lambda_q/2} H_q.$$

From this it can be deduced, by the Weierstrass convergence theorem and lemma (3.3), that g is holomorphic over $\mathbb{C}^n = \bigcup U_p$. □

Corollary 3.5. *The ring $\mathcal{O}_{\mathbb{R}}(\mathbb{C}^n)$ is dense in $\mathbb{C}^m(\mathbb{R}^n)$, $0 \leq m \leq \infty$, with respect to the Whitney topology.*

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