

Almost everybody has solved correctly this problem. Instead of repeating the proof given by most of you, I try to add something here emphasizing some points about mathematical rigor. For instance, at some point $\frac{d}{dt} \frac{\partial y}{\partial x} = \frac{\partial \dot{y}}{\partial x}$ is employed. What does it mean? At the right hand side, \dot{y} suggest a function of t , but then how can we take the derivative with respect to x ?

Recall that $L : TM \rightarrow \mathbb{R}$, then (x, \dot{x}) and (y, \dot{y}) are coordinate maps and they have nothing to do with derivatives from the mathematical point of view. To avoid any confusion we shall write (x, v) and (y, w) . If we change variables in the Lagrangian, we have $L(x, v) = \tilde{L}(y, w)$. If $y = y(x)$, we have $w = y'(x)v$ (by Lemma 1.2.1 in the notes, if you wish). By the chain rule:

$$\begin{aligned} L_v &= \tilde{L}_y \cdot 0 + \tilde{L}_w \frac{\partial w}{\partial v} & \text{and} & & L_x &= \tilde{L}_y y'(x) + \tilde{L}_w \frac{\partial w}{\partial x} \\ &= \tilde{L}_w y'(x) & & & &= \tilde{L}_y y'(x) + \tilde{L}_w y''(x)v \end{aligned}$$

Recall that x and v are independent variables (coordinate maps) and y only depends on x .

When we write the Euler Lagrange equations, we look for a parametrized curve $(x(t), v(t))$ with $x'(t) = v(t)$. If you prefer to see it so, you can say that $\frac{d}{dt} L_v = L_x$ means the system of ODE's $L_{vx}x' + L_{vv}v' = L_x$, $x' = v$.

Then we have

$$\frac{d}{dt} L_v = L_x \quad \Leftrightarrow \quad y'(x) \frac{d}{dt} \tilde{L}_w + \tilde{L}_w y''(x)x' = \tilde{L}_y y'(x) + \tilde{L}_w y''(x)v \quad \Leftrightarrow \quad y'(x) \frac{d}{dt} \tilde{L}_w = \tilde{L}_y y'(x)$$

and $y'(x)$ cancels out because $y = y(x)$ is a change of variables (in particular with C^∞ inverse).