Chapter 2:

Second-Order Linear ODEs

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2.1. Homogeneous Linear ODEs of Second Order

We have already considered first-order linear ODEs (Sec. 1.5) and shall now define and discuss linear ODEs of second order. These equations have important engineering applications, especially in connection with mechanical and electrical vibrations (Secs. 2.4, 2.8, 2.9) as well as in wave motion, heat conduction, and other parts of physics, as we shall see in Chap. 12.

A second-order ODE is called **linear** if it can be written

(1) $$y'' + p(x)y' + q(x)y = r(x)$$

and **nonlinear** if it cannot be written in this form.

The distinctive feature of this equation is that it is *linear in y and its derivatives*, whereas the functions p, q, and r on the right may be any given functions of x. If the equation begins with, say, $f(x)y''$, then divide by $f(x)$ to have the **standard form** (1) with y'' as the first term.

(2) **Homogeneous Second-Order Linear ODEs** —— $\boldsymbol{r(x) = 0}$ ——→ $$y'' + p(x)y' + q(x)y = 0$$

Standard form

$$y'' + \frac{1}{x}y' + y = 0.$$

$$xy'' + y' + xy = 0,$$

- **Homogeneous linear ODE**

$$y'' + 25y = e^{-x}\cos x,$$

- **Nonhomogeneous linear ODE**

$$y''y + y'^2 = 0.$$

- **Nonlinear ODE**

The functions p and q in (1) and (2) are called the **coefficients** of the ODEs. **Solutions** are defined similarly as for first-order ODEs in Chap. 1. A function

$$y = h(x)$$

Homogeneous Linear ODEs: Superposition Principle

Linear ODEs have a rich solution structure. For the homogeneous equation the backbone of this structure is the *superposition principle* or *linearity principle*, which says that we can obtain further solutions from given ones by adding them or by multiplying them with any constants. Of course, this is a great advantage of homogeneous linear ODEs. Let us first discuss an example.

EXAMPLE 1 Homogeneous Linear ODEs: Superposition of Solutions

The functions $y = \cos x$ and $y = \sin x$ are solutions of the homogeneous linear ODE

$$y'' + y = 0$$

for all x. We verify this by differentiation and substitution. We obtain $(\cos x)'' = -\cos x$; hence

$$y'' + y = (\cos x)'' + \cos x = -\cos x + \cos x = 0.$$

Similarly for $y = \sin x$ (verify!). We can go an important step further. We multiply $\cos x$ by any constant, for instance, 4.7, and $\sin x$ by, say, -2, and take the sum of the results, claiming that it is a solution. Indeed, differentiation and substitution gives

$$(4.7 \cos x - 2 \sin x)'' + (4.7 \cos x - 2 \sin x) = -4.7 \cos x + 2 \sin x + 4.7 \cos x - 2 \sin x = 0.$$ ■

In this example we have obtained from y_1 ($= \cos x$) and y_2 ($= \sin x$) a function of the form

$$y = c_1 y_1 + c_2 y_2 \qquad (c_1, c_2 \text{ arbitrary constants}). \tag{3}$$

This is called a **linear combination** of y_1 and y_2. In terms of this concept we can now formulate the result suggested by our example, often called the **superposition principle** or **linearity principle**.

THEOREM 1

Fundamental Theorem for the Homogeneous Linear ODE (2)

For a homogeneous linear ODE (2), *any linear combination of two solutions on an open interval I is again a solution of* (2) *on I. In particular, for such an equation, sums and constant multiples of solutions are again solutions.*

PROOF

Let y_1 and y_2 be solutions of (2) on I. Then by substituting $y = c_1 y_1 + c_2 y_2$ and its derivatives into (2), and using the familiar rule $(c_1 y_1 + c_2 y_2)' = c_1 y_1' + c_2 y_2'$, etc., we get

$$
\begin{aligned}
y'' + py' + qy &= (c_1y_1 + c_2y_2)'' + p(c_1y_1 + c_2y_2)' + q(c_1y_1 + c_2y_2) \\
&= c_1y_1'' + c_2y_2'' + p(c_1y_1' + c_2y_2') + q(c_1y_1 + c_2y_2) \\
&= c_1(y_1'' + py_1' + qy_1) + c_2(y_2'' + py_2' + qy_2) = 0,
\end{aligned}
$$

since in the last line, $(\cdots) = 0$ because y_1 and y_2 are solutions, by assumption. This shows that y is a solution of (2) on I. ■

CAUTION! Don't forget that this highly important theorem holds for *homogeneous linear* ODEs only but ***does not hold*** for nonhomogeneous linear or nonlinear ODEs, as the following two examples illustrate.

EXAMPLE 2 A Nonhomogeneous Linear ODE

Verify by substitution that the functions $y = 1 + \cos x$ and $y = 1 + \sin x$ are solutions of the nonhomogeneous linear ODE

$$y'' + y = 1,$$

but their sum is not a solution. Neither is, for instance, $2(1 + \cos x)$ or $5(1 + \sin x)$. ■

Initial Value Problem. Basis. General Solution

For a second-order homogeneous linear ODE (2) an **initial value problem** consists of (2) and two **initial conditions**

(4) $$y(x_0) = K_0, \qquad y'(x_0) = K_1.$$

These conditions prescribe given values K_0 and K_1 of the solution and its first derivative (the slope of its curve) at the same given $x = x_0$ in the open interval considered.

The conditions (4) are used to determine the two arbitrary constants c_1 and c_2 in a **general solution**

(5) $$y = c_1 y_1 + c_2 y_2$$

of the ODE; here, y_1 and y_2 are suitable solutions of the ODE, with "suitable" to be explained after the next example. This results in a unique solution, passing through the point (x_0, K_0) with K_1 as the tangent direction (the slope) at that point. That solution is called a **particular solution** of the ODE (2).

EXAMPLE 4 Initial Value Problem

Solve the initial value problem

$$y'' + y = 0, \qquad y(0) = 3.0, \qquad y'(0) = -0.5.$$

Solution. ***Step 1. General solution.*** The functions $\cos x$ and $\sin x$ are solutions of the ODE (by Example 1), and we take

$$y = c_1 \cos x + c_2 \sin x.$$

This will turn out to be a general solution as defined below.

Step 2. Particular solution. We need the derivative $y' = -c_1 \sin x + c_2 \cos x$. From this and the initial values we obtain, since $\cos 0 = 1$ and $\sin 0 = 0$,

$$y(0) = c_1 = 3.0 \qquad \text{and} \qquad y'(0) = c_2 = -0.5.$$

This gives as the solution of our initial value problem the particular solution

$$y = 3.0 \cos x - 0.5 \sin x.$$

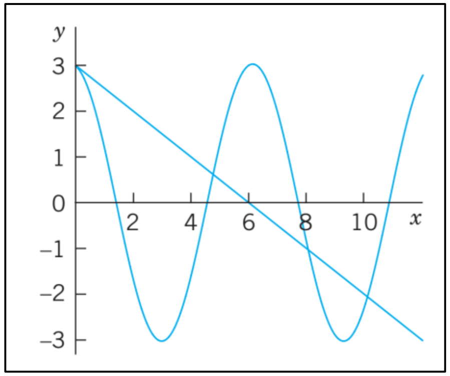

Figure 29 shows that at $x = 0$ it has the value 3.0 and the slope -0.5, so that its tangent intersects the x-axis at $x = 3.0/0.5 = 6.0$. (The scales on the axes differ!)

Observation. Our choice of y_1 and y_2 was general enough to satisfy both initial conditions. Now let us take instead two proportional solutions $y_1 = \cos x$ and $y_2 = k \cos x$, so that $y_1/y_2 = 1/k = \text{const}$. Then we can write $y = c_1 y_1 + c_2 y_2$ in the form

$$y = c_1 \cos x + c_2(k \cos x) = C \cos x \qquad \text{where} \qquad C = c_1 + c_2 k.$$

Hence we are no longer able to satisfy two initial conditions with only one arbitrary constant C. Consequently, in defining the concept of a general solution, we must exclude proportionality. And we see at the same time why the concept of a general solution is of importance in connection with initial value problems.

DEFINITION

General Solution, Basis, Particular Solution

A **general solution** of an ODE (2) on an open interval I is a solution (5) in which y_1 and y_2 are solutions of (2) on I that are not proportional, and c_1 and c_2 are arbitrary constants. These y_1, y_2 are called a **basis** (or a **fundamental system**) of solutions of (2) on I.

A **particular solution** of (2) on I is obtained if we assign specific values to c_1 and c_2 in (5).

DEFINITION

Basis (Reformulated)

A **basis** of solutions of (2) on an open interval I is a pair of linearly independent solutions of (2) on I.

EXAMPLE 5 Basis, General Solution, Particular Solution

$\cos x$ and $\sin x$ in Example 4 form a basis of solutions of the ODE $y'' + y = 0$ for all x because their quotient is $\cot x \neq \text{const}$ (or $\tan x \neq \text{const}$). Hence $y = c_1 \cos x + c_2 \sin x$ is a general solution. The solution $y = 3.0 \cos x - 0.5 \sin x$ of the initial value problem is a particular solution.

EXAMPLE 6 Basis, General Solution, Particular Solution

Verify by substitution that $y_1 = e^x$ and $y_2 = e^{-x}$ are solutions of the ODE $y'' - y = 0$. Then solve the initial value problem

$$y'' - y = 0, \qquad y(0) = 6, \qquad y'(0) = -2.$$

Solution. $(e^x)'' - e^x = 0$ and $(e^{-x})'' - e^{-x} = 0$ show that e^x and e^{-x} are solutions. They are not proportional, $e^x/e^{-x} = e^{2x} \neq \text{const}$. Hence e^x, e^{-x} form a basis for all x. We now write down the corresponding general solution and its derivative and equate their values at 0 to the given initial conditions,

$$y = c_1 e^x + c_2 e^{-x}, \qquad y' = c_1 e^x - c_2 e^{-x}, \qquad y(0) = c_1 + c_2 = 6, \qquad y'(0) = c_1 - c_2 = -2.$$

By addition and subtraction, $c_1 = 2$, $c_2 = 4$, so that the *answer* is $y = 2e^x + 4e^{-x}$. This is the particular solution satisfying the two initial conditions.

Find a Basis if One Solution Is Known. Reduction of Order

It happens quite often that one solution can be found by inspection or in some other way. Then a second linearly independent solution can be obtained by solving a first-order ODE. This is called the method of **reduction of order**.[1] We first show how this method works in an example and then in general.

EXAMPLE 7 Reduction of Order if a Solution Is Known. Basis

Find a basis of solutions of the ODE

$$(x^2 - x)y'' - xy' + y = 0.$$

Solution. Inspection shows that $y_1 = x$ is a solution because $y_1' = 1$ and $y_1'' = 0$, so that the first term vanishes identically and the second and third terms cancel. The idea of the method is to substitute

$$y = uy_1 = ux, \qquad y' = u'x + u, \qquad y'' = u''x + 2u'$$

into the ODE. This gives

$$(x^2 - x)(u''x + 2u') - x(u'x + u) + ux = 0.$$

ux and $-xu$ cancel and we are left with the following ODE, which we divide by x, order, and simplify,

$$(x^2 - x)(u''x + 2u') - x^2u' = 0, \qquad (x^2 - x)u'' + (x - 2)u' = 0.$$

This ODE is of first order in $v = u'$, namely, $(x^2 - x)v' + (x - 2)v = 0$. Separation of variables and integration gives

$$\frac{dv}{v} = -\frac{x-2}{x^2 - x}\,dx = \left(\frac{1}{x-1} - \frac{2}{x}\right)dx, \qquad \ln|v| = \ln|x-1| - 2\ln|x| = \ln\frac{|x-1|}{x^2}.$$

We need no constant of integration because we want to obtain a particular solution; similarly in the next integration. Taking exponents and integrating again, we obtain

$$v = \frac{x-1}{x^2} = \frac{1}{x} - \frac{1}{x^2}, \qquad u = \int v\,dx = \ln|x| + \frac{1}{x}, \qquad \text{hence} \qquad y_2 = ux = x\ln|x| + 1.$$

Since $y_1 = x$ and $y_2 = x\ln|x| + 1$ are linearly independent (their quotient is not constant), we have obtained a basis of solutions, valid for all positive x. ■

In this example we applied **reduction of order** to a homogeneous linear ODE [see (2)]

$$y'' + p(x)y' + q(x)y = 0.$$

Note that we now take the ODE in standard form, with y'', not $f(x)y''$—this is essential in applying our subsequent formulas. We assume a solution y_1 of (2), on an open interval I, to be known and want to find a basis. For this we need a second linearly independent solution y_2 of (2) on I. To get y_2, we substitute

$$\boxed{y = y_2 = uy_1,} \qquad y' = y_2' = u'y_1 + uy_1', \qquad y'' = y_2'' = u''y_1 + 2u'y_1' + uy_1''$$

into (2). This gives

$$u''y_1 + 2u'y_1' + uy_1'' + p(u'y_1 + uy_1') + quy_1 = 0. \tag{8}$$

Collecting terms in u'', u', and u, we have

$$u''y_1 + u'(2y_1' + py_1) + u(y_1'' + py_1' + qy_1) = 0.$$

Now comes the main point. Since y_1 is a solution of (2), the expression in the last parentheses is zero. Hence u is gone, and we are left with an ODE in u' and u''. We divide this remaining ODE by y_1 and set $u' = U$, $u'' = U'$,

$$u'' + u'\frac{2y_1' + py_1}{y_1} = 0, \qquad \text{thus} \qquad U' + \left(\frac{2y_1'}{y_1} + p\right)U = 0.$$

This is the desired first-order ODE, the reduced ODE. Separation of variables and integration gives

$$\frac{dU}{U} = -\left(\frac{2y_1'}{y_1} + p\right) dx \qquad \text{and} \qquad \ln |U| = -2 \ln |y_1| - \int p\, dx.$$

By taking exponents we finally obtain

(9)
$$U = \frac{1}{y_1^2}\, e^{-\int p\, dx}.$$

Here $U = u'$, so that $u = \int U\, dx$. Hence the desired second solution is

$$y_2 = y_1 u = y_1 \int U\, dx.$$

The quotient $y_2/y_1 = u = \int U\, dx$ cannot be constant (since $U > 0$), so that y_1 and y_2 form a basis of solutions.

2.2. Homogeneous Linear ODEs with Constant Coefficients

We shall now consider second-order homogeneous linear ODEs whose coefficients a and b are constant,

(1) $$y'' + ay' + by = 0.$$

These equations have important applications in mechanical and electrical vibrations, as we shall see in Secs. 2.4, 2.8, and 2.9.

To solve (1), we recall from Sec. 1.5 that the solution of the first-order linear ODE with a constant coefficient k

$$y' + ky = 0$$

is an exponential function $y = ce^{-kx}$. This gives us the idea to try as a solution of (1) the function

(2) $$y = e^{\lambda x}.$$

$$y' = \lambda e^{\lambda x}$$

$$y'' = \lambda^2 e^{\lambda x}$$

Substituting (2) and its derivatives into our equation (1), we obtain

$$(\lambda^2 + a\lambda + b)e^{\lambda x} = 0.$$

Hence if λ is a solution of the important **characteristic equation** (or *auxiliary equation*)

$$\lambda^2 + a\lambda + b = 0 \tag{3}$$

then the exponential function (2) is a solution of the ODE (1). Now from algebra we recall that the roots of this quadratic equation (3) are

$$\lambda_1 = \tfrac{1}{2}\left(-a + \sqrt{a^2 - 4b}\right), \qquad \lambda_2 = \tfrac{1}{2}\left(-a - \sqrt{a^2 - 4b}\right). \tag{4}$$

(3) and (4) will be basic because our derivation shows that the functions

$$y_1 = e^{\lambda_1 x} \quad \text{and} \quad y_2 = e^{\lambda_2 x} \tag{5}$$

are solutions of (1). Verify this by substituting (5) into (1).

From algebra we further know that the quadratic equation (3) may have three kinds of roots, depending on the sign of the discriminant $a^2 - 4b$, namely,

(Case I) *Two real roots if* $a^2 - 4b > 0$,

(Case II) *A real double root if* $a^2 - 4b = 0$,

(Case III) *Complex conjugate roots if* $a^2 - 4b < 0$.

Case I. Two Distinct Real-Roots

In this case, a basis of solutions of (1) on any interval is

$$y_1 = e^{\lambda_1 x} \qquad \text{and} \qquad y_2 = e^{\lambda_2 x}$$

because y_1 and y_2 are defined (and real) for all x and their quotient is not constant. The corresponding general solution is

$$y = c_1 e^{\lambda_1 x} + c_2 e^{\lambda_2 x}. \tag{6}$$

EXAMPLE 1 General Solution in the Case of Distinct Real Roots

We can now solve $y'' - y = 0$ in Example 6 of Sec. 2.1 systematically. The characteristic equation is $\lambda^2 - 1 = 0$. Its roots are $\lambda_1 = 1$ and $\lambda_2 = -1$. Hence a basis of solutions is e^x and e^{-x} and gives the same general solution as before,

$$y = c_1 e^x + c_2 e^{-x}.$$

EXAMPLE 2 Initial Value Problem in the Case of Distinct Real Roots

Solve the initial value problem

$$y'' + y' - 2y = 0, \qquad y(0) = 4, \qquad y'(0) = -5.$$

Solution. ***Step 1. General solution.*** The characteristic equation is

$$\lambda^2 + \lambda - 2 = 0. \quad \Rightarrow \quad \lambda_1 = \tfrac{1}{2}(-1 + \sqrt{9}) = 1, \quad \lambda_2 = \tfrac{1}{2}(-1 - \sqrt{9}) = -2 \quad \Rightarrow \quad y = c_1 e^{x} + c_2 e^{-2x}.$$

Step 2. Particular solution. Since $y'(x) = c_1 e^{x} - 2c_2 e^{-2x}$, we obtain from the general solution and the initial conditions

$$y(0) = c_1 + c_2 = 4, \qquad y'(0) = c_1 - 2c_2 = -5. \quad \Rightarrow \quad c_1 = 1, \quad c_2 = 3. \quad \Rightarrow \quad y = e^{x} + 3e^{-2x}$$

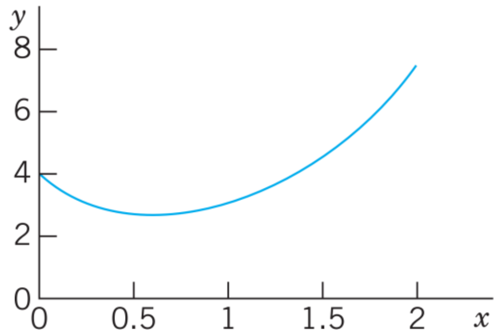

Fig. 30. Solution in Example 2

Case II. Real Double Root

If the discriminant $a^2 - 4b$ is zero, we see directly from (4) that we get only one root, $\lambda = \lambda_1 = \lambda_2 = -a/2$, hence only one solution,

$$y_1 = e^{-(a/2)x}.$$

To obtain a second independent solution y_2 (needed for a basis), we use the method of reduction of order discussed in the last section, setting $y_2 = uy_1$. Substituting this and its derivatives $y_2' = u'y_1 + uy_1'$ and y_2'' into (1), we first have

$$(u''y_1 + 2u'y_1' + uy_1'') + a(u'y_1 + uy_1') + buy_1 = 0.$$

Collecting terms in u'', u', and u, as in the last section, we obtain

$$u''y_1 + u'(2y_1' + ay_1) + u(y_1'' + ay_1' + by_1) = 0.$$

The expression in the last parentheses is zero, since y_1 is a solution of (1). The expression in the first parentheses is zero, too, since

$$2y_1' = -ae^{-ax/2} = -ay_1.$$

We are thus left with $u''y_1 = 0$. Hence $u'' = 0$. By two integrations, $u = c_1x + c_2$. To get a second independent solution $y_2 = uy_1$, we can simply choose $c_1 = 1, c_2 = 0$ and take $u = x$. Then $y_2 = xy_1$. Since these solutions are not proportional, they form a basis. Hence in the case of a double root of (3) a basis of solutions of (1) on any interval is

$$e^{-ax/2}, \qquad xe^{-ax/2}.$$

The corresponding general solution is

$$y = (c_1 + c_2x)e^{-ax/2}. \tag{7}$$

EXAMPLE 3 General Solution in the Case of a Double Root

The characteristic equation of the ODE $y'' + 6y' + 9y = 0$ is $\lambda^2 + 6\lambda + 9 = (\lambda + 3)^2 = 0$. It has the double root $\lambda = -3$. Hence a basis is e^{-3x} and xe^{-3x}. The corresponding general solution is $y = (c_1 + c_2x)e^{-3x}$. ■

EXAMPLE 4 Initial Value Problem in the Case of a Double Root

Solve the initial value problem

$$y'' + y' + 0.25y = 0, \qquad y(0) = 3.0, \quad y'(0) = -3.5.$$

Solution. The characteristic equation is $\lambda^2 + \lambda + 0.25 = (\lambda + 0.5)^2 = 0$. It has the double root $\lambda = -0.5$. This gives the general solution

$$y = (c_1 + c_2 x)e^{-0.5x}.$$

We need its derivative

$$y' = c_2 e^{-0.5x} - 0.5(c_1 + c_2 x)e^{-0.5x}.$$

From this and the initial conditions we obtain

$$y(0) = c_1 = 3.0, \qquad y'(0) = c_2 - 0.5c_1 = 3.5; \qquad \text{hence} \qquad c_2 = -2.$$

The particular solution of the initial value problem is $y = (3 - 2x)e^{-0.5x}$. See Fig. 31. ■

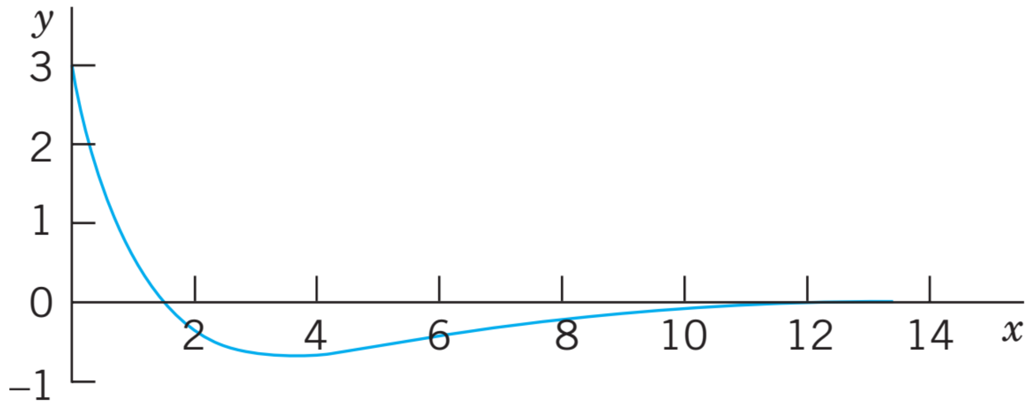

Fig. 31. Solution in Example 4

Case III. Complex Roots

This case occurs if the discriminant $a^2 - 4b$ of the characteristic equation (3) is negative. In this case, the roots of (3) are the complex $\lambda = -\frac{1}{2}a \pm i\omega$ that give the complex solutions of the ODE (1). However, we will show that we can obtain a basis of *real* solutions

$$y_1 = e^{-ax/2} \cos \omega x, \qquad y_2 = e^{-ax/2} \sin \omega x \qquad (\omega > 0) \tag{8}$$

where $\omega^2 = b - \frac{1}{4}a^2$.

(9) ⇒

$$y = e^{-ax/2}(A \cos \omega x + B \sin \omega x) \qquad (A,\ B \text{ arbitrary}).$$

EXAMPLE 6 Complex Roots

A general solution of the ODE

$$y'' + \omega^2 y = 0 \qquad (\omega \text{ constant, not zero})$$

is

$$y = A \cos \omega x + B \sin \omega x.$$

With $\omega = 1$ this confirms Example 4 in Sec. 2.1. ■

EXAMPLE 5 Complex Roots. Initial Value Problem

Solve the initial value problem

$$y'' + 0.4y' + 9.04y = 0, \qquad y(0) = 0, \qquad y'(0) = 3.$$

Solution. ***Step 1. General solution.*** The characteristic equation is $\lambda^2 + 0.4\lambda + 9.04 = 0$. It has the roots $-0.2 \pm 3i$. Hence $\omega = 3$, and a general solution (9) is

$$y = e^{-0.2x}(A \cos 3x + B \sin 3x).$$

Step 2. Particular solution. The first initial condition gives $y(0) = A = 0$. The remaining expression is $y = Be^{-0.2x} \sin 3x$. We need the derivative (chain rule!)

$$y' = B(-0.2e^{-0.2x} \sin 3x + 3e^{-0.2x} \cos 3x).$$

From this and the second initial condition we obtain $y'(0) = 3B = 3$. Hence $B = 1$. Our solution is

$$y = e^{-0.2x} \sin 3x.$$

Figure 32 shows y and the curves of $e^{-0.2x}$ and $-e^{-0.2x}$ (dashed), between which the curve of y oscillates. Such "damped vibrations" (with $x = t$ being time) have important mechanical and electrical applications, as we shall soon see (in Sec. 2.4). ■

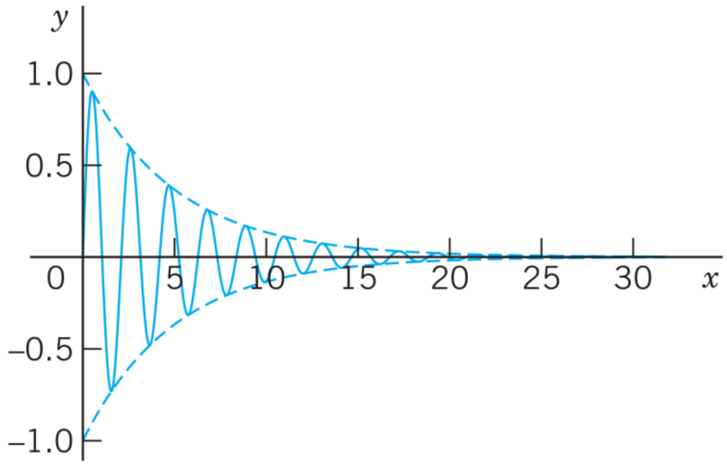

Fig. 32. Solution in Example 5

Euler formula

$$e^{it} = \cos t + i \sin t,$$

Summary of Cases I–III

Case	Roots of (2)	Basis of (1)	General Solution of (1)
I	Distinct real λ_1, λ_2	$e^{\lambda_1 x}, e^{\lambda_2 x}$	$y = c_1 e^{\lambda_1 x} + c_2 e^{\lambda_2 x}$
II	Real double root $\lambda = -\frac{1}{2}a$	$e^{-ax/2}, xe^{-ax/2}$	$y = (c_1 + c_2 x)e^{-ax/2}$
III	Complex conjugate $\lambda_1 = -\frac{1}{2}a + i\omega$, $\lambda_2 = -\frac{1}{2}a - i\omega$	$e^{-ax/2} \cos \omega x$ $e^{-ax/2} \sin \omega x$	$y = e^{-ax/2}(A \cos \omega x + B \sin \omega x)$

2.4. Modeling of Free Oscillations of a Mass–Spring System

We take an ordinary coil spring that resists extension as well as compression. We suspend it vertically from a fixed support and attach a body at its lower end, for instance, an iron ball, as shown in Fig. 33. We let $y = 0$ denote the position of the ball when the system is at rest (Fig. 33b). Furthermore, we choose ***the downward direction as positive***, thus regarding downward forces as *positive* and upward forces as *negative*.

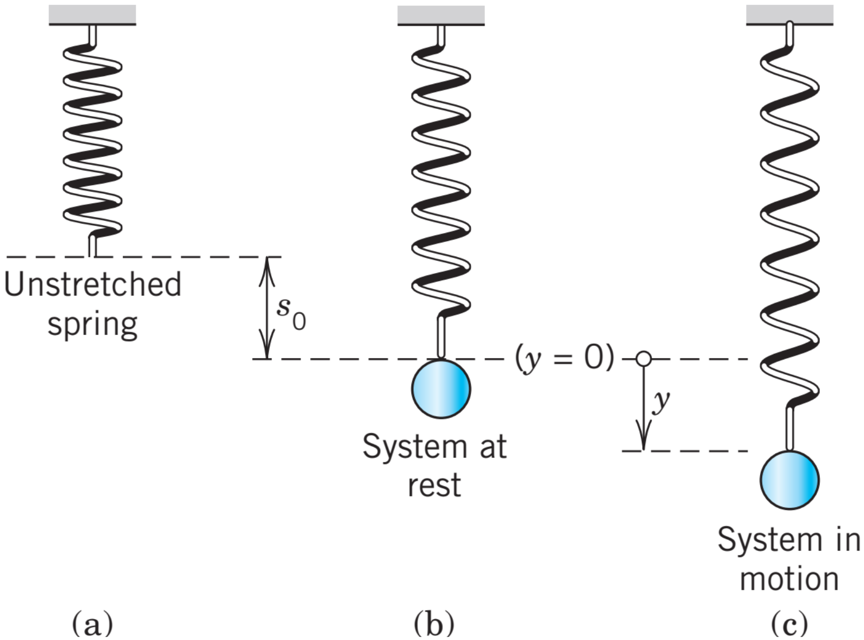

Fig. 33. Mechanical mass–spring system

This causes a spring force

(1) $$F_1 = -ky$$ **(Hooke's law[2])**

proportional to the stretch y, with $k\ (>0)$ called the **spring constant**.

The motion of our mass–spring system is determined by **Newton's second law**

(2) $$\text{Mass} \times \text{Acceleration} = my'' = \text{Force}$$

where $y'' = d^2y/dt^2$ and "Force" is the resultant of all the forces acting on the ball.

(3) $$my'' + ky = 0.$$

This is a homogeneous linear ODE with constant coefficients. A general solution is obtained as in Sec. 2.2, namely (see Example 6 in Sec. 2.2)

(4) $$y(t) = A \cos \omega_0 t + B \sin \omega_0 t \qquad \omega_0 = \sqrt{\frac{k}{m}}.$$

This motion is called a **harmonic oscillation** (Fig. 34). Its *frequency* is $f = \omega_0/2\pi$ Hertz[3] ($=$ cycles/sec) because cos and sin in (4) have the period $2\pi/\omega_0$. The frequency f is called the **natural frequency** of the system. (We write ω_0 to reserve ω for Sec. 2.8.)

(4*) $$y(t) = C \cos(\omega_0 t - \delta) \qquad C = \sqrt{A^2 + B^2}, \quad \tan \delta = B/A.$$

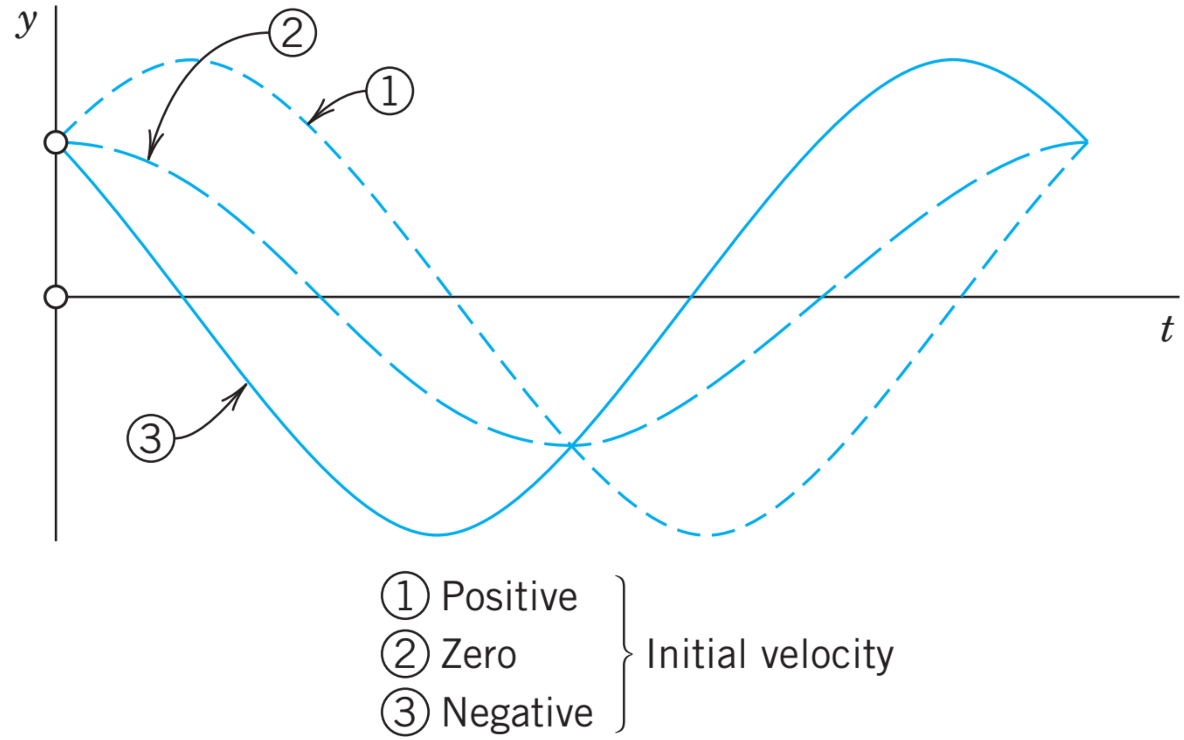

Fig. 34. Typical harmonic oscillations (4) and (4*) with the same $y(0) = A$ and different initial velocities $y'(0) = \omega_0 B$, positive ①, zero ②, negative ③

ODE of the Damped System

To our model $my'' = -ky$ we now add a damping force

$$F_2 = -cy',$$

obtaining $my'' = -ky - cy'$; thus the ODE of the damped mass–spring system is

(5) $$my'' + cy' + ky = 0.$$

The ODE (5) is homogeneous linear and has constant coefficients.

The characteristic equation is (divide (5) by m)

$$\lambda^2 + \frac{c}{m}\lambda + \frac{k}{m} = 0.$$

(6) $\lambda_1 = -\alpha + \beta, \quad \lambda_2 = -\alpha - \beta,$

where $\alpha = \dfrac{c}{2m}$ and $\beta = \dfrac{1}{2m}\sqrt{c^2 - 4mk}.$

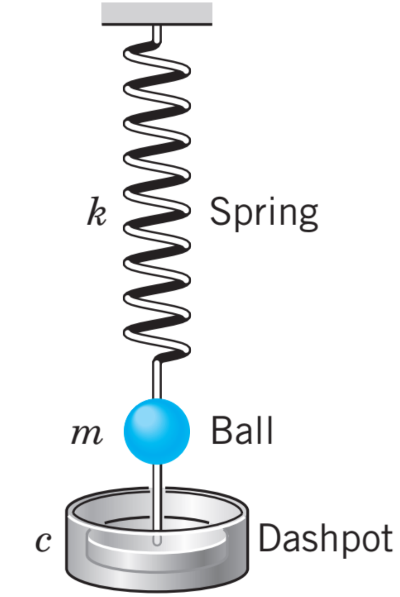

Fig. 36.
Damped system

It is now interesting that depending on the amount of damping present—whether a lot of damping, a medium amount of damping or little damping—three types of motions occur, respectively:

Case I.	$c^2 > 4mk$.	*Distinct real roots* λ_1, λ_2.	**(Overdamping)**
Case II.	$c^2 = 4mk$.	*A real double root.*	**(Critical damping)**
Case III.	$c^2 < 4mk$.	*Complex conjugate roots.*	**(Underdamping)**

Case I. Overdamping

If the damping constant c is so large that $c^2 > 4mk$, then λ_1 and λ_2 are distinct real roots. In this case the corresponding general solution of (5) is

$$y(t) = c_1 e^{-(\alpha-\beta)t} + c_2 e^{-(\alpha+\beta)t}. \quad \textbf{(7)}$$

We see that in this case, damping takes out energy so quickly that the body does not oscillate. For $t > 0$ both exponents in (7) are negative because $\alpha > 0, \beta > 0$, and $\beta^2 = \alpha^2 - k/m < \alpha^2$. Hence both terms in (7) approach zero as $t \to \infty$. Practically

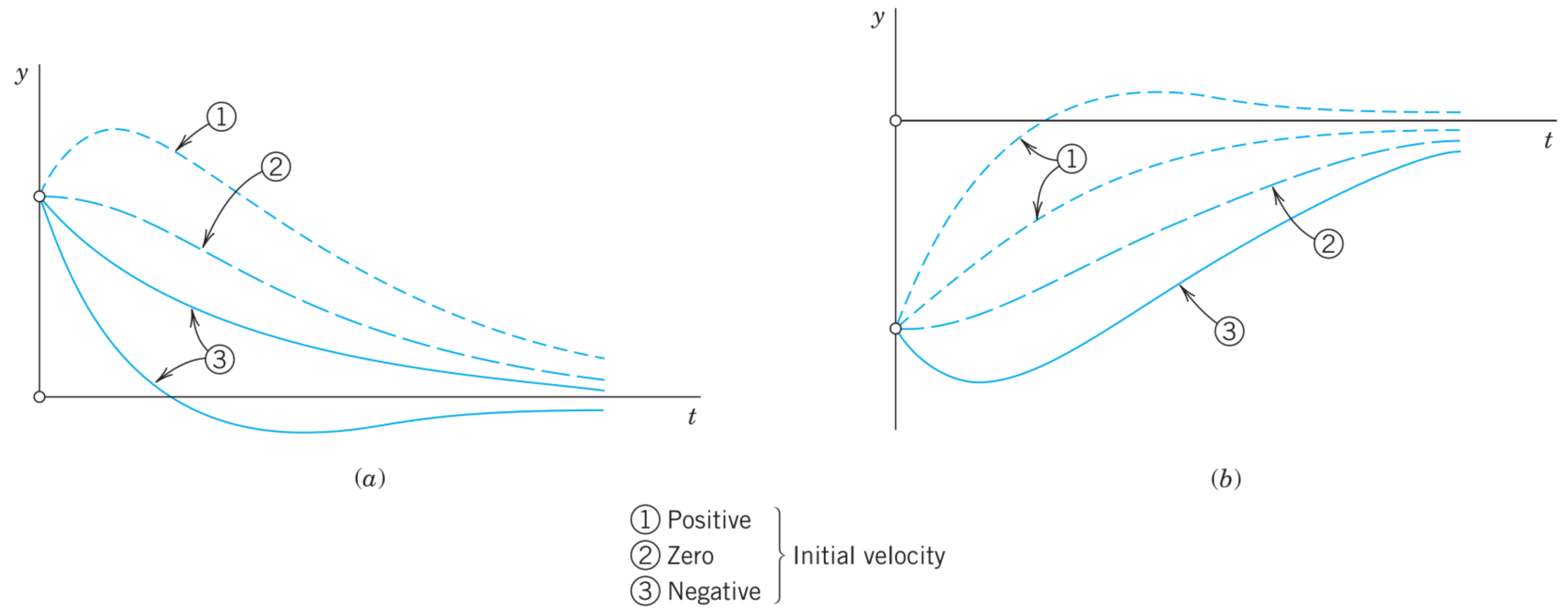

Fig. 37. Typical motions (7) in the overdamped case
(*a*) Positive initial displacement
(*b*) Negative initial displacement

Case II. Critical Damping

Critical damping is the border case between nonoscillatory motions (Case I) and oscillations (Case III). It occurs if the characteristic equation has a double root, that is, if $c^2 = 4mk$, so that $\beta = 0$, $\lambda_1 = \lambda_2 = -\alpha$. Then the corresponding general solution of (5) is

$$y(t) = (c_1 + c_2 t)e^{-\alpha t}. \tag{8}$$

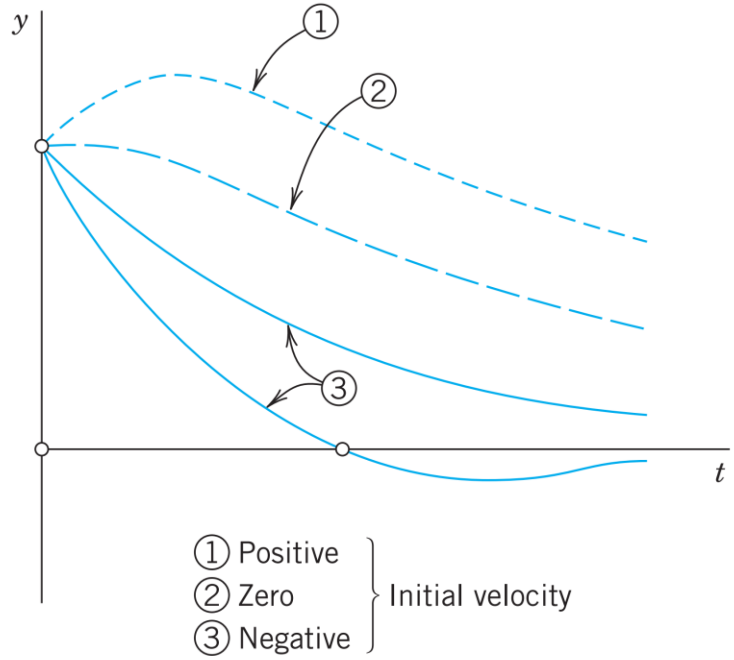

Fig. 38. Critical damping [see (8)]

Case III. Underdamping

This is the most interesting case. It occurs if the damping constant c is so small that $c^2 < 4mk$. Then β in (6) is no longer real but pure imaginary, say,

$$(9) \qquad \boxed{\beta = i\omega^*} \qquad \text{where} \qquad \omega^* = \frac{1}{2m}\sqrt{4mk - c^2} = \sqrt{\frac{k}{m} - \frac{c^2}{4m^2}} \qquad (>0).$$

The roots of the characteristic equation are now complex conjugates,

$$\lambda_1 = -\alpha + i\omega^*, \qquad \lambda_2 = -\alpha - i\omega^*$$

with $\alpha = c/(2m)$, as given in (6). Hence the corresponding general solution is

(10) $$y(t) = e^{-\alpha t}(A \cos \omega^* t + B \sin \omega^* t) = Ce^{-\alpha t} \cos (\omega^* t - \delta)$$

where $C^2 = A^2 + B^2$ and $\tan \delta = B/A$, as in (4*).

This represents **damped oscillations**. Their curve lies between the dashed curves $y = Ce^{-\alpha t}$ and $y = -Ce^{-\alpha t}$ in Fig. 39, touching them when $\omega^* t - \delta$ is an integer multiple of π because these are the points at which $\cos (\omega^* t - \delta)$ equals 1 or -1.

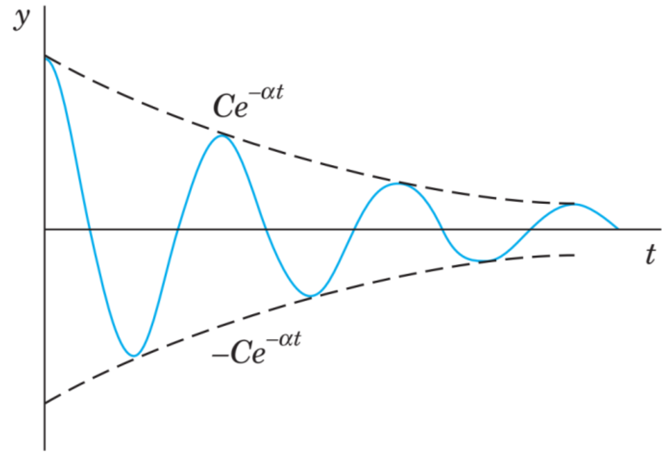

Fig. 39. Damped oscillation in Case III [see (10)]

EXAMPLE 2 The Three Cases of Damped Motion

How does the motion in Example 1 change if we change the damping constant c from one to another of the following three values, with $y(0) = 0.16$ and $y'(0) = 0$ as before?

$$\text{(I) } c = 100 \text{ kg/sec}, \qquad \text{(II) } c = 60 \text{ kg/sec}, \qquad \text{(III) } c = 10 \text{ kg/sec}.$$

Solution. It is interesting to see how the behavior of the system changes due to the effect of the damping, which takes energy from the system, so that the oscillations decrease in amplitude (Case III) or even disappear (Cases II and I).

(I) With $m = 10$ and $k = 90$, as in Example 1, the model is the initial value problem

$$10y'' + 100y' + 90y = 0, \qquad y(0) = 0.16 \text{ [meter]}, \qquad y'(0) = 0.$$

The characteristic equation is $10\lambda^2 + 100\lambda + 90 = 10(\lambda + 9)(\lambda + 1) = 0$. It has the roots -9 and -1. This gives the general solution

$$y = c_1 e^{-9t} + c_2 e^{-t}. \qquad \text{We also need} \qquad y' = -9c_1 e^{-9t} - c_2 e^{-t}.$$

The initial conditions give $c_1 + c_2 = 0.16$, $-9c_1 - c_2 = 0$. The solution is $c_1 = -0.02$, $c_2 = 0.18$. Hence in the overdamped case the solution is

$$y = -0.02e^{-9t} + 0.18e^{-t}.$$

It approaches 0 as $t \to \infty$. The approach is rapid; after a few seconds the solution is practically 0, that is, the iron ball is at rest.

(II) The model is as before, with $c = 60$ instead of 100. The characteristic equation now has the form $10\lambda^2 + 60\lambda + 90 = 10(\lambda + 3)^2 = 0$. It has the double root -3. Hence the corresponding general solution is

$$y = (c_1 + c_2 t)e^{-3t}. \qquad \text{We also need} \qquad y' = (c_2 - 3c_1 - 3c_2 t)e^{-3t}.$$

The initial conditions give $y(0) = c_1 = 0.16$, $y'(0) = c_2 - 3c_1 = 0$, $c_2 = 0.48$. Hence in the critical case the solution is

$$y = (0.16 + 0.48t)e^{-3t}.$$

It is always positive and decreases to 0 in a monotone fashion.

(III) The model now is $10y'' + 10y' + 90y = 0$. Since $c = 10$ is smaller than the critical c, we shall get oscillations. The characteristic equation is $10\lambda^2 + 10\lambda + 90 = 10[(\lambda + \frac{1}{2})^2 + 9 - \frac{1}{4}] = 0$. It has the complex roots [see (4) in Sec. 2.2 with $a = 1$ and $b = 9$]

$$\lambda = -0.5 \pm \sqrt{0.5^2 - 9} = -0.5 \pm 2.96i.$$

This gives the general solution

$$y = e^{-0.5t}(A \cos 2.96t + B \sin 2.96t).$$

Thus $y(0) = A = 0.16$. We also need the derivative

$$y' = e^{-0.5t}(-0.5A \cos 2.96t - 0.5B \sin 2.96t - 2.96A \sin 2.96t + 2.96B \cos 2.96t).$$

Hence $y'(0) = -0.5A + 2.96B = 0$, $\quad B = 0.5A/2.96 = 0.027$. This gives the solution

$$y = e^{-0.5t}(0.16 \cos 2.96t + 0.027 \sin 2.96t) = 0.162e^{-0.5t} \cos (2.96t - 0.17).$$

We see that these damped oscillations have a smaller frequency than the harmonic oscillations in Example 1 by about 1% (since 2.96 is smaller than 3.00 by about 1%). Their amplitude goes to zero. See Fig. 40. ■

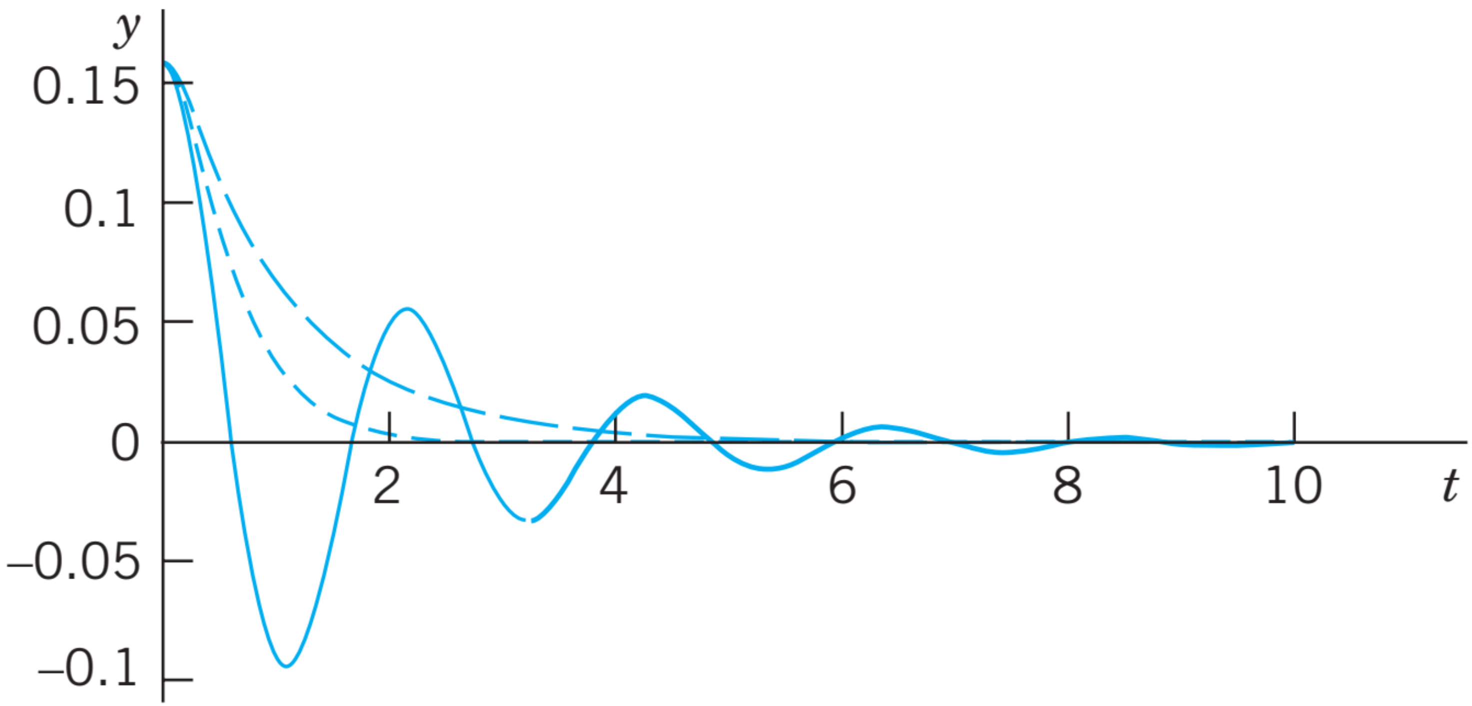

Fig. 40. The three solutions in Example 2