

# A

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## The Maximum Principle

In this appendix, we formulate various maximum principles for second-order, elliptic differential operators such as the weak maximum principle (Theorem A.1) and the Hopf boundary point lemma (Lemma A.3) which play an important role in Chapter 9.

Let  $D$  be a bounded domain of Euclidean space  $\mathbf{R}^N$ , with boundary  $\partial D$ , and let  $A$  be a second-order, elliptic differential operator with real coefficients such that

$$A = \sum_{i,j=1}^N a^{ij}(x) \frac{\partial^2}{\partial x_i \partial x_j} + \sum_{i=1}^N b^i(x) \frac{\partial}{\partial x_i} + c(x).$$

Here:

- (1)  $a^{ij} \in C(\overline{D})$  and  $a^{ij}(x) = a^{ji}(x)$  for all  $x \in \overline{D}$ ,  $1 \leq i, j \leq N$ , and there exists a positive constant  $a_0$  such that

$$\sum_{i,j=1}^N a^{ij}(x) \xi_i \xi_j \geq a_0 |\xi|^2 \quad \text{for all } (x, \xi) \in \overline{D} \times \mathbf{R}^N.$$

- (2)  $b^i \in C(\overline{D})$  for all  $1 \leq i \leq N$ .  
(3)  $c \in C(\overline{D})$  and  $c(x) \leq 0$  in  $D$ .

First, we have the following weak maximum principle:

**Theorem A.1 (the weak maximum principle).** *Assume that a function  $u \in C(\overline{D}) \cap C^2(D)$  satisfies either the condition*

$$Au(x) \geq 0 \quad \text{and} \quad c(x) < 0 \quad \text{in } D$$

*or the condition*

$$Au(x) > 0 \quad \text{and} \quad c(x) \leq 0 \quad \text{in } D.$$

*Then the function  $u(x)$  may take its positive maximum only on the boundary  $\partial D$ .*

As an application of the weak maximum principle, we can obtain a point-wise estimate for solutions of the inhomogeneous equation  $Au = f$  in  $D$ :

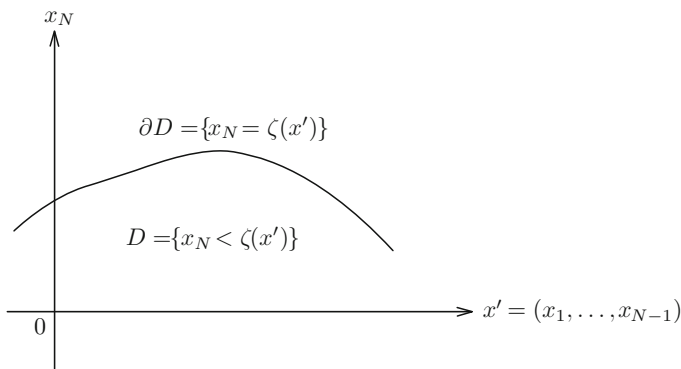
**Theorem A.2.** *Assume that*

$$c(x) < 0 \quad \text{on } \overline{D} = D \cup \partial D.$$

*Then we have, for all  $u \in C(\overline{D}) \cap C^2(D)$ ,*

$$\max_{x \in \overline{D}} |u(x)| \leq \max \left\{ \left( \frac{1}{\min_{x \in \overline{D}} (-c(x))} \right) \sup_{x \in D} |Au(x)|, \max_{x' \in \partial D} |u(x')| \right\}.$$

Now we assume that  $D$  is a *domain of class  $C^2$* , that is, each point of the boundary  $\partial D$  has a neighborhood in which  $\partial D$  is the graph of a  $C^2$  function of  $N - 1$  of the variables  $x_1, x_2, \dots, x_N$  (see Figure A.1).



**Fig. A.1.**

We consider a function  $u \in C(\overline{D}) \cap C^2(D)$  which satisfies the condition

$$Au(x) \geq 0 \quad \text{in } D,$$

and study the interior normal derivative  $(\partial u)/(\partial \mathbf{n})$  at a boundary point where the function  $u(x)$  takes its non-negative maximum (see Figure A.2).

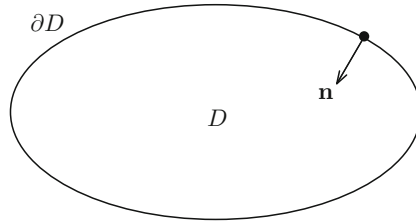
The Hopf boundary point lemma reads as follows:

**Lemma A.3 (the Hopf boundary point lemma).** *Let  $D$  be a domain of class  $C^2$ . Assume that a function  $u \in C(\overline{D}) \cap C^2(D)$  satisfies the condition*

$$Au(x) \geq 0 \quad \text{in } D,$$

*and that there exists a point  $x'_0 \in \partial D$  such that*

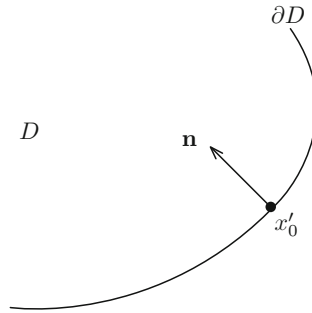
$$\begin{aligned} u(x'_0) &= \max_{x \in \overline{D}} u(x) \geq 0, \\ u(x) &< u(x'_0) \quad \text{for all } x \in D. \end{aligned}$$



**Fig. A.2.**

Then the interior normal derivative  $\frac{\partial u}{\partial \mathbf{n}}(x'_0)$  at  $x'_0$ , if it exists, satisfies the condition (see Figure A.3)

$$\frac{\partial u}{\partial \mathbf{n}}(x'_0) < 0.$$



**Fig. A.3.**

For a proof of Theorems A.1, A.2 and Lemma A.3 and a general study of maximum principles, the reader might refer to [PW, Chapter 2] and [Ta2, Chapter 7] (see also [Ta5, Appendix C]).

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# Index

- a priori* estimate, 3, 4, 11, 84, 87, 88, 90, 95
- absorbing barrier Brownian motion, 47
- absorption phenomenon, 7, 126, 172
- adjoint, 71, 74, 106, 109
- adjoint operator, 107–110
- Agmon's method, 95, 96, 101
- algebra of pseudo-differential operators, 71
- amplitude, 66, 67, 69, 70
- analytic semigroup, 4–6, 13, 17, 111, 159
- associated semigroup, 43
- asymptotic expansion, 64
  
- Besov space, 4, 61, 79, 85
- Besov space boundedness theorem, 11, 73, 74
- Bessel function, 58
- Bessel potential, 58, 59, 61, 68
- bijective, 104, 107, 141, 151
- Borel measurable, 30, 31
- Borel set, 28, 29, 31
- boundary condition, 2, 80, 138
- boundary point lemma, 136, 142, 176
- boundary value problem, 2, 80
- boundary value problem with spectral parameter, 87
- bounded continuous function, 37
- bounded operator, 127, 128, 134
- Brownian motion, 28, 33, 46
- Brownian motion with absorbing barrier, 47
- Brownian motion with constant drift, 33, 46
- Brownian motion with reflecting barrier, 34, 46
- Brownian motion with sticking barrier, 34, 46
- Brownian motion with sticky barrier, 47
  
- $C_0$ -function, 38
- $C_0$ -property, 38
- Calderón–Zygmund operator, 68
- Cauchy density, 34
- Cauchy problem, 9, 162
- Cauchy process, 34, 46
- Cauchy's theorem, 15, 19, 21, 22, 24
- Chapman–Kolmogorov equation, 31
- classical elliptic pseudo-differential operator, 78
- classical pseudo-differential operator, 71, 74, 79, 82, 89, 98, 102, 103, 108
- classical symbol, 64
- closable, 48
- closed extension, 132, 135
- closed graph theorem, 104
- closed operator, 83, 96, 102, 103, 108
- closed range theorem, 107, 110
- codimension, 102, 103
- coercive, 2
- commutator, 120
- compact, 45, 53
- compact operator, 62, 104–107
- compactification, 113
- complete symbol, 70–72
- completely continuous operator, 62



- complex parameter, 2, 88, 97
- composition of pseudo-differential operators, 71, 74
- continuous path, 35, 36
- contractive, 6, 43
- cotangent bundle, 73, 77, 88
- cotangent space, 171
- cotangent vector, 75
  
- degenerate, 4
- degenerate elliptic differential operator, 171
- degenerate problem, 3
- densely defined, 13, 83, 102, 103, 108
- density, 55, 78, 171
- diagonal, 69, 73, 170, 171
- diffusion along the boundary, 172
- diffusion coefficient, 126
- diffusion operator, 170
- diffusion process, 33, 39
- Dini's theorem, 146, 147
- Dirac measure, 58, 59
- Dirichlet condition, 2, 150
- Dirichlet problem, 11, 77, 79, 89, 97, 126
- distribution, 6, 132
- distribution kernel, 68, 170, 171
- domain of class  $C^2$ , 176
- dominated convergence theorem, 22
- double, 55, 77, 87
- drift, 33, 46
- drift coefficient, 126
- dual space, 57, 59, 61
  
- elliptic boundary value problem, 77, 88
- elliptic differential operator, 2, 77, 88, 95, 97, 125, 161
- elliptic integro-differential operator, 169
- elliptic pseudo-differential operator, 72, 75, 79
- elliptic symbol, 64
- existence and uniqueness theorem for the Dirichlet problem, 79, 126
- existence and uniqueness theorem for the Neumann problem, 79
- existence theorem for the Dirichlet problem, 79, 126
- existence theorem for the Neumann problem, 79
  
- Feller function, 38
- Feller property, 38
- Feller semigroup, 7, 27, 39, 43
- Feller semigroup with reflecting barrier, 140
- formulation of a boundary value problem, 80
- Fourier integral distribution, 66
- Fourier integral operator, 62, 67
- Fourier transform, 57, 58
- fractional power, 24, 26, 163
- Fredholm integral equation, 11, 82
- Fredholm operator, 102, 103
- Friedrichs mollifier, 128, 133
- Fubini's theorem, 15
- function rapidly decreasing at infinity, 57
- function space, 55
  
- Gagliardo–Nirenberg inequality, 115, 116
- general existence theorem for Feller semigroups, 125
- generation of analytic semigroups, 13
- generation of Feller semigroups, 44
- global regularity theorem for the Dirichlet problem, 126
- graph norm, 26, 164
- Green operator, 10, 44, 80, 127, 140, 151
  
- harmonic operator, 127, 141
- Hille–Yosida–Ray theorem, 48
- Hille–Yosida theorem, 44
- Hölder continuous, 27
- Hölder space, 126
- Hölder's inequality, 167
- homogeneous principal symbol, 71, 72, 74
- Hopf's boundary point lemma, 176
- hyppoelliptic, 75, 108, 109
  
- imbedding theorem, 163
- index, 102
- infinitesimal generator, 44, 45, 48, 53, 126, 137, 140, 151
- initial-boundary value problem, 161
- injective, 102
- injectivity, 143, 154

- interior normal, 2, 88, 126, 162
- interior regularity theorem for the Dirichlet problem, 126
- invariance of pseudo-differential operators under change of coordinates, 72
- inverse Fourier transform, 57, 58
- inward jump phenomenon from the boundary, 172
- jump phenomenon on the boundary, 172
- kernel, 68
- $L^p$  space, 56
- $\lambda$ -dependent localization, 11, 113, 117
- Laplacian, 90, 98
- Lebesgue's dominated convergence theorem, 22
- Lévy operator, 170
- lifetime, 30
- Lipschitz continuous, 27
- local existence and uniqueness theorem, 9, 161, 165
- localized Besov space, 62
- localized Sobolev space, 62
- locally compact metric space, 35
- locally Hölder continuous, 27
- locally Lipschitz continuous, 9, 27, 162, 165
- Lopatinskii–Shapiro condition, 4
- manifold, 55, 73, 77, 87, 108
- manifold with boundary, 55, 77, 87, 125, 161
- Markov process, 7, 27, 28, 30
- Markov property, 29, 32
- Markov time, 36
- Markov transition function, 7, 31, 39
- maximum norm, 5
- maximum principle, 48, 175
- measurable, 29–31
- metric space, 28, 29, 31, 45, 48, 53
- minimal closed extension, 48, 132, 135
- mollifier, 128, 133
- Neumann condition, 2, 150, 151
- Neumann problem, 10, 11, 79, 80
- Neumann series, 52, 54
- Newtonian potential, 58, 59, 68, 78
- non-degenerate, 2
- non-negative, 6, 43, 127, 128, 134
- norm, 3, 4, 56, 59–61
- normal coordinate, 55
- normal derivative, 176
- normal transition function, 32, 33, 35
- null space, 79, 89, 97, 102–104, 109
- one-point compactification, 113
- oscillatory integral, 65, 66
- parameter, 2, 88, 127
- parametrix, 11, 72, 75, 87, 91
- path, 29
- path continuity, 35
- path function, 35
- Peetre's lemma, 104
- phase function, 64, 66, 67, 69
- point at infinity, 114
- Poisson kernel, 78
- Poisson operator, 11, 79, 89, 97, 141
- Poisson process, 33, 46
- positively homogeneous, 63
- principal part, 64
- principal symbol, 71–74
- progressively measurable, 37
- properly supported, 69, 170, 171
- pseudo-differential operator, 11, 55, 67, 69, 73, 170–172
- pseudo-local property, 69
- quotient topology, 113
- random variable, 29
- reduction to the boundary, 81
- reflecting barrier Brownian motion, 34, 46
- reflection phenomenon, 7, 126, 140, 172
- regularity property, 83
- regularity theorem for the Dirichlet problem, 126
- regularizer, 69, 74
- Rellich–Kondrachov theorem, 62, 106, 107
- residue theorem, 16
- resolvent, 5, 6, 13, 24, 44, 101, 123
- resolvent equation, 128, 129, 135
- resolvent set, 5, 6, 13, 24, 101, 123

- restriction, 66
- Riemannian metric, 90
- Riesz kernel, 58, 59
- Riesz operator, 68
- Riesz potential, 58, 59, 68
- right continuous, 35, 36, 38
- right continuous path, 35, 36, 38
  
- sample space, 29
- Schwartz kernel theorem, 68
- Schwartz space, 57, 59, 61
- semigroup, 15
- semigroup property, 15
- semigroup theory, 13
- semilinear Cauchy problem, 26, 27, 162
- semilinear initial-boundary value problem, 161
- semilinear parabolic differential equation, 161
- semilinear problem, 8, 26
- seminorm, 57, 61–63
- separable, 35, 37
- $\sigma$ -algebra, 28, 30
- $\sigma$ -algebra of Borel sets, 28, 29, 31, 37
- singular integral operator, 172
- singular support, 66
- Sobolev imbedding theorem, 114
- Sobolev space, 3, 59, 61
- solution, 9, 27, 162, 163
- space of bounded continuous functions, 37
- space of bounded linear operators, 15
- space of continuous functions, 27, 28, 131
- space of continuously differentiable functions, 27
- spectral parameter, 95
- state space, 29
- sticking barrier Brownian motion, 34, 46
- sticking (viscosity) phenomenon, 172
- sticky barrier Brownian motion, 47
- stochastic process, 29
- stopping time, 36, 37
  
- strong Markov process, 7, 36, 39
- strong Markov property, 37
- strongly continuous, 39, 40, 43
- strongly continuous semigroup, 39, 43
- supremum norm, 37
- surface potential, 78
- surjective, 102
- surjectivity, 11, 101
- symbol, 63
- symbol class, 62
  
- tempered distribution, 57, 58
- terminal point, 30, 38, 47
- termination coefficient, 126
- topological complement, 104, 105
- trace, 80
- trace map, 62, 80
- trace operator, 89, 97
- trace theorem, 62, 80
- trajectory, 29
- transition function, 7, 30, 36
- transition map, 73
- transmission property, 170, 171
- transpose, 65, 66, 71, 72, 74
- trap, 35
  
- uniform motion, 33, 46
- uniform operator topology, 15, 25
- uniformly stochastically continuous, 39
- uniqueness theorem for the Dirichlet problem, 79, 126
- uniqueness theorem for the Neumann problem, 79
  
- Ventcel' boundary condition, 126, 171
- volume potential, 78
  
- Waldenfels operator, 170
- weak maximum principle, 127, 135, 146, 175
- weak topology of measures, 38
- Wiener measure, 28
  
- Yosida approximation, 45

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