TWO-DIMENSIONAL HELMHOLTZ FLOW ABOUT A FLAT PLATE AND RELATED SHAPES

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by

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SUMMARY

Various configurations of two-dimensional Helmholtz flow about a flat plate are obtained with a free streamline theory using the flow inside a semi-circular disc. The flow can vary continuously from fully-attached Joukowski flow to the commonly-known fully-separated Helmholtz flow. Some general results for an arbitrary aerofoil are also obtained. Variations of the technique give the flow about flat plates with flaps and other related configurations.
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1. **INTRODUCTION**

The incompressible inviscid flow about a flat plate is basic to the theory of aerofoils in aerodynamics. Fully-attached flow around a flat plate is obtained with conformal mapping from flow around a circular cylinder with the application of the Joukowski condition to fix the trailing streamline on the trailing edge of the flat plate. Realizing that it is also possible to obtain free-stream flow at the rear of the plate, Schmieden [1] proposed a method to generate this kind of flow. However Schmieden's method can only generate free-stream flows which are not allowed to reunite again (except at infinity). Therefore it is not possible to examine the evolution of the flow from the fully-attached state to the fully-separated state using the above two theories.

In this Memo an alternative method for generating the flow about a flat plate is presented. The method is more general than the above two in the sense that it yields the two flows as limiting cases of this more general flow. The present method permits a continuous variation from the fully-attached (called here Joukowski) flow through to the separated (called here the Helmholtz-Schmieden) flow to the commonly known Helmholtz flow of figure 4, as given in standard text such as [2]. The method uses a semi-circular \(\sigma\)-plane with a doublet-vortex at an interior point \(D\) chosen such that different conditions of separation and closure of the free stream-lines are obtained.

Although the separated flow (with or without reunion) about an arbitrary aerofoil cannot yet be constructed, the existence of these flows can be proved, hence substantiating a number of conjectures made by Schmieden.

By altering the complex velocity function we can also generate a number of variant flows among which are flows about a flat plate with flaps and flow with a leading edge separation bubble.

The flows described by Hurley and Ruglen [3], which have been considered more recently by Saffman and Tanveer [4], are also included. It is also noted that separated flow with reunion around a circular cylinder has been obtained numerically by Southwell and Vaisey [5], using relaxation method.
2. FLOW ABOUT A FLAT PLATE

The fully attached incompressible, inviscid flow about a flat plate is familiar and is obtained by a conformal transformation of flow about a circular cylinder. Fully-separated flows have been worked out by Schmieden [1]. However, due to Schmieden's choice of the transformed $\tau$-plane, the separated flow situation is completely cut off from the fully-attached flow situation. Here the problem is reformulated such that a continuous variation from one case to the other is possible: In this way the two extreme cases become the limits of a more general flow regime.

Following Schmieden, we define a complex velocity potential $w$ by

$$w = \phi + i\psi \quad (\phi, \psi \text{ real}), \quad (1)$$

and a complex variable $\zeta$ is introduced

$$\zeta = \ln \frac{dz}{dw} = \ln \frac{1}{\psi} + i\theta, \quad (2)$$

where $\psi$ and $\theta$ are the magnitude and angle of the velocity vector in the $z$ plane. The corresponding flows are shown in Figs 1 and 2.

Introducing a $\sigma$ plane (similar to the $\tau$ plane in Schmieden's paper, but with less restriction on its use) such that

$$\frac{dz}{dw} = e^\zeta = C \frac{(\sigma - \sigma_A)}{(\sigma - \sigma_B)} \frac{(\sigma - \sigma_A)}{(\sigma - \sigma_B)} \quad (3)$$

The flow shown in Figure 3 is obtained. The complex scaling constant $C$ determines the size and orientation of the flow in the $z$-plane. In the figure, the upper semi-circular disc of the $\sigma$ plane is the image of the notched strip of the $\zeta$ plane. The upper semi-circle corresponds to the constant direction paths in the $z$ plane and the segment ($-1, +1$) of the real $\sigma$ axis corresponds to the free stream-lines $CD$ and $ED$ of the $z$ plane. The line of $\psi = 0$ in the $z$ plane is the free stream-line(s) and corresponds to the line(s) $\psi = 0$ in the $\sigma$ plane which is DASCWD and DAED.
Point $W$, the inflection point of the free streamline $DABCWD$ is chosen to be at the center of the circle of the $\sigma$ plane. In this way $\sigma_A$ is equal to $(-\bar{\sigma}_B)$.

By putting $D$ on the real segment $CE$ of the $\sigma$ plane the kind of free-stream flow given previously by Schmieden is obtained although the mathematics is less complex.

The flow from $D$ is produced by a doublet plus a quadruplet such that $w(\sigma)$ is real on the boundary of the semi-circular disc and the streamline $D$ to $A$ divides at $A$ and then follows the boundary to return to $D$ as shown in Fig. 3. The complex potential of this flow is given by

$$w(\sigma) = \left\{ \frac{1}{(\sigma-\sigma_D)^2} + \frac{\sigma^2}{(1-\sigma_D)^2} - \frac{4\mu}{(\sigma-\sigma_D)} - \frac{4\mu\sigma}{(1-\sigma_D)} \right\}, \quad (4a)$$

the constant $\mu$ is determined such that $\sigma_A$ is a stagnation point.

The flow in the $z$ plane is obtained by integrating $dz$, as

$$z = \int dz = \int \frac{dz}{dw} \frac{dw}{d\sigma} \quad d\sigma. \quad (5)$$

The results are as already given in Schmieden's paper: When $D$ is very close to $E$ on the $\sigma$ plane the resulting flow is as shown in Figure 4. For $D$ located between $E$ and $W$ the flow is as shown in Figure 1. For $D$ very close to $W$ the flow closes at infinity as shown in Figure 5. $\sigma_D$ cannot be negative or else the two free streamlines $BCWD$ and $ED$ intersect each other presenting a physically impossible overlap of the flow field.

An extension of Schmieden's approach is now made in which the point $D$ is moved up from the real axis of the $\sigma$ plane. The derivative $dz/dw$ is still given by formula (3) but the complex potential $w(\sigma)$ is now given by
\[ w(a) = \left\{ \begin{array}{c}
\frac{e^{i\beta}}{\sigma - \sigma_D} \frac{1}{1 - \sigma_D^2} \quad + \quad \frac{e^{i\beta}}{1 - \sigma_D^2} \\
-\frac{1}{\sigma - \sigma_D} \quad + \quad \frac{e^{-i\beta}}{\sigma_D - \sigma} \frac{1}{1 - \sigma_D^2} \\
+ i\gamma \ln \left( \frac{(\sigma - \sigma_D) (1 - \sigma_D^2)}{(\sigma_D - \sigma) (1 - \sigma_D^2)} \right) \end{array} \right\} \]  

(4b)  

where \( \beta, \gamma \) are real numbers which represent a doublet plus a vortex at \( \sigma_D \) and its three image points. In this way the multiple valued function \( w(a) \) is still real on the boundary of the semi-circular disc (the plane is cut along the streamline DW to make \( w(a) \) single valued). The real numbers \( \beta \) and \( \gamma \) must make \( A \) a stagnation point in the \( \sigma \) plane and also make the point \( F \) in the \( \sigma \) plane correspond to one single point \( z_F \) in the \( z \) plane. This point \( z_F \) is the point at which closure of the free streamlines occurs. These two conditions require respectively

\[ \Im \left( e^{i\beta} \left[ \frac{\sigma_A}{(\sigma_A - \sigma_D)^2} - \frac{\sigma_A^*}{(\sigma_A^* - \sigma_D)^2} \right] \right) \]

\[ \Re \left( \frac{\sigma_A}{\sigma_A - \sigma_D} - \frac{\sigma_A^*}{\sigma_A^* - \sigma_D} \right) \]

and

\[ \frac{i\gamma}{e^{i\beta}} = \left\{ \begin{array}{c}
\frac{d}{dw} \left[ \ln \frac{dz}{dw} \right] \\
\sigma = \sigma_D \end{array} \right\} \]

(7)

Unfortunately the last two equations (6) and (7) cannot both be satisfied with any arbitrarily chosen value of \( \sigma_D \) inside the semi-circular disc. To satisfy both equations (6) and (7) the point \( \sigma_D \) must follow a curve joining \( \sigma = 0 \) and \( \sigma = 1 \) (which is different for each angle of attack), as in Figure 6.

It is seen that for each given \( \sigma_A \) and \( \sigma_B = -\sigma_A^* \), the difference \( h(\sigma_D) \) between the two values of \( \gamma \) given by equations (6) and (7),
\[ h \left( \sigma_D \right) = \frac{\text{Im} \left( e^{i\beta} \left( \frac{\sigma_A - \sigma_D}{(\sigma_A - \sigma_D)^2} - \frac{\bar{\sigma}_A}{(\bar{\sigma}_A - \sigma_D)^2} \right) \right)}{\text{Re} \left( \frac{\sigma_A - \sigma_D}{(\sigma_A - \sigma_D)^2} - \frac{\bar{\sigma}_A}{(\bar{\sigma}_A - \sigma_D)^2} \right)} + 2ie^{i\beta} \sigma_D \left( \frac{1}{\sigma_D^2 - \sigma_A^2} - \frac{1}{\sigma_D^2 - \bar{\sigma}_A^2} \right) \]

This expression tends to \( + \) and \( - \) when the argument of \( \sigma_D \) tends to 0 and \( \pi \) respectively while the magnitude \( 0 < |\sigma_D| < 1 \) is kept constant. This is so as the last term remains finite and the first term is approximated by \(- \cos \beta / \text{Im} (\sigma_D)^2\).

Since \( h(\sigma_D) \) is continuous inside the semi-circular disc there must be a continuous line joining \( \sigma = 0 \) and \( \sigma_A \) such that \( h(\sigma_D) \) is zero when \( \sigma_D \) lies on such a line. As the angle of attack is a continuous function of \( \sigma_D \) and \( \sigma_A \) there exists a continuous line joining \( \sigma = 0, \sigma = i \) for each angle of attack such that the function \( h(\sigma_D) \) is zero on this line.

Therefore with each angle of attack the free-stream flow can vary from fully open as in Figure 4 through Figure 1 and closes as in Figure 5. Afterwards the flow closes at a finite point \( z_P \) as in Figure 7. As \( \sigma_D \) and \( \sigma_A \) tend to \( i, \) \( z_P \) tends to \( z_E, \) hence the limit is a fully attached Joukowski flow as shown in Figure 8. The vortex strength for the closed flow increases as the Joukowski flow is approached. Hence the closed flow may be regarded as a "reduced circulation" flow.

Note that the proof of the existence of the locus for \( \sigma_D \) such that \( h(\sigma_D) = 0 \) holds irrespective of the form of the function \( dz/dw, \) as long as we have

\[ \lim (\beta), \quad \lim (\delta) < 0, \]

\[ \sigma_D \to (-\pi) \quad \sigma_D \to \pi \]

with \( \beta (\sigma_D) \) determined from only equation (7).

The inflection point \( W \) of the free streamlines moves from the upper streamline (between \( B \) and \( D \)) down to the lower streamline (between \( D \) and \( E \)) as the flow closes. In the full Helmholtz flow we have \( B, C, W \) becoming one point and in the full Joukowski flow we have \( E, W, F, C, \) becoming one single point.
At any incidence of the flat plate there is no drag from the Joukowski flow until the two free stream-lines separate at infinity. Thereafter a growing zone with static pressure appears on the rear of the plate giving rise to drag increasing to the full value of Helmholtz flow.

3. FLOW ABOUT AN ARBITRARY AEROFOIL

In this section the proof is given of the existence of separated flows about an arbitrary aerofoil. This result was conjectured by Schmieden [1] by physical reasoning.

For such a flow about an arbitrary aerofoil profile as shown in Figure 9, the flow in the $\zeta$ plane can be constructed as in Figure 10. A flow in the $\chi$ plane is then given by

$$e^\zeta = C \left( \frac{X^2 - X_A^2}{X - X_A} \right),$$

with $C$ being a complex scaling constant. Obviously the aerofoil boundary in the $\chi$ plane is not a semi-circle of unit radius but is distorted as depicted in Figure 11.

Using Riemann's mapping theorem, the area bounded by the curve ACWDEA can be mapped onto the upper semi-circular section in the $\sigma$ plane of Figure 3 such that $\sigma_A = 0, |\sigma_A| = |\sigma_C| = |\sigma_E| = 1$ and $d\chi / d\sigma > 0$ at $\chi = 0$. In this way the transformation $\chi(\sigma)$ is given by

$$\chi(\sigma) = \sum_{n=1}^{m} b_n \sigma^n$$

where $b_n$ are the real-valued coefficients of the series and $b_n > 0$. The series so defined is convergent for all $|\sigma| \leq 1$.

The result presented above covers Schmieden's conjecture: The separated flow around any given aerofoil corresponds to a separated flow around a flat plate. The correspondence is given in equation (8).
The composite function \( \xi(\chi(o)) \) for this flow is thus defined for all \( o \) inside the upper semi-circular disc. By writing

\[
\xi(\chi(o)) = \ln \left( \frac{\sigma - \sigma_A}{\sigma - \sigma_B} \right) + i \phi(\chi(o))
\]

it can be proved that the function \( \phi(\chi(o)) \), which is

\[
i \phi(\chi(o)) = \ln \left( \frac{\chi - \chi_A}{\chi - \chi_B} \right) - \ln \left( \frac{\sigma - \sigma_A}{\sigma - \sigma_B} \right) + \ln \left( \frac{\chi - \chi_B}{\chi - \chi_A} \right) + \text{constant},
\]

is analytic on the semi-circular disc and that \( \phi(\chi(o)) \) is real for \(-1 \leq o \leq 1\). Therefore \( \xi(\chi(o)) \) takes the form

\[
\xi(o) = \ln \left( \frac{\sigma - \sigma_A}{\sigma - \sigma_B} \right) + i \sum_{n=1}^{\infty} a_n \sigma^n + i a_o ,
\]

all \( a_1, a_2, a_3, ... \) real, as previously given by Schmieden. The constant \( a_o \) is real for real \( \sigma_D \) and is complex otherwise.

The condition for the stagnation point to be at \( A \) remains the same as for a flat plate and is given by equation (6).

The closure condition (7) now becomes

\[
\frac{i \gamma}{e^{iB}} = \left\{ \frac{d\xi}{do} \right\} \bigg|_{\sigma = \sigma_D} ,
\]

or

\[
\frac{i \gamma}{e^{iB}} = \left( \frac{1}{\sigma_D - \sigma_A} - \frac{1}{\sigma_D - \sigma_B} \right) + i \sum_{n=1}^{\infty} n a_n \sigma^{n-1} .
\]
When $\sigma_D$ sweeps a semi-circular arc described by

$$\sigma_D = re^{i\theta} \ (0 < r < 1, \ r \ \text{kept constant}, \ \theta \ \text{increasing from 0 to } \pi)$$

the first two terms being $-2i \text{ Im}(\sigma_A) / \left[ (\sigma_D - \sigma_A) (\sigma_D - \overline{\sigma}_A) \right]$ do not contribute to the increase in $\theta$ but the third term may alter the value of $\theta$.

The right hand side of equation (10) is the product of $d\chi / d\sigma$ and $d\chi / d\omega$. Since $\chi(\sigma)$ is a one-to-one and onto conformal mapping the derivative $d\chi / d\sigma$ cannot vanish anywhere on the disc $|\sigma| < 1$. On the other hand, the derivative

$$\frac{d\chi}{d\sigma} = 2\chi \left( \frac{1}{\chi^2-x_B^2} - \frac{1}{x^2-x_A^2} \right) = 2\chi \frac{x_B^2-x_A^2}{(\chi^2-x_B^2) (x^2-x_A^2)}$$

which changes sign once for $\chi$ travelling on the real segment $(-1,1)$.

Therefore $\theta$ changes its value by $\pi$ when $\sigma_D$ sweeps the semi-circular arc described by $\sigma_D = re^{i\theta} \ (0 < r < 1, \ r \ \text{kept constant}, \ \theta \ \text{increasing from 0 to } \pi)$.

Thus a proof similar to that of the last section can be constructed to prove that there exist a continuous line for $\sigma_D$ such that the pair of equations (6) and (7) are satisfied on that line.

Hence with any arbitrary aerofoil at a given angle of attack, the flow can vary continuously from full Joukowski flow to full Helmholtz flow.

It is worthwhile noting that the curvature $k$ for a free stream-line is given by

$$k = \frac{d\theta}{dz} = -i \left\{ \frac{d\sigma}{d\omega} \div \frac{d\chi}{d\sigma} \right\} \text{ for real } \sigma$$

(11)

hence

$$k = \left\{ -2\text{ Im} \left( \frac{1}{\sigma-A} \right) \div \frac{\chi}{n^2} \sum_{n=1}^{\infty} \frac{1}{n^2 \sigma^n} \right\} \frac{d\chi}{d\sigma} \div \frac{d\sigma}{d\omega} .$$
As $\phi_0$ tends to 0, $\phi_A$ tends to $(ie^{-\phi/2} )$ and $x$ tends to zero. Therefore the quantity inside the accolades must vanish. Hence
\[ a_1 = 2 \cos \left( \frac{\phi}{2} \right) \] (12)

for the flows which close at infinity, as previously observed by Schmieden.

For a separated flow with reunion of the two free stream-lines the circulation around the wing is $2\pi\gamma$, where $\gamma$ is given by the system of equations (6) and (7). The free-stream velocity (at the point D) is given by
\[ u = iv = \frac{\delta u}{dz} = \frac{1}{C} \frac{\gamma^2 - \gamma_A^2}{\gamma_D^2 - \gamma_B^2} \]

and the pure lift (there is no drag here) is given by
\[ \rho 2\pi \gamma \left[ \frac{1}{C} \frac{\gamma^2 - \gamma_A^2}{\gamma_D^2 - \gamma_B^2} \right] \]

where $\rho$ is the density of the fluid. As the two stream-lines open, this pure lift changes smoothly into lift and drag caused by a stagnation zone behind the aerofoil.

The question of generating a free-stream flow about an arbitrarily given aerofoil still has not been satisfactorily answered. Towards this aim it can be noted that if $\xi(\sigma)$ is given its most general form
\[ \xi(\sigma) = \ln \left( \frac{\sigma - \sigma_A}{\sigma - \sigma_B} \right) + \int_0^1 \ln \left( \frac{\sigma - e^{it}}{\sigma - e^{-it}} \right) df(t) + \text{complex constant} \]

where $f(t)$ is a function with bounded variation defined for all real $t$ with $0 \leq t \leq 1$, then each flow regime corresponds to a function $f(t)$. However the construction of such a function $f(t)$ from a given aerofoil shape and $\sigma_D$ is very complicated. Possible techniques for this construction are currently under investigation.
From the above considerations, it would appear that the $\sigma$-plane technique would also be appropriate for the solution of two-dimensional free stream-line flow about an arbitrary single body.

4. **VARIANTS OF THE FLOW**

By making some minor changes to $dz/dw$ different flows are speculated from the same basic $\sigma$-plane.

a) Flow about a flat plate with leading edge flap: This is obtained with

$$dz = C \frac{\sigma - \sigma_A}{\sigma - \sigma_B} m \frac{\sigma - \sigma_G}{\sigma - \sigma_B} \, ,$$
$$dw = \frac{\sigma - \sigma_A}{\sigma - \sigma_B} n$$

where the real number $m$ is the flap deflection angle in radians. The flow is illustrated in Figures 12a and 12b. The two trailing stream lines can also close if $D$ is off the real axis of the $\sigma$ plane.

b) Flow about a flat plate with trailing edge flap. This is obtained with

$$dz = C \frac{\sigma - \sigma_A}{\sigma - \sigma_B} m \frac{\sigma - \sigma_G}{\sigma - \sigma_B} \, ,$$
$$dw = \frac{\sigma - \sigma_A}{\sigma - \sigma_B} n$$

where the real number $n$ denotes the flap deflection angle in radians. The flow is given in Figure 13a and 13b.

c) Flow about a flat plate with leading and trailing edge flaps: This is obtained with

$$dz = C \frac{\sigma - \sigma_A}{\sigma - \sigma_B} m \frac{\sigma - \sigma_G}{\sigma - \sigma_B} \frac{\sigma - \sigma_A}{\sigma - \sigma_B} \, ,$$
$$dw = \frac{\sigma - \sigma_A}{\sigma - \sigma_B} n$$

The flow is illustrated in Figures 14a and 14b.
d) Flow about an angle plate. This is obtained with

\[
\frac{dz}{dw} = C \frac{\sigma - \sigma_A}{\sigma - \sigma_A}^m
\]

where \( m \pi \) is the plate angle in radians. The flow is shown in Figures 15a and 15b.

e) Flow about an aerofoil with flat and constant pressure boundary. This is achieved with

\[
\frac{dz}{dw} = C \frac{\sigma - \sigma_A}{\sigma - \sigma_A} \frac{\sigma - \sigma_G}{\sigma - \sigma_G}^m
\]

where \( -m \pi \) is the trailing edge angle of the aerofoil. The flow as plotted on a computer is given in Figure 16a and 16b. This result was obtained previously by Hurley and Ruglen [3] (using Helmholtz free stream-line theory but not with the \( \sigma \) plane technique) and subsequently recalculated by Saffman and Tanveer [4]. Comparing this flow with the separated flow with reunion about a flat plate it can be seen that there are three equations connecting \( \delta \) and \( \gamma \). This redundant system of equations imposes certain relationship between \( \sigma_A', \sigma_G', \) and \( \sigma_D \) and consequently between \( z_C', z_G', \) and \( z_E' \) as previously noted in Refs 3 and 4.

f) By setting \( m \) equal to unity in the last case the flow about a flat plate with leading edge bubble results. This is illustrated in Figures 17a and 17b.

g) By placing one more singularity at the point \( B \) on the semi-circle, making

\[
\frac{dz}{dw} = \left( \frac{\sigma - \sigma_A}{\sigma - \sigma_A} \right) \left( \frac{\sigma - \sigma_B}{\sigma - \sigma_B} \right)
\]
The flow around a flat plate with a different type of separation bubble and no separation from the trailing edge results, as shown in Figures 18a and 18b.

It should be noted that in these variants the closing condition (7) is still required whenever $\varphi_D$ is inside the semi-circular disc.

5. CONCLUSIONS

The incompressible, inviscid flow about a flat plate and certain of its variants has been described using a single $\sigma$-plane. Some of the interesting points from the flows about a flat plate are:

- For every angle of attack the flow can vary between full Joukowski flow to full Helmholtz flow. Reduced circulation flow, in which the free streamlines close at a finite point, and Helmholtz - Schmieden's flows are the intermediate states.

- Lift and drag vary continuously from one possible state to another possible state, the drag being zero for Joukowski and reduced circulation flows.

- There is only one inflection point on the free stream-lines. The inflection point is on the free stream-line leaving the leading edge if the flow is open and is on the free stream-line, leaving the trailing edge if the flow closes.

A proof is given showing that analogous results also hold for an arbitrary aerofoil.

Using the $\sigma$-plane technique the flows about a range of variants of the flat plate are presented.

From the applications presented it would seem that the $\sigma$-plane technique would also be appropriate for the solution of two-dimensional free streamline flows about an arbitrary single body.
REFERENCES


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T. TRAN-CONG, C.A. MARTIN

Aeronautical Research Laboratories
P.O. Box 4331, Melbourne, Vic. 3001

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Airfoil

Various configurations of two-dimensional Helmholtz flow about a flat plate are obtained with a free streamline theory using the flow inside a semi-circular disc. The flow can vary continuously from fully-attached Joukowski flow to the commonly-known fully-separated Helmholtz flow. Some general results for an arbitrary aerofoil are also obtained. Variations of the technique give the flow about flat plates with flaps and other related configurations.
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