

## A PHYSICALLY CONSISTENT, DISCRETE $n$ -BODY MODEL

BY DONALD GREENSPAN

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**1. Introduction.** A dynamical model of a physical phenomenon is said to be *physically consistent* if the model (a) conserves energy, (b) conserves linear momentum, (c) conserves angular momentum, and (d) is symmetric in the physical sense, that is (see [3]), the form of its dynamical equations is invariant with respect to translation, rotation and uniform motion. Unfortunately, the equations of many interesting, physically consistent models have eluded solution by analytical mathematical methods. It was natural then, with the emergence of the modern digital computer, that there were developed varieties of discrete  $n$ -body, "molecular" type, models which were used to approximate solutions of such equations (see, e.g., [1], [2], [4], [7]–[12], and the additional references contained therein). However, *none* of these discrete models was, itself, physically consistent, which forced the unnatural development of computational contrivances, like "artificial viscosity", in order to achieve numerical stability.

Our objective here, then, is to construct a physically consistent, discrete  $n$ -body model. Our approach will be of sufficient generality so as to include both Newtonian and classical molecular  $n$ -body forces. During the discussion, it will be worth noting that, unlike other discrete approaches, our definitions of kinetic energy, potential energy, linear momentum, and angular momentum are *identical* with those of classical, continuous  $n$ -body models.

**2. The discrete model.** For a positive time step  $\Delta t$ , let  $t_k = k\Delta t$ ,  $k=0, 1, 2, \dots$ . At time  $t_k$ , let particle  $P_i$  of mass  $m_i$  be located at  $\mathbf{x}_{i,k} = (x_{i,k}, y_{i,k}, z_{i,k})$ , have velocity  $\mathbf{v}_{i,k} = (v_{i,k,x}, v_{i,k,y}, v_{i,k,z})$ , and have acceleration  $\mathbf{a}_{i,k} = (a_{i,k,x}, a_{i,k,y}, a_{i,k,z})$ , for  $i=1, 2, \dots, n$ . Position, velocity, and acceleration are assumed to be related by the formulas

$$(2.1) \quad (\mathbf{v}_{i,k+1} + \mathbf{v}_{i,k})/2 = (\mathbf{x}_{i,k+1} - \mathbf{x}_{i,k})/(\Delta t),$$

$$(2.2) \quad \mathbf{a}_{i,k} = (\mathbf{v}_{i,k+1} - \mathbf{v}_{i,k})/(\Delta t).$$

If  $\mathbf{F}_{i,k} = (F_{i,k,x}, F_{i,k,y}, F_{i,k,z})$  is the force acting on  $P_i$  at time  $t_k$ , then force and acceleration are assumed to be related by the discrete dynamical

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