Order, chaos, and fractals

15.1 Hamilton systems

A Hamilton system of n degrees of freedom has n coordinates q_i and n momenta p_i whose time derivatives are partial derivatives

$$\dot{q}_i = \frac{\partial H}{\partial p_i}$$
 and $\dot{p}_i = -\frac{\partial H}{\partial q_i}$ (15.1)

of a hamiltonian H that is a function of the 2n q's and p's and possibly of the time t. The time derivative of any function F(q, p) of the q's and p's is then

$$\frac{dF}{dt} = \frac{\partial F}{\partial t} + \sum_{i=1}^{n} \frac{\partial F}{\partial q_i} \dot{q}_i + \frac{\partial F}{\partial p_i} \dot{p}_i = \frac{\partial F}{\partial t} + \sum_{i=1}^{n} \frac{\partial F}{\partial q_i} \frac{\partial H}{\partial p_i} - \frac{\partial F}{\partial p_i} \frac{\partial H}{\partial q_i}$$
(15.2)
$$= \frac{\partial F}{\partial t} + [F, H]$$

in which the last term is the **Poisson bracket** [F, H].

A Hamilton system with n symmetries has n conserved quantities C_i . If time translation invariance is one of the symmetries, and if the hamiltonian H and the conserved quantities are time independent, then the system is **autonomous**, the hamiltonian is one of the conserved quantites, and its Poisson bracket with each of the conserved quantities vanishes $[C_i, H] = 0$. If the conserved quantities have vanishing Poisson brackets $[C_i, C_j] = 0$, then they are **in involution**. An autonomous Hamilton system of degree n that has n independent conserved quantities that are in involution is Liouville **integrable**. In principle, one can integrate Hamilton's equations (15.1) for such a system.

Example 15.1 (Harmonic oscillators). The coordinates q_i and momenta p_i of a Hamilton system of n independent harmonic oscillators obey Hamilton's

Order, chaos, and fractals



Figure 15.1 The $q_1(t)$, $p_1(t)$ coordinates of a harmonic oscillator coupled to another harmonic oscillator by the hamiltonian (15.4) for 0 < t < 100(left) and 0 < t < 500 (right). The initial conditions are $q_1 = q_2 = 0$ and $p_1 = p_2 = 1$, with m = 1, $\omega_2 = \omega_1/2 = 1/2$, and $\lambda = 1/2$.

equations

$$\dot{q}_i = \frac{p_i}{m_i}$$
 and $\dot{p}_i = -m_i \omega_i^2 q_i.$ (15.3)

The energy $E_i = p_i^2/2m_i + m_i\omega_i q_i^2/2$ of each oscillator is conserved. The coordinates $q_i(t) = a_i \sin(\omega_i(t+\tau_i))$ and momenta $p_i = a_i m_i \omega_i \cos(\omega_i(t+\tau_i))$ run over the *n*-dimensional surface of an *n*-torus in a q, p phase space of 2n dimensions.

Few systems are integrable. Two coupled harmonic oscillators with

$$H = \frac{p_1^2 + p_2^2}{2m} + \frac{m(\omega_1^2 q_1^2 + \omega_2^2 q_2^2)}{2} + m\omega_1 \omega_2 (q_1 - q_2)^2 + \lambda q_1^2 q_2^2 \left(q_1^2 + q_2^2\right)$$
(15.4)

display complicated behavior as illustrated in Fig. 15.1 for equal masses but different frequencies.

Example 15.2 (The two-body problem). Two interacting particles moving in empty 3-dimensional space are a system of 6 degrees of freedom with 7 conserved quantities—the energy $E_1 + E_2$, the momentum $\vec{p_1} + \vec{p_2}$, and the angular momentum $\vec{r_1} \times \vec{p_1} + \vec{r_2} \times \vec{p_2}$ —which are in involution and independent. The system is integrable. Its motion is ordered, and if bounded, lies on the surface of a 6-torus.

Hamilton systems are special: The 2n time derivatives \dot{q}_i and \dot{p}_i satisfy

(exercise 15.1) the identities

$$\frac{\partial \dot{q}_i}{\partial q_j} = -\frac{\partial \dot{p}_j}{\partial p_i}, \quad \frac{\partial \dot{q}_i}{\partial p_j} = \frac{\partial \dot{q}_j}{\partial p_i}, \quad \text{and} \quad \frac{\partial \dot{p}_i}{\partial q_j} = \frac{\partial \dot{p}_j}{\partial q_i}.$$
 (15.5)

The integral

$$A = \oint \sum_{i=1}^{n} p_i \, dq_i \tag{15.6}$$

over a closed trajectory in phase space is a time-independent Poincaré invariant (example 12.9). Areas of phase space are constant in time (example 12.11) along Hamilton trajectories (15.1)

$$\frac{d}{dt} \left(\sum_{i}^{n} \left| \begin{array}{c} \delta p_{i} & \delta q_{i} \\ \Delta p_{i} & \Delta q_{i} \end{array} \right| \right) = 0.$$
(15.7)

Although they are special, few Hamilton systems are integrable. Three interacting particles moving in empty space are a system of 9 degrees of freedom with only 7 independent conserved quantities. The three-body problem is not integrable.

15.2 Systems of ordinary differential equations

An autonomous system of n first-order ordinary differential equations

$$\dot{x}_{1} = F_{1}(x_{1}, x_{2}, \dots, x_{n})$$

$$\dot{x}_{2} = F_{2}(x_{1}, x_{2}, \dots, x_{n})$$

$$\vdots$$

$$\dot{x}_{n} = F_{n}(x_{1}, x_{2}, \dots, x_{n}).$$
(15.8)

is more general than it may seem at first sight. For a non-autonomous system of n equations with functions $F_i(x_1, \ldots, x_n, t)$ is equivalent to an autonomous system of n + 1 equations with $t = x_{n+1}$ and $F_{n+1}(x_1, \ldots, x_{n+1}) = 1$. And a system of n higher-order ordinary differential equations is equivalent to an autonomous first-order system of more than n first-order ordinary differential equations.

Example 15.3 (Forced van der Pol oscillator). The second-order, timedependent differential equation $\ddot{y} + \mu(y^2 - 1)\dot{y} + y = a\sin(\omega t)$ describes a forced van der Pol oscillator. Setting $x_1 = \dot{y}, x_2 = y$, and $x_3 = t$, we may



Figure 15.2 Trajectories of the unforced ($\omega = a = 0$) van der Pol oscillator (15.9) converge to their attractors which are limit cycles. The outward spiral starts from y(0) = 0.01 and $\dot{y}(0) = 0$ with $\mu = 1/8$ (left); the inward spiral starts from y(0) = 6 and $\dot{y}(0) = 0$ with $\mu = 1/64$ (right).

write it as the first-order autonomous system

$$\dot{x}_1 = -x_2 - \mu(x_2^2 - 1)x_1 + a\sin(\omega x_3),$$

$$\dot{x}_2 = x_1, \quad \text{and} \quad \dot{x}_3 = 1$$
(15.9)

which exhibits chaos for certain values of its parameters μ , a, and ω . The unforced oscillator ($\omega = a = 0$) has trajectories that converge to limit cycles as illustrated in Fig. 15.2. The outward spiral starts from y(0) = 0.01 and $\dot{y}(0) = 0$ with $\mu = 1/8$ (left); the inward spiral starts from y(0) = 6 and $\dot{y}(0) = 0$ with $\mu = 1/64$ (right).

15.3 Attractors

Hamilton systems evolve in ways that conserve their areas in phase space (15.7), but arbitrary autonomous systems evolve more generally. Phase-space areas of **dissipative** systems typically shrink. If they converge to a point or to a set of points, that point or set is an **attractor**. An attractor may be a point of dimension zero, a loop or **limit cycle** of dimension one, a surface of integral dimension, or a **fractal**—a set whose dimension is not an integer (section 15.6). A fractal attractor is a **strange attractor**.

Example 15.4 (Lorenz butterfly). The Lorenz system is three first-order differential equations

$$\dot{x} = \sigma (y - x), \qquad \dot{y} = r x - y - x z, \qquad \dot{z} = x y - b z$$
(15.10)



Figure 15.3 The trajectory of the Lorenz system (15.10) for $0 \le t \le 300$ approaches a strange attractor of dimension $D_{KY} = 2.06215$.

in which \dot{y} and \dot{z} have the nonlinear terms -xz and xy, and the Prandtl number σ , the Rayleigh number r, and the parameter b are all positive. The Matlab code

```
x0 = [0 8 0]; tspan=[0,300];
[t,x]=ode45(@lorentz,tspan,x0); plot(x(:,1),x(:,3);
function xprime = lorentz(t,x); s = 10; b = 8/3; r =28;
xprime=[ - s*x(1) + s*x(2); r*x(1) - x(2) - x(1)*x(3); ...
- b*x(3) + x(1)*x(2) ]; end
```

generates the plot of x = x(1) and z = x(3) in Fig. 15.3 for initial conditions x = z = 0 and y = 8.

Example 15.5 (Rössler system). The solutions of the differential equations

Order, chaos, and fractals

$$\begin{aligned} \dot{x} &= -y - z \\ \dot{y} &= x + a y \\ \dot{z} &= b + z(x - c) \end{aligned} \tag{15.11}$$

with a = b = 0.2 and initial conditions x(0) = y(0) = z(0) = 0 display a simple limit cycle for c = 2, a period-two limit cycle for c = 3, a period-four limit cycle for c = 4, a period-eight limit cycle for c = 4.15, and a strange attractor for c = 5.7 as shown in Fig. 15.4.

15.4 Chaos

Early in the last century, Henri Poincaré studied the three-body problem and found very complicated orbits. In this and many other systems, he found that after a transient period, classical motion assumes one of four forms:

- 1. periodic (a limit cycle)
- 2. steady or damped or stopped
- 3. quasi-periodic (more than one frequency)
- 4. chaotic

Chaos takes different forms in different dynamical systems, and no single definition of chaos fits all of them. Many are **extremely sensitive to initial conditions**. For instance, two trajectories $x(t) = (x_1(t), \ldots, x_n(t))$ and $x'(t) = (x'_1(t), \ldots, x'_n(t))$ of an autonomous system (15.8) may diverge from each other exponentially

$$|||x'(t) - x(t)||| = e^{\lambda t} |||x'(0) - x(0)|||.$$
(15.12)

in which λ is a Lyapunov exponent.

A first-order, autonomous dynamical system can be chaotic only it has at least n = 3 dimensions. The driven, damped pendulum (example 15.9), the Lorenz system (example 15.4), and the Rössler system (example 15.5) all have n = 3 and evolve chaotically for certain values of their parameters. Here are three more examples:

Example 15.6 (Duffing's equation). If one attaches a thin piece of iron to the end of a rod that moves sinusoidally in the x direction at frequency ω





Figure 15.4 The last 10,000 points (x(i), y(i)) of the solution of the Rössler equations (15.11) trace the attractor for initial conditions x(0) = y(0) = z(0) = 0 and various values of the parameter c. For c = 2, the attractor is a simple loop (not shown); for c = 3, it is two loops loop; for c = 4, it is four loops; for c = 4.15, it is eight loops; and for c = 5.7, it is an infinite set of loops of dimension $D_{KY} = 2.0132$.

near two magnets, then the x coordinate is described by the forced Duffing equation

$$\ddot{x} + a\dot{x} + bx^{3} + cx = g\sin(\omega t + \phi)$$
(15.13)

and varies chaotically for suitable values of a, b, c, g, ω , and ϕ .

Example 15.7 (Dripping faucet). Drops from a slowly dripping faucet tend to fall regularly at times t_n separated by a constant interval $\Delta t = t_{n+1} - t_n$. At a slightly higher flow rate, the drops fall separated by intervals that alternate in their durations Δt , ΔT in a **period-two** sequence. At some higher flow rates, no regularity is apparent.

Example 15.8 (Rayleigh-Benard convection). Consider a fluid in a gravitational field above a hot plate and below a cold one. If the difference ΔT is small enough, then steady convective cellular flow occurs. But if ΔT is above the chaotic threshold, the fluid boils chaotically.

15.5 Maps

Successive crossings $x_j = (x_{1j}, \ldots, x_{nj})$ from one side to the other of a suitably oriented surface by an *n*-dimensional trajectory form a **Poincaré** map

$$x_{j+1} = M(x_j) \tag{15.14}$$

in a space of n-1 dimensions. Poincaré maps are invertible $x_j = M^{-1}(x_{j+1})$. An invertible map can be chaotic only if it has at least two dimensions so that it comes from a dynamical system that has at least three dimensions. A one-dimensional map that is not invertible can display chaos.

The Lyapunov exponent of a smooth one-dimensional map $x_{j+1} = f(x_j)$ is the limit

$$h(x_1) = \lim_{j \to \infty} \frac{1}{j} \left[\ln |f'(x_1)| + \ldots + \ln |f'(x_j)| \right].$$
(15.15)

A bounded sequence that has a positive Lyapunov exponent and that does not converge to a periodic sequence is **chaotic** (Alligood et al., 1996, p. 110). Other aspects of chaos lead to other definitions.

Example 15.9 (Driven, damped pendulum). The angle θ of a sinusoidally driven, damped pendulum obeys the differential equation

$$\ddot{\theta} + b\dot{\theta} + \sin\theta = F\cos t \tag{15.16}$$

which is second order and nonautonomous. We put it into autonomous form



3.5

3

2.5

2

1.5

0.5

 $\dot{\theta}$

0 -0.5 -1 -2 0 2 3 -3 -1 1 θ

Figure 15.5 Poincaré map of the first million crossings of the surface $x_3 = 0$ (mod 2π) by the trajectory $(\theta(t), \dot{\theta}(t))$ of the damped driven pendulum (15.16) with b = 0.22 and F = 2.7. The points form a Cantor-set-like strange attractor of dimension $D_b \simeq 1.38$ (Grebogi et al., 1987). The initial conditions were $\theta(0) = \dot{\theta}(0) = 0$.

by defining $x_1 = \dot{\theta}$, $x_2 = \theta$, and $x_3 = t$. In these variables, the pendulum equation (15.16) is the first-order autonomous system

$$\dot{x}_1 = F \cos x_3 - \sin x_2 - b x_1,$$

 $\dot{x}_2 = x_1, \text{ and } \dot{x}_3 = 1$
(15.17)

with n = 3 dependent variables. Figure 15.5 displays a Poincaré map of the trajectory of the damped driven pendulum (15.16) with b = 0.22 and F = 2.7. This map is a strange attractor of dimension $D_b \simeq 1.38$ (Grebogi et al., 1987). The horizontal axis is the angle $\theta(2\pi j)$ modulo 2π [that is, $\operatorname{sign}(\theta) \mod(|\theta|, 2\pi)$ for $j = 0, 1, 2, \dots, 10^6$ or the first million crossings of the surface $x_3 = 0 \mod 2\pi$.

Order, chaos, and fractals



Figure 15.6 Points x_j of the logistic map (15.18) for $29990 \le n \le 30000$ and 10 random starting points $0 < x_0 < 1$ for $0.5 \le r \le 4$. From r = 1 to r = 3, the attractor rises from 0 to 2/3 where it splits into two attractors.

Example 15.10 (Logistic map). For 0 < r < 4, the one-dimensional logistic map

$$x_{j+1} = r \, x_j (1 - x_j) \tag{15.18}$$

describes a population with a limited food supply as does the differential equation (6.99). Because the quadratic equation for x_j in terms of x_{j+1} has two solutions, the logistic map is not invertible. For 0 < r < 1, sequences of x_i 's starting from any $0 < x_0 < 1$ converge to 0. This **attractor** begins to rise at r = 1 and reaches 2/3 at r = 3 where it bifurcates into two attractors as shown in Fig. 15.6. These attractors split again at $r_2 = 1 + \sqrt{6} \approx 3.4495$, and again at $r_3 \approx 3.54409$, and again at $r_4 \approx 3.5644$. By $r_{\infty} \approx 3.569946$, the attractors have split an infinite number of times. Chaos appears in increasingly striking forms as r exceeds r_{∞} . At r = 3.8, two sequences respectively starting from $x_0 = 0.2$ and $x'_0 = 0.20001$ differ after 19 iterations by seeming random amounts: 0.218 at n = 21, 0.623 at n = 23, and 0.723 at n = 74. At r = 4, the logistic map (15.18) is totally chaotic and equivalent to the **tent map** $x_{j+1} = 1 - 2|x_j - 1|$. The **2x-modulo-1 map** $x_{j+1} = 2x_j \mod 1$ is similarly chaotic.



Figure 15.7 Points x_i of the population map (15.19) for $29990 \le n \le 30000$ and 10 random starting points $0 < x_0 < 1$ for $0.5 \le r \le 2$. For $0 \le r \le 1$, the attractor of the population map (15.19) is x = 0. The attractor splits at r = 1 into two attractors until $r_2 = \sqrt{2}$ where it splits into four. Slightly above $r_3 \approx 1.544$, the four attractors split into eight.

Example 15.11 (Population map). For 0 < r < 2, the map

$$x_{j+1} = r \, x_j (x_j - 1) \tag{15.19}$$

describes (for $x_j > 0$) a population whose rates of reproduction and death respectively are proportional to x_i^2 and x_j . For r < 1, sequences starting from any $0 < x_0 < 1$ approach the attractor x = 0 as shown in Fig. 15.7. That attractor splits at r = 1 into two attractors which become four at $r_2 = \sqrt{2}$. Somewhat above $r_3 \approx 1.544$, the four attractors split into eight. They split again at $r_4 \approx 1.565$. Chaos begins as r exceeds 1.57.

Order, chaos, and fractals



Figure 15.8 The first five approximations to the Cantor set.

Example 15.12 (The Bernoulli shift). The simplest chaotic map is the **Bernoulli shift** in which the initial point x_0 is an arbitrary number between 0 and 1 with the binary-decimal expansion

$$x_0 = \sum_{k=1}^{\infty} 2^{-k} a_k = 0.a_1 a_2 a_3 a_4 \dots$$
(15.20)

and successive points lack a_1 , then a_2 , and so forth:

$$x_1 = 0.a_2 a_3 a_4 a_5 \dots, \quad x_2 = 0.a_3 a_4 a_5 a_6 \dots, \quad x_3 = 0.a_4 a_5 a_6 a_7 \dots$$
 (15.21)

Two unequal irrational numbers x_0 and x'_0 no matter how close generate sequences that roam independently, irregularly, and ergotically over the interval (0, 1).

Example 15.13 (Hénon's map). The two-dimensional map

$$x_{j+1} = f(x_j) + B y_j$$

$$y_{j+1} = x_j$$
(15.22)

for $B \neq 0$ is invertible. If $f(x_j) = A - x_j^2$, it is **Hénon's map**, which for A = 1.4 and B = 0.3 is chaotic and converges to the attractor in Fig. 15.10. \Box

15.6 Fractals

A fractal set has a dimension that is not an integer. How can that be? Felix Hausdorff and Abram Besicovitch have shown how to define the

15.6 Fractals

dimension of a weird set of points. To compute their **box-counting** dimension of a set, we cover it with line segments, squares, cubes, or *n*-dimensional "boxes" of side ϵ . If we need $N(\epsilon)$ boxes, then the fractal dimension D is the limit as $\epsilon \to 0$

$$D_b = \lim_{\epsilon \to 0} \frac{\ln(N(\epsilon))}{\ln(1/\epsilon)}.$$
(15.23)

For instance, we can cover the interval [a, b] with $N(\epsilon) = (b - a)/\epsilon$ line segments of length ϵ , so the dimension of the segment [a, b] is

$$D_b = \lim_{\epsilon \to 0} \frac{\ln(N(\epsilon))}{\ln(1/\epsilon)} = \lim_{\epsilon \to 0} \frac{\ln((b-a)/\epsilon)}{\ln(1/\epsilon)} = 1 + \frac{\ln(b-a)}{\ln(1/\epsilon)} = 1$$
(15.24)

as it should be.

Example 15.14 (Cantor set). The Cantor set is defined by a limiting process in which the set at the *n*th stage consists of 2^n line segments each of length $1/3^n$. The first five approximations to the **Cantor set** are drawn in the figure (15.8). We can cover the *n*th approximation with $N(\epsilon) = 2^n$ line segments each of length $\epsilon_n = 1/3^n$, and so the fractal dimension is

$$D_b = \lim_{\epsilon \to 0} \frac{\ln(N(\epsilon))}{\ln(1/\epsilon)} = \lim_{n \to \infty} \frac{\ln(N(\epsilon_n))}{\ln(1/\epsilon_n)} = \lim_{n \to \infty} \frac{\ln(2^n)}{\ln(3^n)} = \frac{\ln 2}{\ln 3} = 0.6309297\dots$$
(15.25)
which is not an integer or even a rational number.

which is not an integer or even a rational number.

Example 15.15 (Koch Snowflake). In 1904, the Swedish mathematician Helge von Koch described the Koch curve (or the Koch snowflake), whose construction is shown in Fig. 15.9. With each step, there are 4 times as many line segments, each one being 3 times smaller. The length L of the curve at step n is thus $L = (4/3)^n$ which grows without limit as $n \to \infty$. Its box dimension is

$$D_b = \lim_{n \to \infty} \frac{\ln(N(\epsilon_n))}{\ln(1/\epsilon_n)} = \lim_{n \to \infty} \frac{\ln(4^n)}{\ln(3^n)} = \frac{\ln 4}{\ln 3} = 1.2618595\dots$$
 (15.26)

Closely related to the box-counting dimension is the self-similar dimension D_s . To define it, we consider the number of self-similar structures of linear size x needed to cover the figure after n steps and take the limit

$$D_s = \lim_{x \to 0} \frac{\ln N(x)}{\ln 1/x}.$$
 (15.27)

In the case of von Koch's curve, $x = 1/3^n$ and $N(x) = 4^n$. So the self-similar

Order, chaos, and fractals





Figure 15.9 Curve of von Koch: Steps 0, 1, 2, and 3 of construction (adapted from Wikipedia).

dimension of von Koch's curve is

$$D_s = \lim_{x \to 0} \frac{\ln N(x)}{\ln 1/x} = \lim_{n \to \infty} \frac{\ln 4^n}{\ln 3^n} = \frac{n \ln 4}{n \ln 3} = \frac{\ln 4}{\ln 3} = 1.2618595\dots$$
 (15.28)

which is equal to its box dimension $D_{b,K}$ given by (15.26).

Other definitions of the dimension of a set, such as the correlation dimension D_2 (Grassberger and Procaccia, 1983) and the Kaplan-Yorke dimension D_{KY} (Kaplan and Yorke, 1979), can be easier to measure than the box-counting and self-similar dimensions.

Attractors of fractal dimension are strange. The Lorenz butterfly (exam-



Figure 15.10 The first 10^4 points of the strange attractor of Hénon's map (15.13) with A = 1.4 and B = 0.3 and $(x_0, y_0) = (0, 0)$.

ple 15.4, Fig. 15.3) is a strange attractor of Kaplan-Yorke dimension $D_{KY} = 2.06215$, and the loops of the Rössler system for c = 5.7 (example 15.5, Fig. 15.4) form a strange attractor of dimension $D_{KY} = 2.0132$ (Sprott, 2003). The Poincaré map of the damped driven pendulum (15.16, Fig. 15.5 is a strange attractor of box-counting dimension $D_b \approx 1.38$ (Grebogi et al., 1987). Hénon's map (15.22, Fig. 15.10) with A = 1.4 and B = 0.3 is chaotic with a strange attractor of dimension $D_b = 1.261 \pm 0.003$ (Russell et al., 1980). Chaotic systems often have strange attractors; but chaotic systems can have nonfractal attractors, and nonchaotic systems can have strange attractors.

Further Reading

The books Nonlinear Dynamics and Chaos: With Applications to Physics, Biology, Chemistry, and Engineering (Strogatz, 2014), CHAOS: An Introduction to Dynamical Systems (Alligood et al., 1996), and Chaos and Time-Series Analysis (Sprott, 2003) are superb.

Exercises

- 15.1 Use Hamilton's equations to derive the special relations (15.5) that the time derivatives \dot{q}_i and \dot{p}_i satisfy.
- 15.2 A period-one sequence of a map $x_{i+1} = f(x_i)$ is a point p for which p = f(p). Find the period-one sequences of $x_{i+1} = rx_i(1 x_i/K)$.
- 15.3 A period-two sequence of a map $x_{i+1} = f(x_i)$ is two different points p and q for which q = f(p) and p = f(q). Estimate the period-two sequences of the logistic map f(x) = ax(1-x) for a = 1, 2, and 3. Hint: Graph the functions f(f(x)) and I(x) = x on the interval [0, 1].
- 15.4 A period-three sequence of a map $x_{i+1} = f(x_i)$ is three different points p, q, and r for which q = f(p), r = f(q), and p = f(r). Li and Yorke have shown that a map with a period-three sequence is chaotic. Estimate the period-three sequences of the map f(x) = 4x(1-x).