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Some examples of vector fields on the 3-sphere


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1. Homotopy theory of vector fields on $S^3$.

The $n$-sphere $S^n$ will denote the set of points with unit modulus in Euclidean $(n+1)$-space. A vector field on $S^n$ is a cross section in the tangent bundle $TS^n$. Since changing the lengths of these vectors does not alter the geometry of the integral curves, only the speed with which they are transversed, we will always consider a nonsingular vector field as a $C^1$ cross section in the tangent $(n-1)$-sphere bundle $TS^{n-1}$. We shall be investigating homotopy properties of nonsingular vector fields on $S^3$. Nonsingular homotopies of these vector fields are just homotopies of cross sections in $TS^3$. By differential approximation techniques [4; page 25] it suffices to consider homotopies in which the intermediate stages may fail to be differentiable.

A parallelization of $S^3$ is the choice of three pointwise linearly independent vector fields on $S^3$, indexed so that they form a right handed 3-frame at each point. Since every parallelization can be made orthonormal by a homotopy, only orthonormal parallelizations will be considered. In this case, homotopies between parallelizations can always be
achieved by a rigid motion of the 3-frame at each point.

Since $S^3$ is parallelizable, the set of homotopy classes of nonsingular vector fields on $S^3$ can be identified with $\pi_3(S^3)$ and the set of homotopy classes of parallelizations of $S^3$ can be identified with $\pi_3(SO(3))$ where $SO(3)$ denotes the group of rotations of 3-space. We can describe these identifications explicitly: let $\Pi$ denote some fixed parallelization of $S^3$; then expressing any nonsingular vector field $F$ in terms of its $\Pi$-coordinates yields a mapping $(F : \Pi) : S^3 \to S^2$ (homotopies of $F$ correspond to homotopies of the mapping); if $\Sigma$ is another similarly oriented parallelization of $S^3$, then at each point of $S^3$, there is a unique element of $SO(3)$ which carries $\Pi$ onto $\Sigma$, and so we have a mapping $[\Sigma : \Pi] : S^3 \to (SO(3))$. (homotopies of $\Sigma$ correspond to homotopies of the mapping).

Let $F$ be a nonsingular vector field on $S^3$. We say that a parallelization $\Sigma$ is an extension of $F$ if the first coordinate direction of $\Sigma$ coincides with $F$. The following is an easy consequence of elementary obstruction theory.

**Proposition 1.1.** — Every nonsingular vector field on $S^3$ has an extension to a parallelization. Any two extensions of $F$ are homotopic through parallelizations which extend $F$.

**Corollary 1.2.** — The one-to-one correspondence between homotopy classes of vector fields and homotopy classes of parallelizations determines an isomorphism between $\pi_3(S^3)$ and $\pi_3(SO(3))$.

The primary (and only) obstruction to a homotopy between nonsingular vector fields $F$ and $G$ on $S^3$ is the difference element $d(F, G) \in H^3(S^3 : \pi_3(S^2))$. This difference element has the following geometric interpretation: let $\Pi$ be an extension of $F$ to a parallelization; then $d(F, G)$ is represented by $\{(G : \Pi)\} \in \pi_3(S^2)$. Identifying $\pi_3(S^2)$ with the integers via the Hopf invariant, we can interpret the difference element for a pair of vector fields as being the (integral) distance between the vector fields. Relative to a fixed vector field $H$, and parallelization $\Pi$ which extends $H$

$$d(F, G) = d(F, H) + d(H, G) = d(F, H) - d(G, H) = \{(F : \Pi)\} - \{(G : \Pi)\}$$
SOME EXAMPLES OF VECTOR FIELDS ON THE 3-SPHERE

Considering $S^3$ as the Lie group of unit quaternions, we have the right and left invariant vector fields. Since we are interested in the homotopy class, it does not matter which direction we pick at the identity. We also have the right and left invariant parallelizations as extensions of these respective fields. If $R$ is the right invariant parallelization which is given by $[i; j; k]$ at the identity, then at any point $q \in S^3$, $R_q = [iq; jq; kq]$. Similarly, the left invariant parallelization is described by $L_q = [qi; qj; qk]$.

We have seen that relative to a fixed parallelization $\Pi$, the parallelizations are in one-to-one correspondence with the elements of $\pi_3(\text{SO}(3))$. This correspondence can be described by $g \mapsto \Pi \cdot g$ for $g \in \pi_3(\text{SO}(3))$. In particular, if $g$ is a generator, then $\Pi(n) = \Pi \cdot ng$ yields a complete set of homotopy representatives of parallelizations. In [4; page 115], an extremely useful generator for $\pi_3(\text{SO}(3))$ is described. Briefly, let $S^2$ denote the set of unit pure quaternions. For $\pm q \in S^3$, a rotation of $S^2$ is given by $g(q)(x) = qxq^{-1}$. The mapping $g: S^3 \to \text{SO}(3)$ thus defined is a 2-fold covering of $\text{SO}(3)$ which generates $\pi_3(\text{SO}(3))$. Applying $g$ to $R_q$ yields $L_q$, showing that $R$ and $L$ lie in adjacent homotopy classes and this is also the case for the right and left invariant vector fields. These fields are excellent choices for the reference field. There is no clear advantage in choosing either one over the other in general. In fact each has its advantages in particular situations, as we shall see.

H. Hopf [1] has described a method for differentiably fibering $S^3$ by $S^1$ so that the base space is $S^3$. There is such a fibering for each pair of relatively prime integers $(m, n)$ with $m \neq 0$, $n > 0$. In the case $m = \pm 1$, $n = 1$ the structure is that of a principal fiber bundle. The fields of tangent vectors to the fibers will be denoted by $H_+(m = +1)$ and $H_-(m = -1)$. In the other cases, these
fiberings do not have the structure of fiber bundles, but are singular fiberings.

In order to describe these fiberings explicitly, we shall need to choose coordinates for $S^2$ and $S^3$:

$S^2$ can be parameterized by $(r, \theta)$ with $-1 \leq r \leq 1$ and $0 \leq \theta < 2\pi$ by means of the formulas

$$x_1 = \sqrt{1 - r^2} \cos \theta, \quad x_2 = \sqrt{1 - r^2} \sin \theta, \quad x_3 = r$$

$S^3$ can be parameterized by $(r, \mu, \nu)$ with $0 \leq r \leq 1$ and $0 \leq \mu, \nu < 2\pi$ by means of the formulas

$$x_1 = r \cos \mu, \quad x_2 = r \sin \mu, \quad x_3 = \sqrt{1 - r^2} \cos \nu, \quad x_4 = \sqrt{1 - r^2} \sin \nu,$$

In $S^3$, the sets $T_r$ which are obtained by holding $r$ constant are circles for $r = 0, 1$ and for $0 < r < 1$, $T_r$ is a torus which separates $T_0$ and $T_1$, and which has $T_0$ and $T_1$ as its axes of symmetry.

We can now describe the $(m, n)^{th}$ Hopf fibering by defining the fiber projection $p_{m,n}: S^3 \to S^2$:

$$p_{m,n}(r, \mu, \nu) = (1 - 2r, -m\mu + n\nu).$$

The Hopf invariant of $p_{m,n}$ is $mn$. For $0 < r < 1$ and $m, n$ relatively prime, $p_{m,n}^{-1}(1 - 2r, \theta)$ is a circle on $T_r$ which wraps $m$ times in the $T_0$ direction and $n$ times in the $T_1$ direction. In particular, the tangent vector field is tangent to $T_r$ and is positively directed along $T_1(n > 0)$ and is either positively or negatively directed along $T_0$ depending on whether $m > 0$ or $m < 0$. Computing $H_+$ and $H_-$ explicitly and using the identification $(a, b, c, d) \to a + bi + cj + dk$ we find.

**Proposition 2.1.** — $H_+$ coincides with the left invariant vector field and $H_-$ coincides with the right invariant vector field. Consequently, $H_+$ and $H_-$ lie in adjacent homotopy classes.

Another interesting vector field on $S^3$ is the normal field to the Reeb foliation [3]. This field has the properties that it is tangent to $T_0$ and $T_1$, and transverse to $T_r$ for $0 < r < 1$. Since these vector fields can be extended to parallelizations, their directions can be reversed by a homotopy, and so we
are free to always choose the field to be directed positively on $T_0$. Depending on the foliation it may then be either positive ($R_+$) or negative ($R_-$) on $T_1$.

**Proposition 2.2.** — $R_+$ is homotopic to $H_+$ and $R_-$ is homotopic to $H_-$.
This proposition is immediate from.

**Lemma 2.3.** — *If $F$ and $G$ are vector fields on a parallelizable manifold $M^n$ which are never negatives of one another, then $F$ and $G$ are homotopic.*

**Proof.** — With respect to any parallelization $\Pi (F : \Pi)$ and $(G : \Pi)$ are mappings of $M^n$ into $S^{n-1}$ which never have $(F : \Pi)(x)$ and $(G : \Pi)(x)$ antipodal for any $x \in M^n$. Therefore $(F : \Pi)$ and $(G : \Pi)$ are homotopic.

**Corollary 2.4.** — *The $(m, n)^{th}$ Hopf fibering is homotopic to $H_+$ if $m > 0$ and to $H_-$ if $m < 0.*

**Proof.** — Assume $n > 0$. For $m > 0$ compare with $R_+$; for $m < 0$ compare with $R_-$. 

**3. Isolated periodic solutions.**

Let $F$ be a $C^1$ vector field on an $n$-manifold $M^n$ and let $\gamma$ denote a nontrivial, isolated periodic solution of $F$. Then there is a tubular neighborhood $B$ of $\gamma$ which intersects no periodic solution of $F$ other than $\gamma$. We shall assume that $\gamma$ is parameterized by $t(0 \leq t < 1)$ and we denote the normal fiber to $\gamma$ at time $t$ by $B_t$.

For each fixed $t$, there is a diffeomorphism $P$ of a neighborhood of $\gamma(t)$ into $B_t$ called the Poincaré mapping. This mapping is defined by $P(x)$ is the first point where the positive trajectory from $x$ intersects $B_t$. It follows from the uniqueness and the differentiability of the trajectories of $F$ with respect to their initial conditions that $P$ is well defined, one-to-one, and differentiable. Since an inverse for $P$ can be defined near $\gamma(t)$ and the inverse is also differentiable, it follows that $P$ is a diffeomorphism.

Consider $B$ as a vector bundle with $\gamma$ corresponding to
the zero cross section. Then we have a vector field \( F_1 \) defined on \( B_t \) by \( F_1(x) \) is the vector \( x - P(x) \). The aggregation of these vector fields is a \( C^1 \) vector field \( F^1 \) on \( B \), which has \( \gamma \) for its singular set. Similarly for each nonzero integer \( k \) we have defined the \( k^{th} \) iterate \( P^k \) of \( P \) and the induced vector field \( F^k \) defined on some neighborhood of \( \gamma \) and having \( \gamma \) for its singular set. Thus we have the \( k^{th} \) index of \( \gamma \) defined for each nonzero integer \( k \). The \( k^{th} \) index is just the index of \( F^k_1 \) at the origin in \( B_t \) (it does not matter which \( t \) we use). We shall use the notation \( i_k(\gamma, F) \) to denote the \( k^{th} \) index of the periodic solution \( \gamma \) of \( F \). We can obtain other information about \( F \) near \( \gamma \) from the vector fields \( F^k \), but first we need some additional topological machinery.

Let \( C \) denote a regular simple closed curve in \( S^3 \) and consider the set of embeddings \( f:[0, 1) \times S^1 \to S^3 \) such that \( f(0 \times S^1) = C \). The images \( \text{Im}(f) \) of these embeddings are called half-line bundles on \( C \). Two half-line bundles \( \text{Im}(f) \) and \( \text{Im}(g) \) are called equivalent if \( f \) and \( g \) are isotopic \( \text{rel} \ (0 \times S^1) \). A necessary and sufficient condition for equivalence is that \( f\left(\frac{1}{2} \times S^1\right) \) and \( g\left(\frac{1}{2} \times S^1\right) \) have the same linking with \( C \). Given an equivalence class \( \Delta \) of half-line bundles, we define the rotation number \( r(\Delta) \) to be the linking number of \( f\left(\frac{1}{2} \times S^1\right) \) and \( C \) for any representative \( f \in \Delta \).

Now consider the set of immersions \( f:[0, 1) \times S^1 \to S^3 \) such that \( f|[0, 1) \times S^1 \) is an embedding and \( f|0 \times S^1 : S^1 \to C \) has degree \( q \) for some positive integer \( q \). Then for each \( s \in (0, 1) \), the set \( \Delta_s = \text{Im}(f|[s, 1) \times S^1) \) is a half-line bundle in the above sense and \( r(\Delta_s) = p \) for some integer \( p \), which does not depend on the choice of \( s \). Note that if \( T^2 \) is the boundary of a small tubular neighborhood of \( C \) chosen so that \( T^2 \cap \text{Im}(f) \) is a simple curve, than this curve has type \( (p, q) \) in \( T^2 \). Hence \( p \) and \( q \) are relatively prime. We shall call the images of these immersions \( \text{half-line bundles} \) also, and we define the rotation of an equivalence class \( \Delta \) of such bundles to be \( r(\Delta) = p/q \). The \( f \)-images of nonzero sections over \( 0 \times S^1 \) will be called \( \text{sections} \) in \( \text{Im}(f) \). Every section in \( \text{Im}(f) \) is a \( q \)-fold covering of \( C \) which links \( C \) \( p \) times.
Now let \( C \) be a nonzero regular section in \( B \). The vector fields \( F^k \) define half-line bundles over \( C \) which we denote by \( F^k|C \). It is clear that \( F^k|C \) is altered isotopically when \( C \) is altered homotopically through nonzero sections in \( B \). We define the torsion of \( F^k \) along \( \gamma \), denoted by \( t_k(\gamma; F) \) to be the integer \( r(F^k|C) \) where \( C \) is a section in \( B \) which does not link \( \gamma \).

We shall now give some examples of vector fields on the open solid torus which illustrate some properties of the index and the torsion. We assume that the reader is familiar with [2; pages 1-75]. Describe the solid torus by coordinates \((r, \theta, \varphi)\) where \( 0 \leq r < \infty \), \( 0 \leq \theta \), \( \varphi < 2\pi \) and \( \varphi \) parameterizes the axis \( r = 0 \). Let \( B_\varphi \) denote the disk obtained by setting \( \varphi \) equal to a constant. Let \( n \) be any integer and choose a differential equation on \( B_0 \)

\[
\begin{align*}
\dot{r} &= R(r, \theta) ; \\
\dot{\theta} &= \Theta(r, \theta) \\
\dot{\varphi} &= 1
\end{align*}
\]

such that \( R(0, \theta) = 0 \), such that this is the only singularity, and such that the index of this singularity is \( n \). Then on the solid torus, the differential equation

\[
F \begin{cases}
\dot{r} = R(r, \theta) \\
\dot{\theta} = \Theta(r, \theta) \\
\dot{\varphi} = 1
\end{cases}
\]

has \( \gamma = \{(r, \theta, \varphi) | r = 0\} \) for an isolated periodic solution. In this case, \( i_k(\gamma; F) = n \) for every \( k > 0 \) and \( t(\gamma; F^k) = 0 \) for every \( k > 0 \). We call the equation on \( B_0 \) the generating equation for \( F \). Suppose that the generating equation has been chosen so that there are finitely many elliptic domains, so that the attracted (repelled) trajectories are isolated, and so that the system is symmetric with respect to rotations of angle \( 2\pi/q \) where \( q \) is some positive integer, \( i.e. \)

\[
R\left(r, \theta + \frac{2\pi k}{q}\right) = R(r, \theta) \\
\Theta\left(r, \theta + \frac{2\pi k}{q}\right) = \Theta(r, \theta)
\]

Let \( E(H) \) denote the (finite) number of elliptic domains (hyperbolic domains, respectively). It follows from the sym-
metry condition that \( q \) divides \( E \) and \( H \). Therefore since the index of \( \gamma(0) \) is given by the formula \( 1 + \frac{1}{2}(E - H) \), it follows that the index is of the form \( 1 + nq \). A trajectory of the vector field \( F \) can be classified as elliptic, hyperbolic, attracted, or repelled depending on which kind of trajectory on \( B_0 \) generated it. The union of the attracted (repelled) trajectories is an invariant 2-manifold which has a finite number of components. Each component has the property that its union with \( \gamma \) is a half-line bundle. The union of the elliptic (hyperbolic) trajectories is an open subset with \( E(H) \) components, each of which is an open solid torus. These components are called elliptic (hyperbolic) domains. We now construct another vector field \( G \) on the solid torus by cutting the torus at \( B_0 = B_{2\pi} \) and identifying \( B_0 \) to \( B_{2\pi} \) by

\[
(r, \theta, 2\pi) = \left( r, \theta + \frac{2\pi p}{q}, 0 \right)
\]

where \( p \) is some nonzero integer which is relatively prime to \( q \). \( G \) is field of tangent vectors to the images of the trajectories of \( F \) under this operation. It is clear that \( G \) is as smooth as \( F \). The invariant manifolds of \( G \) form half-line bundles over \( \gamma \) which have rotation number \( r(\gamma; G) = p/q \). Also, there are \( e \) elliptic domains and \( h \) hyperbolic domains for \( G \) where \( E = eq \) and \( H = hq \). The restrictions \( G^k \) of \( G^* \) to \( B_0 \) either have \( \gamma(0) \) a node if \( k \neq mq \) or similar to the original field if \( k = mq \). Therefore,

\[
i_k(\gamma; G) = \begin{cases} 
1 & \text{if } k \neq mq \\
1 + nq & \text{if } k = mq.
\end{cases}
\]

From this we also see immediately that \( t_k(\gamma; G) = 0 \) if \( k \neq mq \), and \( t_{mq}(\gamma; G) \) is the same for all \( m > 0 \). We shall now compute \( t_q(\gamma; G) \).

**Lemma 3.1.** — Let \( C \) denote any nonzero cross-section of the solid torus and let \( G^q|C \) denote the half-line bundle over \( C \) which is induced by \( G^q \). Then

\[
r(G^q|C) = t_q(\gamma; G) + \lambda(C, \gamma)i_q(\gamma; G)
\]

where \( \lambda(C, \gamma) \) denotes the linking number of \( C \) and \( \gamma \).
Proof. — Let $C_0$ denote a section which does not link $\gamma$ and let $C_1$ denote a curve in $B_0$ which links $\gamma$ once. Then $t_q(\gamma; G) = r(G^q|C_0)$. Now homotopies of $C$ through nonzero cross-sections induce equivalences of the bundle $G^q|C$; so we can assume that $C$ is a section which lies very close to $C_0 \cup C_1$ ($C$ is homologous to $C_0 + \lambda(C, \gamma)C_1$). A circuit of a loop close to $C_1$ rotates $G^q|C$ by $i_q(\gamma; G)$, and so the formula is established.

Corollary 3.2. — If $C$ is a local, nonzero section which has homology type $(p', q')$, then $r(G^q|C) = q't_q(\gamma; G) + p'i_q(\gamma; G)$.

Corollary 3.3. — $t_{mq}(\gamma; G) = r(\gamma; G)[1 - i_{mq}(\gamma; G)]$.

Proof. — Let $C$ be a local section which lies in an attracted manifold. Then $C$ has homology type $(p, q)$ and $r(G^q|C) = p$. By 3.2.

$$p = qt_q(\gamma; G) + pi_q(\gamma; G).$$

Remark. — With the simple geometry that we have assumed, we can compute the numbers $i_k(\gamma; G)$ and $t_k(\gamma; G)$ directly the values $e, h, p, q$. The values are

$$i_k(\gamma; G) = \begin{cases} 1 & \text{if } k \neq mq \\ 1 + \frac{q}{2}(e - h) & \text{if } k = mq \end{cases}$$

$$t_k(\gamma; G) = \begin{cases} 1 & \text{if } k \neq mq \\ -\frac{p}{2}(e - h) & \text{if } k = mq. \end{cases}$$

Definition. — Let $F$ be any vector field on $S^3$ and let $\gamma$ be a periodic solution of $F$. $\gamma$ has simple type if there is a neighborhood of $\gamma$ on which $F$ has the same form as one of the vector fields $G$ (above) near its periodic solution. The attracted and repelled manifolds of $\gamma$ are called the invariant manifolds.

4. Geometrically simple vector fields.

We shall now investigate a special class of vector fields on an orientable 3-manifold $M^3$ whose trajectories have a
sufficiently simple geometric structure that we can make some rather strong statements about their global qualitative structure. A vector field is called geometrically simple if its trajectories satisfy the following properties:

1. There is a finite number of periodic solutions.
2. Each periodic solution has simple type.
3. Each trajectory has its \( \alpha \)- and \( \omega \)-limit sets contained in the set of periodic solutions.
4. If a trajectory does not intersect an invariant manifold, then its \( \alpha \)- and \( \omega \)-limits are at the same periodic solution \( \gamma \) and the trajectory approaches \( \gamma \) in an elliptic domain.
5. The invariant manifolds, have degenerate intersection, i.e. they either coincide or else they are disjoint.

**Proposition 4.1.** — The closure of an invariant manifold of a geometrically simple vector field is the image of an immersion \( f: S^1 \times [0, 1] \rightarrow M^3 \) which is one-to-one on \( S^1 \times (0, 1) \).

**Proof.** — Let \( \overline{N} \) denote the closure of an invariant manifold \( N \). By the degenerate intersection property and the fact that every trajectory must have its \( \alpha \)- and \( \omega \)-limits at some periodic solution, it follows that there are periodic solutions \( \gamma_\alpha, \gamma_\omega \) such that every trajectory in \( N \) has its \( \alpha \)-limit at \( \gamma_\alpha \) and its \( \omega \)-limit at \( \gamma_\omega \) (it is not necessary that \( \gamma_\alpha \) and \( \gamma_\omega \) be distinct). Let \( f_1: S^1 \times [0, \frac{1}{3}] \rightarrow M^3 \) be an immersion into \( \overline{N} \) which describes the half-line bundle over \( \gamma_\alpha \) and such that \( f_1|_{S^1 \times \left\{ \frac{1}{3} \right\}} \) is transverse to \( F|_N \), and let \( f_3: S^1 \times \left[\frac{2}{3}, 1\right] \) be a similar embedding at \( \gamma_\omega \) (\( f_1 \) and \( f_3 \) can be obtained via Lyapunov theory, for example [5], [6]). Every trajectory which starts at a point \( x \in N_1 = f_1\left(S^1 \times \left\{ \frac{1}{3} \right\}\right) \) reaches \( N_2 = f_3\left(S^1 \times \left\{ \frac{2}{3} \right\}\right) \) in finite time \( t(x) \) and it follows by the implicit function theorem and the differentiability of trajectories with respect to their initial conditions that \( t: N_1 \rightarrow \mathbb{R} \) is as smooth as the vector...
field. Define $f_2 : S^1 \times \left[ \frac{1}{3}, \frac{2}{3} \right] \to N$ by

$$x = f_1 \left( \theta, \frac{1}{3} \right), \quad f_2(\theta, t) = \psi \left( x, \left( t - \frac{1}{3} \right) 3t(x) \right)$$

where $\psi : M^3 \times \mathbb{R} \to M^3$ is the flow induced by the vector field. The mapping $f_1 \circ f_2 \circ f_3$ is the desired immersion except possibly for the lack of smoothness at $S^1 \times \left\{ \frac{1}{3} \right\}$ and $S^1 \times \left\{ \frac{2}{3} \right\}$. Smoothing techniques for Lyapunov functions [5] can be used to remedy this problem.

**Proposition 4.2.** If $V$ is an elliptic domain of a periodic solution of $F$, then the saturation $\hat{V} = \{ p | \varphi(p, t) \in V \text{ for some } t \in \mathbb{R} \}$ of $V$ is open. If $V_1$ and $V_2$ are distinct elliptic domains, the $\hat{V}_1$ and $\hat{V}_2$ are disjoint.

**Proof.** $\hat{V}$ is open since $V$ is open. By the structure near a periodic solution, $V_1$ and $V_2$ can be chosen so that whenever a trajectory enters $V_i$ positively (negatively) it stays in $V_i$ for all future positive (negative) time. But with such choices, $\hat{V}_1$ and $\hat{V}_2$ must be disjoint.

**Proposition 4.3.** Let $F$ be a geometrically simple vector field and let $\gamma$ be a periodic solution of $F$. Then every hyperbolic domain of $\gamma$, which intersects no invariant manifolds, corresponds to an elliptic domain of some periodic solution.

**Proof.** Let $U$ denote a hyperbolic domain of $\gamma$, let $p \in U$, and let $\gamma_\alpha, \gamma_\omega$ denote the respective $\alpha$- and $\omega$-limit sets of $p$. Since $p$ does not lie on an invariant manifold, $\gamma_\alpha = \gamma_\omega$. Let $V$ denote the elliptic domain of $\gamma_\alpha$ which corresponds to the trajectory through $p$. Since $U$ is open and connected and since $U$ intersects no invariant manifolds, it follows that $U$ is contained in the saturation of $V$.

**Proposition 4.4.** The saturation of an elliptic domain is homeomorphic to an open solid torus.

**Proof.** Let $V$ denote an elliptic domain of a periodic solution $\gamma$. If we can construct a cross section to the induced
flow on $\tilde{V}$ which is contained in $V$, then the cross section will have the form $S^1 \times \mathbb{R}$. We can then obtain a homeomorphism $h: S^1 \times \mathbb{R}^2 \to \tilde{V}$ by

$$h(\theta, s, t) = \psi(g(\theta, s), t)$$

where $g: S^1 \times \mathbb{R} \to \tilde{V}$ describes the cross-section and $\psi(p, t)$ describes the induced flow. Thus it remains to construct a cross-section to the flow on $\tilde{V}$. Let us suppose $r(\gamma; F) = p/q$. Then there is a neighborhood $U$ of $\gamma$ such that $F|U$ coincides with one of the examples from § 3. Let $(U', \gamma')$ be the $q$-fold covering space of $(U, \gamma)$ and let $F'$ denote the induced vector field, $V'$ a related elliptic domain. Then it suffices to construct a cross-section to the flow induced on $V'$ by $F'$. But $F'$ can be described in coordinates by

$$\dot{r} = R(r, \theta); \quad \dot{\theta} = \Theta(r, \theta); \quad \phi = 1.$$ 

Thus it suffices to find a cross-section to the generating equation on the elliptic domain $V' = V^1 \cap B_0$. But for this, we can take any trajectory of a transverse vector field. There is no difficulty in choosing the transverse vector field so that the section is contained in $V$ ([cf. [7]]).

**Theorem 4.5 (Structure Theorem).** — Let $F$ be a geometrically simple vector field on $M^3$. Then $F$ has a finite set of periodic solutions $\gamma_1, \ldots, \gamma_k$ and a finite set of invariant manifolds $N_1, \ldots, N_l$. Each invariant manifold $N_i$ is diffeomorphic to $S^1 \times (0, 1)$ and contains two periodic solutions in its closure (not necessarily distinct) one attracting the trajectories of $N_i$, the other repelling them. The union of $N_i$ and either of these periodic solutions forms a half-line bundle. The complement of the set $S = \left( \bigcup_{j=1}^k \gamma_j \right) \left( \bigcup_{i=1}^l N_i \right)$ is the union of disjoint open tori, and each such torus is the saturation of an elliptic domain of some periodic solution.

**Proof.** — The properties of the $N_i$ follow from 4.1. Let $U$ be a component of $M^3 - S$. Then any $p \in U$ lies in the saturation of some elliptic domain (cf. 4.3) and by 4.2 $U$ is an elliptic domain. It follows from 4.4 that $U$ is homeomorphic to an open solid torus. Finiteness follows since there
are only finitely many periodic solutions and each of these has only finitely many elliptic domains.

**Proposition 4.6.** — Suppose that $F$ is a geometrically simple vector field having periodic solutions $\gamma_0$ and $\gamma_1$ which bound an invariant manifold $N$. Suppose that $r(\gamma_0; F) = p/q$ and $r(\gamma_1; F) = p'/q' \ (q, q' > 0, \ p \text{ or } p' \text{ may be zero})$. Then

$$\lambda(\gamma_0; \gamma_1) = \frac{p}{q} = \frac{p'}{q'}$$

$$r(\gamma_0; F) \cdot r(\gamma_1; F) = \lambda(\gamma_0; \gamma_1)^2.$$  

If $F$ has no other periodic solutions, then

$$t_\gamma(\gamma_0; F) = \lambda(\gamma_0; \gamma_1) i_q(\gamma_1; F) - \lambda(\gamma_0; \gamma_1)$$

$$t_\gamma(\gamma_1; F) = \lambda(\gamma_0; \gamma_1) i_{q'}(\gamma_1; F) - \lambda(\gamma_0; \gamma_1).$$

**Proof.** — Let $\gamma$ denote a section in the half-line bundle $N \cup \gamma_0$. Then $\lambda(\gamma; \gamma_0) = p$ and $\gamma$ covers $\gamma_0$ $q$ times. Similarly, $\lambda(\gamma; \gamma_1) = p'$ and $\gamma$ covers $\gamma_1$ $q'$ times. Translating $\gamma$ by the flow to get it close to $\gamma_0$ or $\gamma_1$ as desired, we conclude

$$q\lambda(\gamma_0; \gamma_1) = \lambda(\gamma; \gamma_1) = p'$$

$$q\lambda(\gamma_0; \gamma_1) = \lambda(\gamma; \gamma_0) = p.$$  

If $F$ has no other periodic solutions, then the roles of $e$ and $h$ are interchanged for $\gamma_0$ and $\gamma_1$. Thus, using the formulas from § 3, we have

$$i_{q'}(\gamma_1; F) = 1 + \frac{q'}{2} (h - e)$$

and

$$t_\gamma(\gamma_0; F) = -\frac{p}{2} (e - h) = \frac{p}{2} \cdot \frac{q'}{2} [i_{q'}(\gamma_1; F) - 1]$$

$$= \lambda(\gamma_0; \gamma_1) i_{q'}(\gamma_1; F) - \lambda(\gamma_0; \gamma_1).$$

**5. Some examples of geometrically simple vector fields on $S^3$.**

In this section, we shall show that there are geometrically simple vector fields on $S^3$ and we shall determine the properties of those vector fields which have only two periodic solutions. Preparatory for this goal, we must study the geometric properties of the closure of an invariant manifold.
Lemma 5.1. — Let $F$ be a vector field on $S^3$ which has just two periodic solutions $\gamma_0$ and $\gamma_1$. Suppose that $\gamma_0$ is asymptotically stable with domain of attraction $S^3 - \gamma_1$ and that $\gamma_1$ is asymptotically stable in the negative sense with domain of (negative) attraction $S^3 - \gamma_0$. Then $\gamma_0$ and $\gamma_1$ are unknotted and $\lambda(\gamma_0, \gamma_1) = \pm 1$.

Proof. — Let $M$ denote an unknotted circle which lies in a tubular neighborhood of $\gamma_1$ and such that $\lambda(M, \gamma_1) = 1$. Let $M_t$ denote the translate of $M$ by the flow for time $t$. Then $\lambda(M_t, \gamma_1) = 1$ for all $t$, and for sufficiently large $t'$, $M_{t'}$ lies in a tubular neighborhood $U$ of $\gamma_0$. Let $\pi : U \rightarrow \gamma_0$ denote the projection of the tubular neighborhood $U$, and let $q$ denote the degree of $\pi|_{M_{t'}}$. Then

$$1 = \lambda(M_{t'}, \gamma_1) = q \lambda(\gamma_0, \gamma_1)$$

from which it follows that $q = \lambda(\gamma_0, \gamma_1) = \pm 1$. Now if $\gamma_0$ were knotted, then $M_{t'}$ would be knotted. But this cannot be since $M$ is unknotted. Thus $\gamma_0$ is unknotted. By symmetry, $\gamma_1$ is also unknotted.

Theorem 5.2. — Let $F$ denote a geometrically simple vector field on $S^3$ which has just two periodic solutions $\gamma_0$ and $\gamma_1$. Then $\gamma_0$ and $\gamma_1$ are unknotted and $\lambda(\gamma_0, \gamma_1) = \pm 1$.

Proof. — There is no loss of generality in assuming that every elliptic domain of $\gamma_0$ corresponds to a hyperbolic domain of $\gamma_1$, and conversely, since if $W$ is the closure of an elliptic domain of $\gamma_0$ which does not contain $\gamma_1$, then $S^3 - W$ is diffeomorphic to $S^3 - \gamma_0$, and the resulting diffeomorphism induces a geometrically simple vector field on $S^3$ with essentially the same structure except for the omission of $W$. We shall build a new vector field $G$ on $S^3$ which has $\gamma_0, \gamma_1$ for its only minimal sets and which has the elliptic domains and invariant manifolds as invariant sets, but such that the hypotheses of 5.1 are satisfied. This is sufficient to prove the theorem. Since every invariant manifold of $F$ has $\gamma_0$ and $\gamma_1$ in its closure, we define $G$ on the invariant manifolds so that every trajectory runs from $\gamma_1$ to $\gamma_0$. Since every elliptic domain of $F$ is a solid torus which contains $\gamma_0, \gamma_1$ and two invariant manifolds in its
boundary, we can extend $G$ to each elliptic domain of $F$ so that every trajectory runs from $\gamma_1$ to $\gamma_0$ there also.

Theorem 5.3. — If $F$ is a geometrically simple vector fields on $S^3$ which has just two periodic solutions, $\gamma_0, \gamma_1$, then

$$r(\gamma_0; F) = \frac{p}{q} \neq 0$$

$$r(\gamma_1; F) = \pm \frac{q}{p} \neq 0.$$

Proof. — There is no loss of generality in assuming $\gamma_0 = T_0$ and $\gamma_1 = T_1$. Let $\bar{N}$ denote the closure of an invariant manifold which contains $\gamma_0$ and $\gamma_1$, and let $C$ denote a section in $N$. Then $C$ covers $\gamma_0 q \geq 1$ times and $\lambda(C, \gamma_0) = p$.

By the relationship of $T_0$ and $T_1$, it follows that $\lambda(C, \gamma_1) = q$ and $C$ covers $\gamma_0 |p|$ times, i.e. $|p| \neq 0$. The theorem follows.

Examples which have two periodic solutions. — We will now describe some examples of geometrically simple vector fields on $S^3$ which have just two periodic solutions. As a consequence of 4.2, 4.5, 5.2 and 5.3, it follows that these every such vector field corresponds to one of these examples.

Take $\gamma_0 = T_0$ and $\gamma_1 = T_1$. We choose integers $p \neq 0$, $q > 0$, $e > 0$, $h > 0$ such that $(p, q) = 1$ and $e + h = 0 \mod 2$. Consider the arcs

$$A_k = \{(r, \theta, \varphi) | 0 \leq r \leq 1, \theta = \frac{2\pi k}{q(e + h)}, \varphi = \frac{2\pi k}{p(e + h)}\}$$

for $k = 1, 2, \ldots, e + h$. There is one point $x_r^k$ in $A_k \cap T_r$ for each $r, 0 < r < 1$. Let $C_r^k$ denote the canonical curve of type $(p, q)$ in $T_r$, which passes through $x_r^k$. Then

$$N_k = \bigcup_{0 < r < 1} C_r^k$$

is a submanifold of $S^3$ whose closure can be considered as a half-line bundle with rotation $\begin{pmatrix} p \\ e + h \end{pmatrix}$ at $T_0$ or with rotation $\begin{pmatrix} q \\ p \end{pmatrix}$ at $T_1$. $S = S^3 - \bigcup_{k=1}^{e+h} \bar{N}_k$ has $(e + h)$ components,
each of which is an open solid torus. By means of immersions of $S^1 \times [0, 1] \to \mathbb{N}_k$ and diffeomorphisms of $S^1 \times \mathbb{R}^3 \to S$ we can define a $C^1$ vector field $F$ on $S^3$ which has $\gamma_0 = T_0$, $\gamma_1 = T_1$ periodic solutions of simple type, which has $e$ elliptic domains at $\gamma_0$, which has $h$ elliptic domains at $\gamma_1$, and which has each $\mathbb{N}_k$ as an invariant manifold. (It is also clear how to put in some elliptic domains at $\gamma_0$ which do not reach to $\gamma_1$ if we so desire). For simplicity, when we refer to these examples, we shall intend for the vector field on $\gamma_0$ to be directed with increasing $\varphi$. The vector field may be directed in either direction on $\gamma_1$. We say $\lambda(\gamma_0, \gamma_1) = +1$ if $F$ is directed with increasing $\theta$ on $\gamma_1$.

**Theorem 5.4.** — Let $p \neq 0$, $q > 0$, $e \geq 0$, $h \geq 0$ be the parameters used to construct a geometrically simple vector field $F$ which has two periodic solutions. Then

i) $r(\gamma_0; F) = \frac{p}{q}$.

ii) $i^q(\gamma_0, F) = 1 + \frac{q}{2} (e - h)$.

iii) $i^e(\gamma_0; F) = -\frac{|p|}{2} (e - h)$.

iv) $r(\gamma_1; F) = \lambda(\gamma_0, \gamma_1) \frac{q}{p}$.

v) $i^p(\gamma_1; F) = 1 - \frac{|p|}{2} (e - h)$.

vi) $i^q(\gamma_1; F) = \frac{q}{2} (e - h)$.

**Proof.** — The assertions regarding $\gamma_0$ are restatements of results obtained in §3. The assertions regarding $\gamma_1$ follow similarly after we recall that for $\gamma_1$, the roles of $e$ and $h$ and the roles of $p$ and $q$ are interchanged, and $r(\gamma_1; F)$ is computed by looking in the direction of $F$ along $\gamma_1$.

**Examples which have one periodic solution.** We shall now describe a countably infinite set of distinct examples of geometrically simple vector fields on $S^3$ which have just one periodic solution. Let $F$ be a geometrically simple vector field with just two periodic solutions, and let $p$, $q$, $e$, $h$ be the parameters describing $F$. Observe that if $p$ and $\lambda(\gamma_0, \gamma_1)$ have the same sign, then $F$ could be altered homotopically,
preserving each invariant manifold and elliptic domain, so that on some invariant manifold \( N \), \( F \) is made to coincide with the field of tangents to the \( (p, q) \)th Hopf fibering (if \( p \lambda(\gamma_0, \gamma_1) < 0 \), then this structure would force a discontinuity at \( \gamma_1 \)). Suppose that \( F \) has been so altered. Note that there is a diffeomorphism \( h : S^3 \rightarrow N \rightarrow S^3 - T_0 \). Define a vector field \( G \) on \( S^3 \) by

\[
G|T_0 = F|T_0 \\
G|(S^3 - T_0) = h_*(F|S^3 - N).
\]

Then \( G \) is geometrically simple and \( \gamma_0 \) is the only periodic solution of \( G \). Also, since some invariant manifolds of \( F \) remain as invariant manifolds of \( G \) near \( \gamma_0 \), it follows that \( r(\gamma_0; G) = p|q \). Thus we obtain a different example of a geometrically simple vector field with just one periodic solution for each relatively prime pair \( (p, q) \).


Let \( F \) denote a geometrically simple vector field on \( S^3 \) which has just two periodic solutions \( \gamma_0, \gamma_1 \), and let \( p, q, e, h \) be the parameters describing \( F \).

**Theorem 6.1.** — If \( p \lambda(\gamma_0, \gamma_1) > 0 \), then \( F \simeq H_+ \) if \( p > 0 \), and \( F \simeq H_- \) if \( p < 0 \).

**Corollary 6.2.** — The examples which we have given of geometrically simple vector fields with just one periodic solution are homotopic to \( H_+ \) or \( H_- \) according to whether \( p > 0 \) or \( p < 0 \).

**Proof of theorem.** — Let \( \{N_i\}_{i=1}^{e+h} \) denote the invariant manifolds of \( F \) and let \( \{D_i\}_{i=1}^{e+h} \) denote the elliptic domains. By the construction used in the proof of 4.4, there is a cross-section \( M_i \) to the flow in \( D_i \) and we can arrange it so that \( M_i \) contains \( \gamma_0 \) and \( \gamma_1 \) in its closure and forms a half-line bundle over \( \gamma_0 \) and \( \gamma_1 \), just as the \( N_i \) do. Let \( M_{i,t} \) denote the translate of \( M_i \) by the flow for time \( t \) \((-\infty < t < \infty)\). Then \( M_{i,t} \) is also a half-line bundle over \( \gamma_0 \) and \( \gamma_1 \) and
\[ \bigcup_{-\infty < i < \infty} M_{i,t} = D. \] Since \( F \) is transversal to \( M_{i,t} \) for each \( i \) and \( t \), there is a homotopy of \( F \) relative to \( \bigcup_{i=1}^{e+h} N_i \) which produces a vector field \( F' \) which is tangent to every \( M_{i,t} \).

**Lemma 6.3.** — Let \( \{M_\alpha\} \) be a family of embedded open cylinders which fill \( S^3 - T_0 \cup T_1 \), and such that for each \( \alpha \)
\[ M_\alpha = M_\alpha \cup T_0 \cup T_1 \]
is a half-line bundle with rotation \( p/q \) over \( T_0 \) and a half-line bundle with rotation \( q/p \) over \( T_1 \). Then there is an isotopy of \( S^3 \) relative to \( T_0 \cup T_1 \) which carries \( \{M_\alpha\} \) onto \( \{N_{\theta, \varphi}\} \) where \( N_{\theta, \varphi} \) is the half-line bundle over \( T_0 \) and \( T_1 \)
\[ N_{\theta, \varphi} = \bigcup_{0 < r < 1} C_r \]
where \( C_r \) is the canonical curve of type \((p, q)\) in \( T_r \) which passes through the point \((r, \theta, \varphi)\).

Continuing the proof of 6.1, we alter \( F' \) by the isotopy of the flow described in 6.3. By a further homotopy on each \( N_{\theta, \varphi} \), we obtain the \((p, q)\)th Hopf field. The theorem now follows from 2.4.

**Theorem 6.4.** — If \( p\lambda(\gamma_0, \gamma_1) < 0 \), then
\[ d(F, H_-) = -i_q(\gamma_0; F)i_p(\gamma_1; F) \quad \text{if} \quad \lambda(\gamma_0, \gamma_1) > 0. \]
\[ d(F, H_+) = i_q(\gamma_0; F)i_p(\gamma_1; F) \quad \text{if} \quad \lambda(\gamma_0, \gamma_1) < 0. \]

**Proof.** — We shall choose a parallelization \( \Pi \) which extends the \((p, q)\)th Hopf fibering and compute the difference element by geometrically determining the Hopf invariant of the mapping of \( S^3 \) into \( S^2 \) induced by \( F \) and \( \Pi \).

By 6.3 and the construction used in the previous proof, we can assume that \( F \) is transverse to \( \{N_{\theta, \varphi}\} \) on the interior of each elliptic domain and that \( N_i = N_{\theta_i, \varphi_i} \) for \( i = 1, \ldots, e + h \). Let \( \Pi \) denote a parallelization which extends the \((p, q)\)th Hopf fibering \( H \). By 1.1, it does not matter which one we choose. On each \( N_i \), the trajectories go either from \( \gamma_0 \) to \( \gamma_1 \) or from \( \gamma_1 \) to \( \gamma_0 \). In either case, there is no loss of generality in assuming that they are never tangent to the first coordinate of \( \Pi \). Then, since \( F \) is trans-
verse to $N_{0, \varphi}$ on the interior of each elliptic domain, it follows that the only places that $F$ coincides with the first coordinate direction $H$ of $\Pi$ is on $\gamma_0$ and $\gamma_1$. On $\gamma_0$, $F$ is positively directed and on $\gamma_1$, $F$ is negatively directed. We can then alter $\Pi$ by a homotopy relative to $H$ so that expressed in $\Pi$-coordinates, the first coordinate of $F|T_\tau$ has value $1 - 2r$. Thus to compute $d(F, H)$, it suffices to consider the induced mapping $f: T_\tau \to S^1$. Since $F$ is geometrically simple, sufficiently close to $\gamma_0$, $F$ and $F^q$ are homotopic. Since we have chosen $\Pi$ to fix the magnitude of the first coordinate of $F$ in $\Pi$-coordinates, we can use either $F$ or $F^q$ to determine the other two $H$-coordinates of $F|T_\tau$.

**Lemma 6.5.** — Let $\Delta$ denote the half-line bundle over $T_0$ induced by the second coordinate direction of the right invariant (left invariant) parallelization of $S^3$. Then

$$r(\Delta) = -1 \quad \text{right invariant}$$
$$r(\Delta) = +1 \quad \text{left invariant}.$$

**Proof.** — By 2.1, $H_+$ and the left invariant vector field coincide, i.e. $H_+$ is the $(1,1)$-Hopf vector field and its trajectories are the left-cosets the Lie-action of $S^1$ on $S^3$. Since these cosets carry the left invariant parallelization, $r(\Delta) = +1$ in the left invariant case. The other case is similarly verified.

**Corollary 6.6.** — $r(\Pi|\gamma_0) = -\lambda(\gamma_0, \gamma_1)$.

**Proof.** — Since $\Pi$ is homotopic to one of the invariant parallelizations (depending on the sign of $p$) we can apply 6.5.

Returning to the proof of 6.4, we let $C_\varphi(C_\theta)$ denote a curve in $T_\tau$ obtained by holding $\varphi$ constant ($\theta$ constant, respectively). By the definition of torsion, $t_\varphi(\gamma_0; F^q) = r(F|C_\theta)$. Since $r(\Pi|C_\varphi) = -\lambda(\gamma_0, \gamma_1)$, we conclude that $f|C_\varphi$ has degree $t_\varphi(\gamma_0; F) + \lambda(\gamma_0, \gamma_1)$. By definition, $f|C_\varphi$ has degree $i_\varphi(\gamma_0; F)$. Since these values do not depend on $r$, it follows that the Hopf invariant of $f$ is

$$-i_\varphi(\gamma_0; F)[t_\varphi(\gamma_0; F) + \lambda(\gamma_0, \gamma_1)].$$

(cf. the description of the Hopf fiberings in § 2). By 4.7,

$$t_\varphi(\gamma_0; F) = \lambda(\gamma_0; \gamma_1)i_\rho(\gamma_1; F) - \lambda(\gamma_0; \gamma_1).$$
Thus the Hopf invariant of \( f \) is
\[-\lambda(\gamma_0; \gamma_1)i_q(\gamma_0; F)i_p(\gamma_1; F).\]

**Theorem 6.7.** — There is a geometric vector field with two periodic solutions representing every homotopy class of vector field on \( S^3 \).

**Proof.** — We apply 6.4. To obtain the positive classes (above \( H_+ \)), take \( \lambda(\gamma_0, \gamma_1) = +1, \ p < 0, \ q > 0 \) and \( e - h = k \). When \( q = k = 1 \), then
\[ i_q(\gamma_0; F) = 2; \quad i_p(\gamma_1; F) = 1 + p. \]
Then \( d(F; H_-) = -2(1 + p) > 0 \) and for \( p = -2, -3, ... \) every odd class above \( H_+ \) is represented. Taking \( p = -1, \ k = 2 \), we find
\[ i_q(\gamma_0; F) = 1 + 2q; \quad i_p(\gamma_1; F) = -1 \]
and \( d(F; H_-) = 1 + 2q \) and for \( q = 1, 2, ... \), every even class above \( H_+ \) is represented. The negative classes (below \( H_- \)) are found by taking \( \lambda(\gamma_0; \gamma_1) = -1 \).

**Bibliography**


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