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Preface

... ad alcuno, dico, di quelli, che troppo laconicamente vorrebbero vedere, nei più angusti spazii che possibil fusse, ristretti i filosofici insegnamenti, sí che sempre si usasse quella rigida e concisa maniera, spogliata di qualsivoglia vaghezza ed ornamento, che é propria dei puri geometri, li quali né pure una parola proferiscono che dalla assoluta necessitá non sia loro suggerita.

*Ma io, all'incontro, non ascrivo a difetto in un trattato, ancorché indirizzato ad un solo scopo, interserire altre varie notizie, purché non siano totalmente separate e senza veruna coerenza annesse al principale istituto.**

Galileo Galilei

“Lettera al Principe Leopoldo di Toscana” (1623)

Hydrodynamics is one of those fundamental areas in mathematics where progress at any moment may be regarded as a standard to measure the real success of mathematical science. Many important achievements in this field are based on profound theories rather than on experiments. In turn, those hydrodynamical theories stimulated developments in the domains of pure mathematics, such as complex analysis, topology, stability theory, bifurcation theory, and completely integrable dynamical systems. In spite of all this acknowledged success, hydrodynamics with its spectacular empirical laws remains a challenge for mathematicians. For instance, the phenomenon of turbulence has not yet acquired a rigorous mathematical theory. Furthermore, the existence problems for the smooth solutions of hydrodynamic equations of a three-dimensional fluid are still open.

The simplest but already very substantial mathematical model for fluid dynamics is the hydrodynamics of an ideal (i.e., of an incompressible and inviscid) homogeneous fluid. From the mathematical point of view, a theory of such a fluid

* “... Some prefer to see the scientific teachings condensed too laconically into the smallest possible volume, so as always to use a rigid and concise manner that whatsoever lacks beauty and embellishment, and that is so common among pure geometers who do not pronounce a single word which is not of absolute necessity.

I, on the contrary, do not consider it a defect to insert in a treatise, albeit devoted to a single aim, other various remarks, as long as they are not out of place and without coherency with the main purpose,” see [Gal].

filling a certain domain is nothing but a study of geodesics on the group of diffeomorphisms of the domain that preserve volume elements. The geodesics on this (infinite-dimensional) group are considered with respect to the right-invariant Riemannian metric given by the kinetic energy.

In 1765, L. Euler [Eul] published the equations of motion of a rigid body. Eulerian motions are described as geodesics in the group of rotations of three-dimensional Euclidean space, where the group is provided with a left-invariant metric. In essence, the Euler theory of a rigid body is fully described by this invariance. The Euler equations can be extended in the same way to an arbitrary group. As a result, one obtains, for instance, the equations of a rigid body motion in a high-dimensional space and, especially interesting, the Euler equations of the hydrodynamics of an ideal fluid.

Euler's theorems on the stability of rotations about the longest and shortest axes of the inertia ellipsoid have counterparts for an arbitrary group as well. In the case of hydrodynamics, these counterparts deliver nonlinear generalizations of Rayleigh's theorem on the stability of two-dimensional flows without inflection points of the velocity profile.

The description of ideal fluid flows by means of geodesics of the right-invariant metric allows one to apply the methods of Riemannian geometry to the study of flows. It does not immediately imply that one has to start by constructing a consistent theory of infinite-dimensional Riemannian manifolds. The latter encounters serious analytical difficulties, related in particular to the absence of existence theorems for smooth solutions of the corresponding differential equations.

On the other hand, the strategy of applying geometric methods to the infinite-dimensional problems is as follows. Having established certain facts in the finite-dimensional situation (of geodesics for invariant metrics on finite-dimensional Lie groups), one uses the results to *formulate* the corresponding facts for the infinite-dimensional case of the diffeomorphism groups. These final results often can be proved directly, leaving aside the difficult questions of foundations for the intermediate steps (such as the existence of solutions on a given time interval). The results obtained in this way have an *a priori* character: the derived identities or inequalities take place for any reasonable meaning of "solutions," provided that such solutions exist. The actual existence of the solutions remains an open question.

For example, we deduce the formulas for the Riemannian curvature of a group endowed with an invariant Riemannian metric. Applying these formulas to the case of the infinite-dimensional manifold whose geodesics are motions of the ideal fluid, we find that the curvature is negative in many directions. Negativeness of the curvature implies instability of motion along the geodesics (which is well-known in Riemannian geometry of finite-dimensional manifolds). In the context of the (infinite-dimensional) case of the diffeomorphism group, we conclude that the ideal flow is unstable (in the sense that a small variation of the initial data implies large changes of the particle positions at a later time). Moreover, the curvature formulas allow one to estimate the increment of the exponential deviation of fluid particles with close initial positions and hence to pre-

dict the time period when the motion of fluid masses becomes essentially unpredictable.

For instance, in the simplest and utmost idealized model of the earth's atmosphere (regarded as two-dimensional ideal fluid on a torus surface), the deviations grow by the factor of 10^5 in 2 months. This circumstance ensures that a dynamical weather forecast for such a period is practically impossible (however powerful the computers and however dense the grid of data used for this purpose).

The table of contents is essentially self explanatory. We have tried to make the chapters as independent of each other as possible. Cross-references within the same chapter do not contain the chapter number.

For a first acquaintance with the subject, we address the reader to the following sections in each chapter: Sections I.1–5 and I.12, Sections II.1 and II.3–4, Sections III.1–2 and III.4, Section IV.1, Sections V.1–2, Sections VI.1 and VI.4.

Some statements in this book may be new even for the experts. We mention the classification of the local conservation laws in ideal hydrodynamics (Theorem I.9.9), M. Freedman's solution of the A. Sakharov–Ya. Zeldovich problem on the energy minimization of the unknotted magnetic field (Theorem III.3), a discussion of the construction of manifold invariants from the energy bounds (Remark III.2.6), a discussion of a complex version of the Vassiliev knot invariants (in Section III.7.E), a nice remark of B. Zeldovich on the Lobachevsky triangle medians (Problem IV.1.4), the relation of the covariant derivative of a vector field and the inertia operator in hydrodynamics (Section IV.1.D), a digression on the Fokker–Planck equation (Section V.3.C), and the dynamo construction from the geodesic flow on surfaces of constant negative curvature (Section V.4.D).

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Contents

Preface	v
Acknowledgments	ix
I. Group and Hamiltonian Structures of Fluid Dynamics	1
§1. Symmetry groups for a rigid body and an ideal fluid	1
§2. Lie groups, Lie algebras, and adjoint representation	3
§3. Coadjoint representation of a Lie group	10
3.A. Definition of the coadjoint representation	10
3.B. Dual of the space of plane divergence-free vector fields	11
3.C. The Lie algebra of divergence-free vector fields and its dual in arbitrary dimension	13
§4. Left-invariant metrics and a rigid body for an arbitrary group	14
§5. Applications to hydrodynamics	19
§6. Hamiltonian structure for the Euler equations	25
§7. Ideal hydrodynamics on Riemannian manifolds	31
7.A. The Euler hydrodynamic equation on manifolds	31
7.B. Dual space to the Lie algebra of divergence-free fields	32
7.C. Inertia operator of an n -dimensional fluid	36
§8. Proofs of theorems about the Lie algebra of divergence-free fields and its dual	39
§9. Conservation laws in higher-dimensional hydrodynamics	42
§10. The group setting of ideal magnetohydrodynamics	49
10.A. Equations of magnetohydrodynamics and the Kirchhoff equations	49
10.B. Magnetic extension of any Lie group	50
10.C. Hamiltonian formulation of the Kirchhoff and magnetohydrodynamics equations	53
§11. Finite-dimensional approximations of the Euler equation	56
11.A. Approximations by vortex systems in the plane	56
11.B. Nonintegrability of four or more point vortices	58
11.C. Hamiltonian vortex approximations in three dimensions	59
11.D. Finite-dimensional approximations of diffeomorphism groups	60

§12. The Navier–Stokes equation from the group viewpoint	63
--	----

II. Topology of Steady Fluid Flows 69

§1. Classification of three-dimensional steady flows	69
1.A. Stationary Euler solutions and Bernoulli functions	69
1.B. Structural theorems	73
§2. Variational principles for steady solutions and applications to two-dimensional flows	75
2.A. Minimization of the energy	75
2.B. The Dirichlet problem and steady flows	78
2.C. Relation of two variational principles	80
2.D. Semigroup variational principle for two-dimensional steady flows	81
§3. Stability of stationary points on Lie algebras	84
§4. Stability of planar fluid flows	88
4.A. Stability criteria for steady flows	89
4.B. Wandering solutions of the Euler equation	96
§5. Linear and exponential stretching of particles and rapidly oscillating perturbations	99
5.A. The linearized and shortened Euler equations	99
5.B. The action–angle variables	100
5.C. Spectrum of the shortened equation	101
5.D. The Squire theorem for shear flows	102
5.E. Steady flows with exponential stretching of particles	103
5.F. Analysis of the linearized Euler equation	105
5.G. Inconclusiveness of the stability test for space steady flows	106
§6. Features of higher-dimensional steady flows	109
6.A. Generalized Beltrami flows	109
6.B. Structure of four-dimensional steady flows	111
6.C. Topology of the vorticity function	112
6.D. Nonexistence of smooth steady flows and sharpness of the restrictions	116

III. Topological Properties of Magnetic and Vorticity Fields 119

§1. Minimal energy and helicity of a frozen-in field	119
1.A. Variational problem for magnetic energy	119
1.B. Extremal fields and their topology	120
1.C. Helicity bounds the energy	121
1.D. Helicity of fields on manifolds	124
§2. Topological obstructions to energy relaxation	129
2.A. Model example: Two linked flux tubes	129
2.B. Energy lower bound for nontrivial linking	131
§3. Sakharov–Zeldovich minimization problem	134

§4. Asymptotic linking number	139
4.A. Asymptotic linking number of a pair of trajectories	140
4.B. Digression on the Gauss formula	143
4.C. Another definition of the asymptotic linking number	144
4.D. Linking forms on manifolds	147
§5. Asymptotic crossing number	152
5.A. Energy minoration for generic vector fields	152
5.B. Asymptotic crossing number of knots and links	155
5.C. Conformal modulus of a torus	159
§6. Energy of a knot	160
6.A. Energy of a charged loop	160
6.B. Generalizations of the knot energy	163
§7. Generalized helicities and linking numbers	166
7.A. Relative helicity	166
7.B. Ergodic meaning of higher-dimensional helicity integrals	168
7.C. Higher-order linking integrals	174
7.D. Calugareanu invariant and self-linking number	177
7.E. Holomorphic linking number	179
§8. Asymptotic holonomy and applications	184
8.A. Jones–Witten invariants for vector fields	184
8.B. Interpretation of Godbillon–Vey-type characteristic classes	191

IV. Differential Geometry of Diffeomorphism Groups 195

§1. The Lobachevsky plane and preliminaries in differential geometry	196
1.A. The Lobachevsky plane of affine transformations	196
1.B. Curvature and parallel translation	197
1.C. Behavior of geodesics on curved manifolds	201
1.D. Relation of the covariant and Lie derivatives	202
§2. Sectional curvatures of Lie groups equipped with a one-sided invariant metric	204
§3. Riemannian geometry of the group of area-preserving diffeomorphisms of the two-torus	209
3.A. The curvature tensor for the group of torus diffeomorphisms	209
3.B. Curvature calculations	212
§4. Diffeomorphism groups and unreliable forecasts	214
4.A. Curvatures of various diffeomorphism groups	214
4.B. Unreliability of long-term weather predictions	218
§5. Exterior geometry of the group of volume-preserving diffeomorphisms	219
§6. Conjugate points in diffeomorphism groups	223

§7. Getting around the finiteness of the diameter of the group of volume-preserving diffeomorphisms	225
7.A. Interplay between the internal and external geometry of the diffeomorphism group	226
7.B. Diameter of the diffeomorphism groups	227
7.C. Comparison of the metrics and completion of the group of diffeomorphisms	228
7.D. The absence of the shortest path	230
7.E. Discrete flows	234
7.F. Outline of the proofs	235
7.G. Generalized flows	236
7.H. Approximation of fluid flows by generalized ones	238
7.I. Existence of cut and conjugate points on diffeomorphism groups	240
§8. Infinite diameter of the group of Hamiltonian diffeomorphisms and symplecto-hydrodynamics	242
8.A. Right-invariant metrics on symplectomorphisms	243
8.B. Calabi invariant	246
8.C. Bi-invariant metrics and pseudometrics on the group of Hamiltonian diffeomorphisms	252
8.D. Bi-invariant indefinite metric and action functional on the group of volume-preserving diffeomorphisms of a three-fold	255

V. Kinematic Fast Dynamo Problems 259

§1. Dynamo and particle stretching	259
1.A. Fast and slow kinematic dynamos	259
1.B. Nondissipative dynamos on arbitrary manifolds	262
§2. Discrete dynamos in two dimensions	264
2.A. Dynamo from the cat map on a torus	264
2.B. Horseshoes and multiple foldings in dynamo constructions	267
2.C. Dissipative dynamos on surfaces	271
2.D. Asymptotic Lefschetz number	273
§3. Main antidynamo theorems	273
3.A. Cowling's and Zeldovich's theorems	273
3.B. Antidynamo theorems for tensor densities	274
3.C. Digression on the Fokker–Planck equation	277
3.D. Proofs of the antidynamo theorems	281
3.E. Discrete versions of antidynamo theorems	284
§4. Three-dimensional dynamo models	285
4.A. “Rope dynamo” mechanism	285
4.B. Numerical evidence of the dynamo effect	286

4.C.	A dissipative dynamo model on a three-dimensional Riemannian manifold	288
4.D.	Geodesic flows and differential operations on surfaces of constant negative curvature	293
4.E.	Energy balance and singularities of the Euler equation	298
§5.	Dynamo exponents in terms of topological entropy	299
5.A.	Topological entropy of dynamical systems	299
5.B.	Bounds for the exponents in nondissipative dynamo models	300
5.C.	Upper bounds for dissipative L^1 -dynamos	301

VI. Dynamical Systems with Hydrodynamical Background **303**

§1.	The Korteweg–de Vries equation as an Euler equation	303
1.A.	Virasoro algebra	303
1.B.	The translation argument principle and integrability of the high-dimensional rigid body	307
1.C.	Integrability of the KdV equation	312
1.D.	Digression on Lie algebra cohomology and the Gelfand–Fuchs cocycle	315
§2.	Equations of gas dynamics and compressible fluids	318
2.A.	Barotropic fluids and gas dynamics	318
2.B.	Other conservative fluid systems	322
2.C.	Infinite conductivity equation	324
§3.	Kähler geometry and dynamical systems on the space of knots	326
3.A.	Geometric structures on the set of embedded curves	326
3.B.	Filament, nonlinear Schrödinger, and Heisenberg chain equations	331
3.C.	Loop groups and the general Landau–Lifschitz equation	333
§4.	Sobolev’s equation	335
§5.	Elliptic coordinates from the hydrodynamical viewpoint	340
5.A.	Charges on quadrics in three dimensions	340
5.B.	Charges on higher-dimensional quadrics	342

References	345
------------	-----

Index	369
-------	-----