11.3 Forced Oscillations

Fourier series have important applications for both ODEs and PDEs. In this section we shall focus on ODEs and cover similar applications for PDEs in Chap. 12. All these applications will show our indebtedness to Euler's and Fourier's ingenious idea of splitting up periodic functions into the simplest ones possible.

From Sec. 2.8 we know that forced oscillations of a body of mass m on a spring of modulus k are governed by the ODE

$$my'' + cy' + ky = r(t) \tag{1}$$

where $y = y(t)$ is the displacement from rest, c the damping constant, k the spring constant (spring modulus), and $r(t)$ the external force depending on time t. Figure 274 shows the model and Fig. 275 its electrical analog, an RLC-circuit governed by

$$LI'' + RI' + \frac{1}{C}I = E'(t) \qquad \text{(Sec. 2.9).} \tag{1*}$$

We consider (1). If $r(t)$ is a sine or cosine function and if there is damping ($c > 0$), then the steady-state solution is a harmonic oscillation with frequency equal to that of $r(t)$. However, if $r(t)$ is not a pure sine or cosine function but is any other periodic function, then the steady-state solution will be a superposition of harmonic oscillations with frequencies equal to that of $r(t)$ and integer multiples of these frequencies. And if one of these frequencies is close to the (practical) resonant frequency of the vibrating system (see Sec. 2.8), then the corresponding oscillation may be the dominant part of the response of the system to the external force. This is what the use of Fourier series will show us. Of course, this is quite surprising to an observer unfamiliar with Fourier series, which are highly important in the study of vibrating systems and resonance. Let us discuss the entire situation in terms of a typical example.

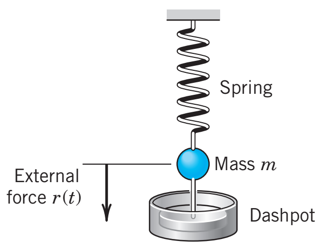

Fig. 274. Vibrating system under consideration

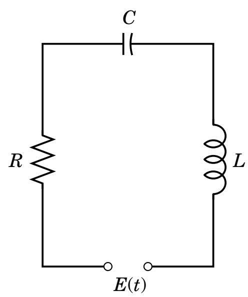

Fig. 275. Electrical analog of the system in Fig. 274 (*RLC-circuit*)

EXAMPLE 1 Forced Oscillations under a Nonsinusoidal Periodic Driving Force

In (1), let $m = 1$ (g), $c = 0.05$ (g/sec), and $k = 25$ (g/sec^2), so that (1) becomes

$$y'' + 0.05y' + 25y = r(t) \tag{2}$$

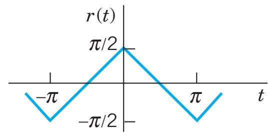

Fig. 276. Force in Example 1

where $r(t)$ is measured in $\mathrm{g \cdot cm/sec^2}$. Let (Fig. 276)

$$r(t) = \begin{cases} t + \dfrac{\pi}{2} & \text{if} \quad -\pi < t < 0, \\ -t + \dfrac{\pi}{2} & \text{if} \quad 0 < t < \pi, \end{cases} \qquad r(t + 2\pi) = r(t).$$

Find the steady-state solution $y(t)$.

Solution. We represent $r(t)$ by a Fourier series, finding

$$r(t) = \frac{4}{\pi}\left(\cos t + \frac{1}{3^2}\cos 3t + \frac{1}{5^2}\cos 5t + \cdots\right). \tag{3}$$

Then we consider the ODE

$$y'' + 0.05y' + 25y = \frac{4}{n^2\pi}\cos nt \qquad (n = 1, 3, \cdots) \tag{4}$$

whose right side is a single term of the series (3). From Sec. 2.8 we know that the steady-state solution $y_n(t)$ of (4) is of the form

$$y_n = A_n \cos nt + B_n \sin nt. \tag{5}$$

By substituting this into (4) we find that

$$A_n = \frac{4(25 - n^2)}{n^2\pi D_n}, \qquad B_n = \frac{0.2}{n\pi D_n}, \qquad \text{where} \qquad D_n = (25 - n^2)^2 + (0.05n)^2. \tag{6}$$

Since the ODE (2) is linear, we may expect the steady-state solution to be

$$y = y_1 + y_3 + y_5 + \cdots \tag{7}$$

where y_n is given by (5) and (6). In fact, this follows readily by substituting (7) into (2) and using the Fourier series of $r(t)$, provided that termwise differentiation of (7) is permissible. (Readers already familiar with the notion of uniform convergence [Sec. 15.5] may prove that (7) may be differentiated term by term.)

From (6) we find that the amplitude of (5) is (a factor $\sqrt{D_n}$ cancels out)

$$C_n = \sqrt{A_n^2 + B_n^2} = \frac{4}{n^2\pi\sqrt{D_n}}.$$

Values of the first few amplitudes are

$$C_1 = 0.0531 \quad C_3 = 0.0088 \quad C_5 = 0.2037 \quad C_7 = 0.0011 \quad C_9 = 0.0003.$$

Figure 277 shows the input (multiplied by 0.1) and the output. For $n = 5$ the quantity D_n is very small, the denominator of C_5 is small, and C_5 is so large that y_5 is the dominating term in (7). Hence the output is almost a harmonic oscillation of five times the frequency of the driving force, a little distorted due to the term y_1, whose amplitude is about 25% of that of y_5. You could make the situation still more extreme by decreasing the damping constant c. Try it. ■

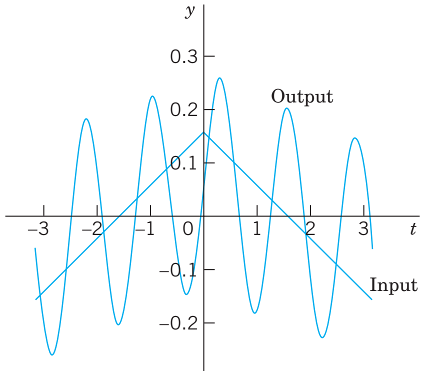

Fig. 277. Input and steady-state output in Example 1

PROBLEM SET 11.3

1. **Coefficients C_n.** Derive the formula for C_n from A_n and B_n.
2. **Change of spring and damping.** In Example 1, what happens to the amplitudes C_n if we take a stiffer spring, say, of $k = 49$? If we increase the damping?
3. **Phase shift.** Explain the role of the B_n's. What happens if we let $c \to 0$?
4. **Differentiation of input.** In Example 1, what happens if we replace $r(t)$ with its derivative, the rectangular wave? What is the ratio of the new C_n to the old ones?
5. **Sign of coefficients.** Some of the A_n in Example 1 are positive, some negative. All B_n are positive. Is this physically understandable?

6–11 GENERAL SOLUTION

Find a general solution of the ODE $y'' + \omega^2 y = r(t)$ with $r(t)$ as given. Show the details of your work.

6. $r(t) = \sin \alpha t + \sin \beta t$, $\omega^2 \neq \alpha^2, \beta^2$
7. $r(t) = \sin t$, $\omega = 0.5, 0.9, 1.1, 1.5, 10$
8. **Rectifier.** $r(t) = \pi/4\ |\cos t|$ if $-\pi < t < \pi$ and $r(t + 2\pi) = r(t)$, $|\omega| \neq 0, 2, 4, \cdots$
9. What kind of solution is excluded in Prob. 8 by $|\omega| \neq 0, 2, 4, \cdots$?
10. **Rectifier.** $r(t) = \pi/4\ |\sin t|$ if $0 < t < 2\pi$ and $r(t + 2\pi) = r(t)$, $|\omega| \neq 0, 2, 4, \cdots$
11. $r(t) = \begin{cases} -1 & \text{if} \quad -\pi < t < 0 \\ 1 & \text{if} \quad 0 < t < \pi, \end{cases} \qquad |\omega| \neq 1, 3, 5, \cdots$
12. **CAS Program.** Write a program for solving the ODE just considered and for jointly graphing input and output of an initial value problem involving that ODE. Apply the program to Probs. 7 and 11 with initial values of your choice.

13–16 STEADY-STATE DAMPED OSCILLATIONS

Find the steady-state oscillations of $y'' + cy' + y = r(t)$ with $c > 0$ and $r(t)$ as given. Note that the spring constant is $k = 1$. Show the details. In Probs. 14–16 sketch $r(t)$.

13. $r(t) = \sum_{n=1}^{N} (a_n \cos nt + b_n \sin nt)$
14. $r(t) = \begin{cases} -1 & \text{if} \quad -\pi < t < 0 \\ 1 & \text{if} \quad 0 < t < \pi \end{cases}$ and $r(t + 2\pi) = r(t)$
15. $r(t) = t(\pi^2 - t^2)$ if $-\pi < t < \pi$ and $r(t + 2\pi) = r(t)$
16. $r(t) = \begin{cases} t & \text{if} \quad -\pi/2 < t < \pi/2 \\ \pi - t & \text{if} \quad \pi/2 < t < 3\pi/2 \end{cases}$ and $r(t + 2\pi) = r(t)$

17–19 *RLC*-CIRCUIT

Find the steady-state current $I(t)$ in the *RLC*-circuit in Fig. 275, where $R = 10\ \Omega$, $L = 1$ H, $C = 10^{-1}$ F and with $E(t)$ V as follows and periodic with period 2π. Graph or sketch the first four partial sums. Note that the coefficients of the solution decrease rapidly. *Hint.* Remember that the ODE contains $E'(t)$, not $E(t)$, cf. Sec. 2.9.

17. $E(t) = \begin{cases} -50t^2 & \text{if} \quad -\pi < t < 0 \\ 50t^2 & \text{if} \quad 0 < t < \pi \end{cases}$

18. $E(t) = \begin{cases} 100\,(t - t^2) & \text{if} \quad -\pi < t < 0 \\ 100\,(t + t^2) & \text{if} \quad 0 < t < \pi \end{cases}$

19. $E(t) = 200t(\pi^2 - t^2) \quad (-\pi < t < \pi)$

20. CAS EXPERIMENT. Maximum Output Term. Graph and discuss outputs of $y'' + cy' + ky = r(t)$ with $r(t)$ as in Example 1 for various c and k with emphasis on the maximum C_n and its ratio to the second largest $|C_n|$.

11.4 Approximation by Trigonometric Polynomials

Fourier series play a prominent role not only in differential equations but also in **approximation theory**, an area that is concerned with approximating functions by other functions—usually simpler functions. Here is how Fourier series come into the picture.

Let $f(x)$ be a function on the interval $-\pi \leqq x \leqq \pi$ that can be represented on this interval by a Fourier series. Then the ***N*th partial sum** of the Fourier series

$$f(x) \approx a_0 + \sum_{n=1}^{N} (a_n \cos nx + b_n \sin nx) \tag{1}$$

is an approximation of the given $f(x)$. In (1) we choose an arbitrary N and keep it fixed. Then we ask whether (1) is the "best" approximation of f by a **trigonometric polynomial of the same degree N**, that is, by a function of the form

$$F(x) = A_0 + \sum_{n=1}^{N} (A_n \cos nx + B_n \sin nx) \qquad (N \text{ fixed}). \tag{2}$$

Here, "best" means that the "error" of the approximation is as small as possible.

Of course we must first define what we mean by the **error** of such an approximation. We could choose the maximum of $|f(x) - F(x)|$. But in connection with Fourier series it is better to choose a definition of error that measures the goodness of agreement between f and F *on the whole interval* $-\pi \leqq x \leqq \pi$. This is preferable since the sum f of a Fourier series may have jumps: F in Fig. 278 is a good overall approximation of f, but the maximum of $|f(x) - F(x)|$ (more precisely, the *supremum*) is large. We choose

$$E = \int_{-\pi}^{\pi} (f - F)^2 \, dx. \tag{3}$$

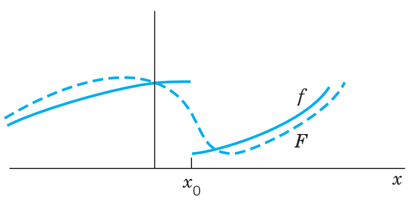

Fig. 278. Error of approximation