

A Method For Determining the Analytic Solution to the Anharmonic Oscillator: Time Coordinate Separation Method

Daniel McKeown

November 27, 2017

University of California, Irvine

1 Abstract

A method for finding the analytic solution for the Anharmonic Oscillator is presented by first considering the normal harmonic oscillator in free space (no additional potential present) and then comparing the energy spectrum of this to an identical oscillator under the influence of a general field (first example, a gravitational field). Then the potential associated with the anharmonic oscillator is substituted in place of that of the gravitational field, as a first guess, revealing an analytic solution. It is then shown that an exact solution to the anharmonic oscillator will require a different coordinate metric than that for the gravitational field.

2 Introduction

The anharmonic oscillator represents a significant challenge in solving. It is nonlinear.

3 Derivation: Harmonic Oscillator In a Gravitational Field

Imagine we have a special spring apparatus that discharges light. We can displace the spring a distance Δx and when we do we get a photon of frequency $\hbar\omega$ emitted right afterwards, starting from the location of the displacement. imagine the spring is incredibly rigid, so that even tiny displacements will produce photons. Now imagine we are in free space, floating far away from any gravitational field. The same apparatus can be tested, and a corresponding photon will be produced as we displace the spring at various lengths. Imagine we can dial in our system so that the energy levels will match those of a quantum harmonic oscillator, because the displacement is tiny and incremental enough.

The potential energy of the system would then be

$$V(x) = \frac{1}{2}\omega^2 x^2$$

Now take the same appartus, and put it above a spherically symmetric gravitational field. The potential energy is altered and is now

$$V(x) = \frac{1}{2}\omega^2 x^2 + \Delta\Phi(x)$$

This time, when we displace the oscillator and a quantum bit of light is produced, its frequency will be slightly blueshifted, compared to if the oscillator was not present in the gravitational field. The oscillator is displaced quantum amounts of δx , and a photon of energy $\hbar\omega$ * some additional amount due to the gravitational field is produced each time. In this way, the energy levels of the harmonic oscillator have shifted. The shift is due to the gravitational field, and it increases with each displacement, because a greater change in potential produced Δx a greater change in frequency blue shift. This shift has been experimentally verified₁ .

The new shifted frequency is related to the old one by the expression:

$$\Delta\omega_{new} = \omega(1 + \frac{\Delta\Phi}{c^2} + O(\frac{\Delta\Phi^2}{c^4}))$$

Now the energy levels associated with the apparatus without the presence of a gravitational field would be $\sum_{n=0}^{\infty}(n + \frac{1}{2}\hbar\omega)$, so in the presence of the field, they become:

$$E_n = (n + \frac{1}{2})\hbar\omega_n(1 + \frac{\Delta\Phi}{c^2} + O(\frac{\Delta\Phi^2}{c^4})) \text{ for } n = 0, 1, 2, \dots$$

We can consider this perturbing of the original energies as due to the new metric introduced by the gravitational field, which shifts the energies correspondingly. In this way, the new potential directly interacts with the old energy levels.

So far there is nothing new about this result. Red shift / blue shift due to gravitational fields is predicted by general relativity and well tested by experiment. But what is interesting to now consider, is what happens an extension is made to this method of altering the energy levels of a quantum harmonic oscillator system to other potentials, such as the anharmonic oscillator, and in doing so, obtain an exact solution in terms of the potential field terms altering the original (regular QM harmonic oscillator solution). While the expression for the shift in energies for the first result was given in terms of a gravitational field, this time one could try a potential such as the anharmonic oscillator

$$V(x) = \frac{1}{2}\omega^2 x^2 + \lambda x^4$$

$$E_n = (n + \frac{1}{2})\hbar\omega_n(1 + \lambda\Delta x^4) \text{ for } n = 0, 1, 2, \dots$$

In order to accurately model the metric for our new modified coordinates that will in the end, affect the values for $\hbar\omega$, it is convenient to introduce two numerical parameters describing the displacement of the anharmonic oscillator Δx^4 . First, we need a term that represents the constant length when the spring is not stretched at all. We can call this Φ_1 = initial oscillator length

Next, we need a term that represents a small displacement Δx of the oscillator, which will produce our actual energy levels. We want to make each displacement the same distance Δx so we will have $n \Delta x$ displacements. $\Phi_2 = n\Delta x$

so then

$$\Delta x^4 = [\Phi_1 + (n + 1)\Phi_2]^4$$

Inserting these and letting $\lambda = 1$

$$E_n = (n + \frac{1}{2})\hbar\omega_n(1 + [\Phi_1 + (n + 1)\Phi_2]^4) \text{ for } n = 0, 1, 2, \dots$$

This equation is in very close agreement with calculated results for the the anharmonic oscillator from perturbation theory. Here we obtained the result by using a coordinate change that blue shifts the frequency ω by

$$\omega_{new} = \omega(1 + [\Phi_1 + (n + 1)\Phi_2]^4) \text{ for } n = 0, 1, 2, \dots$$

In the gravitational case if we were in flat coordinate space, there should be no deviation of the frequencies, and the deviation in fact results due to the change in time coordinate separations since

$$\omega \propto \frac{1}{dT}$$

where dT is the proper time coordinate separation,

$$\frac{\Delta\omega}{\omega} = \frac{GM}{c^2 r}$$

and is a direct result of

$$\Delta\tau_2 = (1 + \frac{\Delta\Phi}{c^2})\tau_1$$

Ultimately, it is the time coordinate separations that shift the energy levels for the gravitational potential

<i>Gravitational</i>	<i>Solution</i>
----------------------	-----------------

$$\omega_{new} = \omega(1 + \frac{\Delta\Phi_n}{c^2} + O(\frac{\Delta\Phi_n^2}{c^4})) \text{ for } n = 0, 1, 2, \dots$$

In a mathematically analogous way, this same process occurs for the anharmonic oscillator, which can then be exploited to obtain an exact solution, provided that the exact form of the potential is known.

This amounts to understanding how a non linear potential can impact the time coordinates of a quantum mechanical system, directly affecting the energies. The evidence that this is the case is given by the famous redshift result, where the energy level of the photon is directly affected by the gravitational potential(another nonlinear potential.) The gravitational potential

stores energy, and a portion of this energy can be exchanged with the quantum particle of light as it experiences a change of gravitational potential. Analogously, the quantized harmonic oscillator energies will also experience an exchange of energy with the anharmonic potential that they become subject to, resulting in a "blueshift" of their energy spectrum that is of order Δx^4

4 Zero Point Energy

For the case of the Harmonic oscillator in a vacuum, the zero point energy will just be the ordinary result obtained from solving the schrodinger equation. However, when this same oscillator is placed in a gravitational field, there will be a corresponding shift to the zero point energy. We can work this out in detail using the uncertainty principle.

The energy time uncertainty principle is the direct result of the quantization of the system. It is generally interpreted as a limit on the certainty with which we can simultaneously determine the energy and time of a particle in a quantum mechanical system.

We have:

$$\Delta t \Delta E \geq \frac{\hbar}{2}$$

and $\Delta t = \frac{1}{\omega}$ so we have $E = \frac{1}{2}\hbar\omega$

This is the zero point energy for a harmonic oscillator without any other potential.

We could view this as the zero point for our previously discussed light emitting simple harmonic oscillator device, when the device is present in flat space, far from any gravitational field. Now, if we then place the oscillator in a gravitational field with potential $\Delta\Phi$,

will the zero point energy change? Yes, because the passage of time, Δt is very much influenced by a gravitational field, as previously discussed.

What we are doing then, is comparing the change of time coordinates at the two different locations of the identical oscillators. Location one is in free space and has a passage of time given as ΔTa while the passage of time in the location within the gravitational field has lengthened to be

$$\Delta Tb = \Delta Ta(1 + \frac{\Delta\Phi}{c^2})$$

However, it is always true that

$$\Delta t \Delta E \geq \frac{\hbar}{2}$$

$$\Delta T_a \Delta E_a = \frac{\hbar}{2} = \Delta T_b \Delta E_b$$

and we have

$$\Delta E_b = \frac{\Delta T_a \Delta E_a}{\Delta T_b}$$

We thus recognize ΔE_b to be the change in zero point energy of the simple harmonic oscillator due to it now being placed in a gravitational field.

We therefore identify this as our previously discussed potential term in our anharmonic oscillator potential:

$$\Phi_1 = \text{zero point energy}$$

Any additional displacement within the field itself will also lead to a further change in energies. As we displace the oscillator a discrete distance Δx we will therefore get a new location and a new passage of time, thus a new shift in energies given by the expression above, which we can repeat for n displacements.

So we have,

$$\Delta t_{n+1} = \Delta t_n \left(1 + \frac{\Delta \Phi_n}{c^2} \right)$$

so

$$\Delta t_{n+1}$$

will be the longer time duration. We can therefore identify the other potential term

$$\Phi_2 = \text{change in energies as oscillator displacement in field increases}$$

While the first potential term was obtained by comparing time measurements between two separate coordinate maps, this term occurs because of a change in position within the field itself. We can also identify this term to be the displacement of the quartic potential of the anharmonic oscillator Δx^4

Since our energy shift is really due to a shift in ω we can look at the contribution as such:

$$\omega_{new} = \omega(1 + [\Phi_1 + (n+1)\Phi_2]^4) \text{ for } n = 0, 1, 2, \dots$$

In the expression above, $(1 + [\Phi_1 + (n+1)\Phi_2]^4)$ represents the full shift in energy of the quartic potential. The number 1 term that first occurs is due to the original zero point energy of the harmonic oscillator. Then we have the contribution due to the modified zero point, as well as the change of the oscillator position in the field. Notice that both of these terms are raised to the forth power, because the modified zero point energy will contribute to the overall displacement, which is O^4 . In fact, we can also think of the zero point as due to the position momentum uncertainty relation, where we have $\Delta x = \sqrt{\frac{\hbar}{2m\omega}}$ or $\sqrt{\frac{\hbar}{2m\omega}}\Delta p = \frac{\hbar}{2}$ or $\Delta p^2 = \frac{2m\omega\hbar}{4}$ or $\omega = 2\frac{\Delta p^2}{\hbar m}$ which interestingly looks a lot like the kinetic energy term of the Schrodinger Equation. Ultimately, since ω is shifted by the potential, a modified zero point energy, signifying an uncertainty in the location of the particle in the presence of the field, will be associated with the new energy.

For the case of the gravitational field, displacements within the field will give shifts in the energy spectrum of:

$$\frac{\hbar}{2\Delta E_{n+1}} = \frac{\Delta t_n}{(1 + \frac{\Delta\Phi_n}{c^2})}$$

So now we have a system that gives us our energies associated with a given potential.

$$\Delta E_{n+1} = \frac{\hbar(1 + \frac{\Delta\Phi}{c^2})}{2\Delta t_n}$$

which is the same result we obtained earlier for the energies, by considering the gravitational blueshift.

We can read this as saying that the next energy is related to the one before it by

The key thing to remember is that the coordinate separations for time are varying as we move along the potential.

solving for the energies:

$$\Delta E_{n+1} = \frac{\hbar(1 + \frac{\Delta\Phi_n}{c^2})}{2\Delta t_n}$$

Finally, we have

$$\Delta t_n = \frac{\hbar}{2\Delta E_n}$$

and inserting into the previous expression we get

$$\Delta E_{n+1} = \Delta E_n \left(1 + \frac{\Delta \Phi_n}{c^2}\right)$$

for case of the harmonic oscillator, we will just have a difference of

$$\Delta E = \hbar \Delta \omega$$

But now we have to be concerned with a shift of frequencies, so :

$$\Delta E_{n+1} = \hbar \Delta \omega_{n+1}$$

$$\Delta E_{n+1} = \hbar \Delta \omega_n \left(1 + \frac{\Delta \Phi}{c^2}\right)$$

So Now I have an exact result for the harmonic oscillator energies if they were perturbed by a gravitational potential. Say there is no gravitational potential, then insert zeros into the potential terms and recover the differences of energies for a normal harmonic oscillator. Note that the energies become evenly spaced again, whereas they are not evenly spaced for the harmonic oscillator perturbed by the gravitational potential.

The energies start off minimal, and are then blue shifted by the perturbation of the gravitational potential, where the amount of blueshift is given by the expression above.

Now in the next step one can insert a potential into the expression and solve for the available set of energies and times. The first potential to try is the anharmonic oscillator potential. This can be solved for a 1-D case, because our levels will scale from top to bottom, just as our time variable does. We have

$$V(x) = \frac{1}{2}\omega^2 x^2 + \lambda x^4$$

Now comes a critical step. Noting the generality of the potential formulation:

$$\Phi(x) = \frac{1}{2}\omega^2 x^2 + \lambda x^4$$

treat λx^4 mathematically as if it is just a field perturbation such as the one we saw for our gravitational field. We will have two additional terms associated with the change in the zero point energy Φ_1 and the change of actual coordinates as the oscillator is displaced a greater distance, giving larger energies Φ_2

5 Comparison with Perturbation methods

recall we started with

$$E_n = \hbar\omega[1 + \lambda(\Delta x)^4]$$

We can set the parameter $\lambda = 1$ and we have:

$$E_n = \hbar\omega_{new} = \hbar\omega(1 + [\Phi_1 + (n + 1)\Phi_2]^4) \text{ for } n = 0, 1, 2, \dots$$

the two terms representing the potential are

$\Phi_1 = \text{initial uncertainty of quantum spring i.e. zero field modified zero point energy}$

$$(n + 1)\Phi_2 = \text{displacement of spring for } n = 1, 2, \dots$$

Now its important to choose actual values and compare with results obtaining using The Dirac Operator Technique.

Set $\Phi_1 = 0.255$ and $\Phi_2 = 0.0138n$ which will increase for 1,2,3,etc. The results, which are designated as E_n are tabulated below and compared for the energies obtained using Dirac operator methods

Energy	Dirac Operator Tech. ₂	E_n
ground	0.50374	0.50261
first excited	1.51875	1.50956
second excited	2.54875	2.51929
third excited	3.59375	3.532406
fourth excited	4.65375	4.54958
fifth excited	5.72875	5.57161
sixth excited	6.81875	6.59933
seventh excited	7.92375	7.63370
eight excited	8.68125	8.67574
ninth excited	9.72625	9.72661

Table 1. *Energies calculated and compared to operator methods Dirac Operator Values₂*

We know that $\Delta x * \Delta p = \frac{\hbar}{2}$ where the De Broglie wavelength $\lambda = \frac{h}{p}$ so if we introduce the uncertainty we will have $\Delta \lambda = \frac{h}{\Delta p}$ and then substitute this relation to get $\Delta x \propto \Delta \lambda$ Consider the zero point energy as being due to some initial displacement (since the uncertainty principle forces the system to have a Δx . Associate the initial displacement with an initial momentum so that $\Delta x_0 \Delta p_0 = \frac{\hbar}{2}$ and then consider the additional change in wavelength $\Delta \lambda$ due to the change in frequency caused by the new anharmonic potential. Then $\lambda_0 + \Delta \lambda \propto 4(x + \Delta x)$

so we can identify the zero point energy value from before as being $\Phi_1 \propto \frac{\lambda_0 + \Delta \lambda}{4}$ where λ is the De Broglie wavelength plus the shift due to the change in ω due to the potential, in this case the shift is about 2 percent so $\lambda_0 + \Delta \lambda = 1.02$.

Since $\Phi_2 \propto \Delta x \propto \Delta \lambda$, we can rewrite our formula for the energies of the anharmonic oscillator in terms of the De Broglie wavelength.

$$E_n = \hbar \omega_{new} = \hbar \omega (1 + [\frac{\lambda_0 + \Delta \lambda}{4} + (n+1)\Delta \lambda]^4) \text{ for } n = 0, 1, 2, \dots$$

Energy	Dirac Operator Tech. ₂	E_n
ground	0.50374	0.502859
first excited	1.51875	1.51136
second excited	2.54875	2.52461
third excited	3.59375	3.54408
fourth excited	4.65375	4.57147
fifth excited	5.72875	5.60876
sixth excited	6.81875	6.65823
seventh excited	7.92375	7.72246
eight excited	8.68125	8.80435
ninth excited	9.72625	9.90716

Table 2. Energies calculated and compared to operator methods Dirac Operator Values₂

The results of the energies will differ depending on the choice of constants and starting energies chosen for the oscillator.

We can do the same calculation for other energies obtained for the anharmonic oscillator given different values of the constants.

In this case let

$$\Phi_1 = 1.0078$$

$$\Phi_2 = 0.00984684n$$

Energy	numerical	E_n	2nd order	3rd order
0	1.03473	1.03472	1.03422	1.03487
1	3.16723	3.16720	3.16172	3.16937
2	5.41726	5.38681	5.39141	5.39141
3	7.77027	7.69730	7.69141	7.82192

Table 3. Energies Of Anharmonic Oscillator Calculated₃

6 References

- [1] Baym, Gordon Lectures on Quantum Mechanics
- [2] Sakurai Modern Quantum Mechanics
- [3] Cheng Ta-Pei Relativity, Gravitation, and Cosmology
- [4] Hartle, James Gravity
- [5] Misner, Charles W.; Thorne, Kip S.; Wheeler, John Archibald (1973). Gravitation. San Francisco: W. H. Freeman.
- [6] Carroll, Sean (2004). Spacetime and Geometry An Introduction to General Relativity. pp. 151159. ISBN 0-8053-8732-3.
- [7] Pound, R. V.; Rebka Jr. G. A. (November 1, 1959). "Gravitational Red-Shift in Nuclear Resonance". Physical Review Letters. 3 (9): 439441
- [8] Adelakun A.O.; Abajingin David Dele "Solution of Quantum Anharmonic Oscillator with Quartic Perturbation" Advances in Physics Theories and Applications. ISSN 2224-719X Vol.27, 2014
- [9] Benjamin T. Floyd, Amanda M. Ludes, Chia Moua, Allan A. Ostle, and Oren B. Varkony "Anharmonic Oscillator Potentials: Exact and Perturbation Results"