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### ► To cite this version:

Jean-Baptiste Caillaud, Lamberto Dell'Elce, Jean-Baptiste Pomet, Jérémy Rouot. Optimal control of slow-fast mechanical systems. Proceedings of the Complex Systems Academy of Excellence, Jan 2018, Nice, France. pp.105-116. hal-01953337

**HAL Id: hal-01953337**

**<https://hal.inria.fr/hal-01953337>**

Submitted on 12 Dec 2018

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# Optimal control of slow-fast mechanical systems

Jean-Baptiste Caillau, Lamberto Dell’Elce,  
Jean-Baptiste Pomet and Jérémy Rouot

**Abstract** We consider the minimum time control of dynamical systems with slow and fast state variables. With applications to perturbations of integrable systems in mind, we focus on the case of problems with one or more fast angles, together with a small drift on the slow part modelling a so-called secular evolution of the slow variables. According to Pontrjagin maximum principle, minimizing trajectories are projections on the state space of Hamiltonian curves. In the case of a single fast angle, it turns out that, provided the drift on the slow part of the original system is small enough, time minimizing trajectories can be approximated by geodesics of a suitable metric. As an application to space mechanics, the effect of the  $J_2$  term in the Earth potential on the control of a spacecraft is considered. In ongoing work, we also address the more involved question of systems having two fast angles.

**Keywords.** Slow-fast control systems, minimum time, averaging

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1 **MSC classification.** 49K15, 70Q05

## 2 **Introduction**

We consider the following slow-fast control system on an  $n$ -dimensional manifold  $M$ :

$$\frac{dI}{dt} = \varepsilon F_0(I, \varphi, \varepsilon) + \varepsilon \sum_{i=1}^m u_i F_i(I, \varphi, \varepsilon), \quad |u| = \sqrt{u_1^2 + \cdots + u_m^2} \leq 1, \quad (1)$$

$$\frac{d\varphi}{dt} = \omega(I) + \varepsilon G_0(I, \varphi, \varepsilon) + \varepsilon \sum_{i=1}^m u_i G_i(I, \varphi, \varepsilon), \quad \omega(I) > 0, \quad (2)$$

3 with  $I \in M$ ,  $\varphi \in \mathbf{S}^1$ ,  $u \in \mathbf{R}^m$ , and fixed extremities  $I_0, I_f$ , and free phases  $\varphi_0, \varphi_f$ . All the data is periodic with respect to the single fast angle  $\varphi$ , and  $\omega$  is  
4 assumed to be positive on  $M$ . Extensions are possible to the case of several  
5 phases but resonances must then be taken into account.

6 In the first section, we focus on systems with a single fast angle. The  
7 Hamiltonian system provided by applying Pontrjagin maximum principle  
8 is averaged after properly identifying the slow variables. The averaged sys-  
9 tem turns out to be associated with a metric approximation of the original  
10 problem. We apply the method to space mechanics, and show how the  $J_2$   
11 term in the Earth potential is responsible for the asymmetry of the metric. In  
12 the second section, we give a preliminary analysis of multiphase averaging  
13 for minimum time control problems. The case of two fast angles is consid-  
14 ered on a simple example. A crucial step is to define a suitable near-identity  
15 transformation of the initial state and costate. This work is related with other  
16 methods applicable to slow-fast control systems. (See, *e.g.*, the recent papers  
17 [1, 2, 3, 6].)  
18

## 19 **1 Metric approximation in the case a single fast phase**

### 20 **1.1 Averaging the extremal flow**

According to Pontrjagin maximum principle, time minimizing curves are projections onto the base space  $M \times \mathbf{S}^1$  of integral curves (*extremals*) of the maximized Hamiltonian below:

$$H(I, \varphi, p_I, p_\varphi, \varepsilon) := p_\varphi \omega(I) + \varepsilon K(I, \varphi, p_I, p_\varphi, \varepsilon),$$

$$K := H_0 + \sqrt{\sum_{i=1}^m H_i^2},$$

$$H_i(I, \varphi, p_I, p_\varphi, \varepsilon) := p_I F_i(I, \varphi, \varepsilon) + p_\varphi G_i(I, \varphi, \varepsilon), \quad i = 0, \dots, m.$$

There are two types of extremals: abnormal ones that live on the level set  $\{H = 0\}$ , and normal ones that evolve on nonzero levels of the Hamiltonian. One defines the averaged Hamiltonian  $\bar{K}$  as

$$\bar{K} := \bar{H}_0 + \bar{K}_0, \quad \bar{H}_0 := \langle p_I, \bar{F}_0 \rangle,$$

$$\bar{K}_0(I, p_I) := \frac{1}{2\pi} \int_0^{2\pi} \sqrt{\sum_{i=1}^m H_i^2(I, \varphi, p_I, p_\varphi = 0, \varepsilon = 0)} d\varphi. \quad (3)$$

It is smooth on the open set  $\Omega$  equal to the complement of  $\bar{\Sigma}^c$  where

$$\Sigma := \{(I, p_I, \varphi) \in T^*M \times \mathbf{S}^1 \mid (\forall i = 1, m) : \langle p_I, F_i(I, \varphi, \varepsilon = 0) \rangle = 0\},$$

$$\bar{\Sigma} := \omega(\Sigma) \quad \omega : T^*M \times \mathbf{S}^1 \rightarrow T^*M.$$

1 On also defines the open submanifold  $M_0 := \Pi(\Omega)$  of  $M$ . We assume that  
2  $M_0$  is connex. Under the assumption

3 (A1)  $\text{rank}\{\partial^j F_i(I, \varphi, \varepsilon = 0) / \partial \varphi^j, i = 1, \dots, m, j \geq 0\} = n, (I, \varphi) \in M \times \mathbf{S}^1,$

4 one is able to express some properties of the averaged Hamiltonian in terms  
5 of Finsler metric. (We refer the reader, e.g., to [5] for an introduction to Finsler  
6 geometry.)

7 **Proposition 1.** *The symmetric part  $\bar{K}_0 : (\Omega \subset) T^*M \rightarrow \mathbf{R}$  of the tensor  $\bar{K}$  is posi-*  
8 *tive definite and 1-homogenous. It so defines a symmetric Finsler co-norm.*

9 We assume moreover that

10 (A2)  $\bar{K}_0(I, \bar{F}_0^*(I)) < 1, I \in M,$

11 where  $\bar{F}_0^*$  is the inverse Legendre transform of  $\bar{F}_0$ . Under this new assump-  
12 tion, one has

13 **Proposition 2.** *The tensor  $\bar{K} = \bar{H}_0 + \bar{K}_0$  is positive definite and defines an asym-*  
14 *metric Finsler co-norm.*

The geodesics are the integral curves of the Hamiltonian  $\bar{K}$  restricted to the level set  $\{\bar{K} = 1\},$

$$\frac{dI}{d\tau} = \frac{\partial \bar{K}}{\partial p_I}, \quad \frac{dp_I}{d\tau} = -\frac{\partial \bar{K}}{\partial I},$$

$$I(0) = I_0, \quad I(\tau_f) = I_f, \quad \bar{K}(I_0, p_I(0)) = 1,$$

- 1 and  $\tau_f = d(I_0, I_f)$  for minimizing ones. The convergence properties of the  
 2 original system towards this metric when  $\varepsilon \rightarrow 0$  are studied in [4].

### 3 **1.2 Application to space mechanics**

We consider the two-body potential case,

$$\ddot{q} = -\mu \frac{q}{|q|^3} + \frac{u}{M}, \quad |u| \leq T_{\max}.$$

Thanks to the super-integrability of the  $-1/|q|$  potential, the minimum time control system is slow-fast with only angle (the longitude of the evolving body) if one restricts to the case of transfers between elliptic orbits ( $\mu$  is the gravitational constant). In the non-coplanar situation, we have to analyze a dimension five symmetric Finsler metric. In order to account for the Earth non-oblateness, we add to the dynamics a small drift  $F_0$  on the slow variables. In the standard equinoctial orbit elements,  $I = (a, e, \omega, \Omega, i)$ , the  $J_2$  term of order  $1/|q|^3$  of the Earth potential derives from the additional potential ( $r_e$  being the equatorial radius)

$$R_0 = \frac{\mu J_2 r_e^2}{|q|^3} \left( \frac{1}{2} - \frac{3}{4} \sin^2 i + \frac{3}{4} \sin^2 i \cos 2(\omega + \varphi) \right)$$

where  $\varphi$  is the true anomaly. As a result, the system now has two small parameters (depending on the initial condition). One is due to the  $J_2$  effect, the other to the control:

$$\varepsilon_0 = \frac{3J_2 r_e^2}{2a_0^2}, \quad \varepsilon_1 = \frac{a_0^2 T_{\max}}{\mu M}.$$

- 4 Here,  $a_0$  is the initial semi-major axis,  $T_{\max}$  the maximum level of thrust, and  
 5  $M$  the spacecraft mass. We make a reduction to a single small parameter as  
 6 follows: Defining  $\varepsilon := \varepsilon_0 + \varepsilon_1$  and  $\lambda := \varepsilon_0 / (\varepsilon_0 + \varepsilon_1)$ , one has

$$\begin{aligned}\frac{dI}{dt} &= \varepsilon_0 F_0(I, \varphi) + \varepsilon_1 \sum_{i=1}^m u_i F_i(I, \varphi), \\ &= \varepsilon \left( \lambda F_0(I, \varphi) + (1 - \lambda) \sum_{i=1}^m u_i F_i(I, \varphi) \right).\end{aligned}$$

1 There are two regimes depending on whether the  $J_2$  effect is small against  
 2 the control ( $\varepsilon_0 \ll \varepsilon_1$  and  $\lambda \rightarrow 0$ ) or not ( $\varepsilon_0 \gg \varepsilon_1$  and  $\lambda \rightarrow 1$ ). The critical ratio  
 3 on  $\lambda$  can be explicitly computed in metric terms.

**Proposition 3.** *In the average system of the two-body potential including the  $J_2$  effect,  $\bar{K} = \lambda \bar{H}_0 + (1 - \lambda) \bar{K}_0$  is a metric tensor if and only if  $\lambda < \lambda_c(I)$  with*

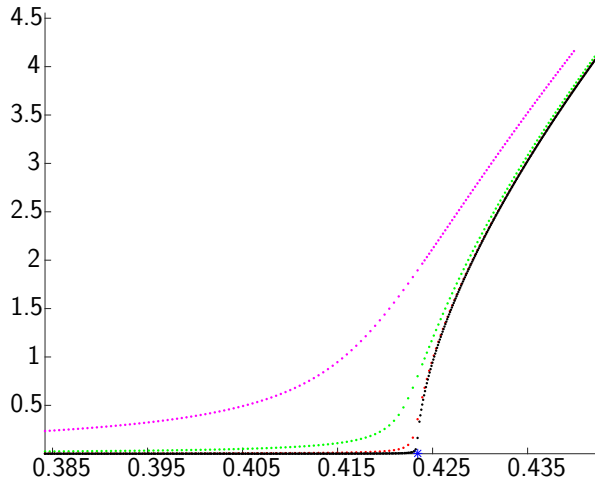
$$\lambda_c(I) = \frac{1}{1 + \bar{K}_0(I, \bar{F}_0^*(I))}.$$

4 The relevance of this critical ratio for the qualitative analysis of the original  
 5 system is illustrated by the numerical simulations displayed in Figures 2 to  
 6 4. For a given initial condition  $I_0$  on the slow variables, we let the drift  $F_0$   
 7 alone act: We integrate the flow of  $F_0$  during a short positive duration  $\tau_d$ ,  
 8 then compute the trajectory of the averaged system to go from this point  
 9  $I(\tau_d)$  back to  $I_0$ . For  $\lambda < \lambda_c(I_0)$ , the tensor  $\bar{K}$  is a metric one, and this tra-  
 10 jectory is a geodesic. As  $\tau_d$  tends to zero, the time  $\tau_f$  to come back from  $I(\tau_d)$   
 11 tends to zero when  $\lambda < \lambda_c(I_0)$ . For  $\lambda \geq \lambda_c(I_0)$ , finiteness of this time indicates  
 12 that global properties of the system still allows to control it although the met-  
 13 ric character of the approximation does not hold anymore. (See Figure 2.)  
 14 The behaviour of  $\tau_f$  measures the loss in performance as  $\lambda$  approaches the  
 15 critical ratio. This critical value depends on the initial condition and gives  
 16 an asymptotic estimate of whether the thrust dominates the  $J_2$  effect or not.  
 17 Beyond the critical value, the system is still controllable, but there is a drastic  
 18 change in performance. As the original system is approximated by the average  
 19 one, this behaviour is very precisely reproduced on the value function  
 20 of the original system for small enough  $\varepsilon$ . (See Figures 3 to 4.)

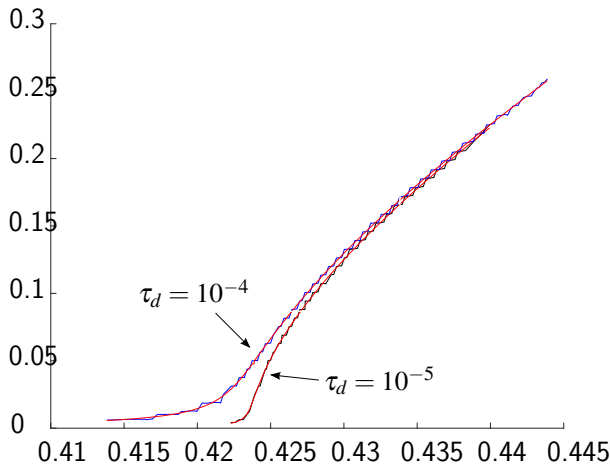
## 21 2 Averaging control systems with two fast angles

### 22 2.1 A simple example

In order to illustrate the our preliminary analysis of multiphase averaging  
 for control systems, we consider an elementary dynamical system consisting  
 of a scalar slow variable,  $I$ , and two fast variables,  $\zeta$  and  $\psi$ . The optimal

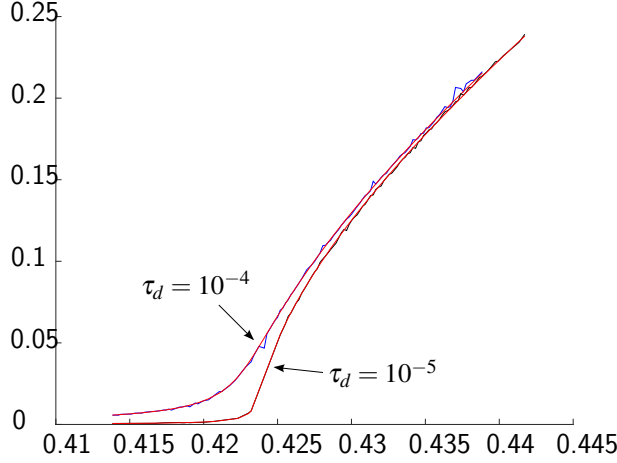


**Fig. 1** Value function  $\lambda \mapsto \tau_f(\lambda)$ ,  $\tau_d \rightarrow 0$  (averaged system). On this example,  $a = 30$  Mm,  $e = 0.5$ ,  $\omega = \Omega = 0$ ,  $i = 51$  degrees (strong inclination), and  $\lambda_c \simeq 0.4239$ . The value function is portrayed for  $\tau_d = 1e-2, 1e-3, 1e-4, 1e-5$ .



**Fig. 2** Value function  $\lambda \mapsto \tau_f(\lambda)$ ,  $\tau_d \rightarrow 0$  (original system,  $\varepsilon = 1e-3$ ). On this example,  $a = 30$  Mm,  $e = 0.5$ ,  $\omega = \Omega = 0$ ,  $i = 51$  degrees (strong inclination), and  $\lambda_c \simeq 0.4239$ . The behaviour of the value function for the original system matches very precisely the behaviour of the averaged one. (See also Figure 4 for a even lower value of  $\varepsilon$ .)

control problem is



**Fig. 3** Value function  $\lambda \mapsto \tau_f(\lambda)$ ,  $\tau_d \rightarrow 0$  (original system,  $\varepsilon = 1e-4$ ). On this example,  $a = 30$  Mm,  $e = 0.5$ ,  $\omega = \Omega = 0$ ,  $i = 51$  degrees (strong inclination), and  $\lambda_c \simeq 0.4239$ . The behaviour of the value function for the original system matches very precisely the behaviour of the averaged one.

$$\begin{aligned} & \min_{\sqrt{u_1^2 + u_2^2} \leq 1} t_f \quad \text{subject to :} \\ & \frac{dI}{dt} = \varepsilon [\cos \zeta + \cos(\zeta - \psi) u_1 + u_2], \quad \frac{d\zeta}{dt} = I, \quad \frac{d\psi}{dt} = 1, \quad (4) \\ & I(0) = I_0, \quad I(t_f) = I_f. \end{aligned}$$

We note that the frequency of  $\psi$  is constant. If one of the two frequencies is non-vanishing on the ambient manifold  $M$ , any problem with two frequencies can be recast into this form by means of a change of the time variable, as emphasized in [8]. The Hamiltonian associated to Problem (4) is

$$H = Ip_\zeta + p_\psi + \varepsilon \left[ p_I \cos \zeta + |p_I| \sqrt{1 + \cos^2(\zeta - \psi)} \right]. \quad (5)$$

The maximizing control is

$$u_1^{opt} = \frac{p_I}{|p_I|} \frac{\cos(\zeta - \psi)}{\sqrt{1 + \cos^2(\zeta - \psi)}}, \quad u_2^{opt} = \frac{p_I}{|p_I|} \frac{1}{\sqrt{1 + \cos^2(\zeta - \psi)}},$$

- 1 revealing that the sign of  $p_I$  determines the direction of the control vector,
- 2 which imposes a secular drift to the slow variable. Numerical values used
- 3 in all simulations are  $\varepsilon = 10^{-3}$  and  $I_0 = \sqrt{2}/2$ . Applying averaging theory



to the extremal flow of this problem is questionable because the structure of this vector field differs from the one of conventional fast-oscillating systems. As in the case of one fast angle, the equation of motion of  $p_I$  includes the term  $p_\varphi \partial \omega / \partial I$  that may be of order larger than  $\varepsilon$ . Hence, adjoints of slow variables are not necessary slow themselves. We justify the application of averaging theory to System (14) by showing that, as in the case of a single fast phase discussed in the previous section, adjoints of fast variables remain  $\varepsilon$ -small for any extremal trajectory with free phases.

Consider the canonical change of variables  $\{I, p_I, \varphi, p_\varphi\} \rightarrow \{J, p_J, \psi, p_\psi\}$  such that

$$J = I, \quad \psi = \Omega(I) \varphi, \quad (6)$$

where the matrix-valued function,  $\Omega : M \rightarrow \mathbf{R}^{2 \times 2}$  is defined as

$$\Omega := \frac{1}{\|\omega(I)\|} \begin{bmatrix} \omega_1(I) & \omega_2(I) \\ -\omega_2(I) & \omega_1(I) \end{bmatrix}. \quad (7)$$

Symplectic constraints yield the transformation of the adjoints

$$p_I = p_J + p_\psi \frac{\partial \Omega}{\partial J} \Omega^T \psi, \quad p_\varphi = p_\psi \Omega(J), \quad (8)$$

so that the transformed Hamiltonian is

$$\tilde{H} = \|\omega(J)\| p_{\psi_1} + \varepsilon K \left( J, p_J + p_\psi \frac{\partial \Omega}{\partial J} \Omega^T \psi, \Omega^T \psi, p_\psi \Omega \right). \quad (9)$$

$:= \tilde{K}(J, p_J, \psi, p_\psi)$

Boundary conditions on the adjoints of fast variables require that  $p_\varphi(0) = 0$ . Evaluating the Hamiltonian at the initial time and normalizing the initial adjoints according to  $\|p_{I_0}\| = 1$ , one sets

$$\varepsilon h := \tilde{H}(t=0) = \varepsilon K \left( I_0, p_{I_0}, \underbrace{\Omega^T(I_0) \psi_0, 0}_{O(1)} \right). \quad (10)$$

Hence,  $p_{\psi_1}$  can be evaluated at any time by solving the implicit function

$$p_{\psi_1} = \varepsilon \frac{h - \tilde{K}(J, p_J, \psi, p_\psi)}{\|\omega(J)\|} \approx \frac{h - \tilde{K}(J, p_J, \psi, 0)}{\|\omega(J)\|} \quad (11)$$

Equation (11) indicates that  $p_{\psi_1} = O(\varepsilon)$  when evaluated on a candidate optimal trajectory. As a consequence,  $p_J$  has an  $\varepsilon$ -slow dynamics, *i.e.*

$$\frac{dp_I}{dt} = - \underbrace{\frac{\partial \|\omega\|}{\partial J} p_{\psi_1}}_{O(\varepsilon)} - \varepsilon \frac{\partial \tilde{K}}{\partial J} = O(\varepsilon), \quad (12)$$

which justifies the averaging of the extremal flow. As before, we denote by  $\bar{K}$  the averaged Hamiltonian

$$\bar{K} := \frac{1}{4\pi^2} \int_{\mathbf{T}^2} K(I, p_I, \varphi, 0) \, d\varphi. \quad (13)$$

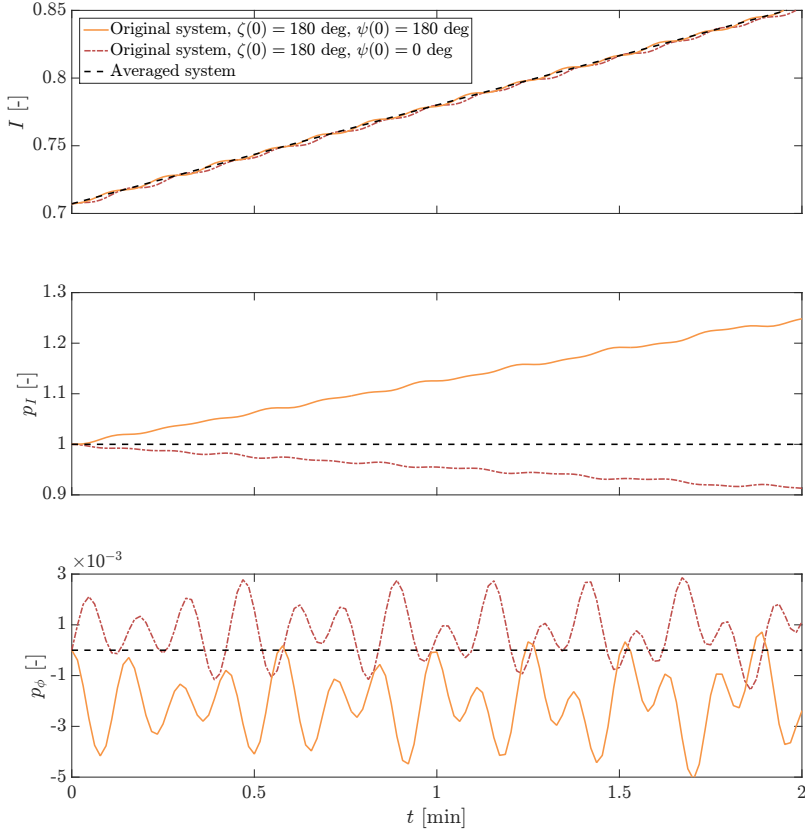
Here,  $p_\varphi = 0$  because the averaging is carried out by considering the limit of the function as  $\varepsilon$  approaches zero. Averaging the extremal flow yields

$$\begin{aligned} \frac{d\bar{I}}{dt} &= \varepsilon \frac{\partial \bar{K}}{\partial \bar{p}_I}, & \frac{d\bar{p}_I}{dt} &= -\varepsilon \frac{\partial \bar{K}}{\partial \bar{I}} - \bar{p}_\varphi \frac{\partial \omega}{\partial \bar{I}}, \\ \frac{d\varphi}{dt} &= \varepsilon \frac{\partial \bar{K}}{\partial \bar{p}_\varphi} + \omega(\bar{I}), & \frac{d\bar{p}_\varphi}{dt} &= 0. \end{aligned} \quad (14)$$

## 2.2 Near-identity transformation of the initial state and costate

Changing the initial conditions of averaged trajectories allows one to reduce the drift between  $I(t)$  and  $\bar{I}(t)$ . Qualitatively, one defines a transformation that shifts the initial point of the averaged trajectory to the middle of the short-period oscillations of  $I(t)$ . The improvement obtained with this expedient is possibly negligible when compared to the estimate provided by Neishtadt theorem for systems with two fast angles [8], which considers the same initial conditions for the two trajectories. Nonetheless, the transformation of the initial variables plays a key role for the optimal control problem. (See [7] for a detailed discussion.) Figure 4 shows that  $p_I$  and  $\bar{p}_I$  exhibit a steady drift that largely exceeds the expected small drift when the original and averaged systems are integrated with the same initial conditions. In addition, trajectories of the original system strongly depend on the initial angles. We show in the sequel that transforming the adjoints of fast variables is sufficient to drastically reduce the drift of  $p_I$ .

The trigger at the origin of the drift of  $p_I$  is the wrong assessment of the averaged value of  $p_\varphi$ , as shown in the bottom of Figure 4. This error is of order  $\varepsilon$  but it induces a steady drift of  $\bar{p}_I$  of the same order of magnitude,



**Fig. 4** Numerical integration of the simple example. Trajectories of the original and averaged system emanate from the same point of the phase space. Initial adjoints are  $p_I(0) = 1$  and  $p_\psi(0) = p_\zeta(0) = 0$ .

$$\frac{d\overline{p_I}}{dt} = \underbrace{-\overline{p_\varphi} \frac{\partial \omega}{\partial \overline{I}}}_{\varepsilon\text{-small error}} - \varepsilon \frac{\partial \overline{K}}{\partial \overline{I}}. \quad (15)$$

In turn, an  $\varepsilon$ -small error on  $\overline{p_\varphi}$  induces a steady drift of  $\overline{p_I}$  that is comparable with its slow motion. Transforming the initial adjoints of fast variables is sufficient to greatly mitigate this problem. More precisely, initial conditions of the averaged and of the original initial value problem are mostly the same, *i.e.*

$$I(0) = \overline{I}(0) = I_0, \quad p_I(0) = \overline{p_I}(0) = p_{I_0}, \quad \varphi(0) = \varphi_0, \quad (16)$$

except for the adjoints of fast variables, which are such that

$$\overline{p_\varphi}(0) = \overline{p_{\varphi_0}} \quad \text{and} \quad p_\varphi(0) = \overline{p_{\varphi_0}} + \nu_{p_\varphi}(I_0, p_{I_0}, \varphi_0, \overline{p_{\varphi_0}}), \quad (17)$$

where, assuming that  $I_0$  is in a non-resonant zone,  $\nu_{p_\varphi}$  is given by

$$\nu_{p_\varphi} = -i \sum_{0 < |k| \leq N} \frac{e^{ik \cdot \overline{\varphi}}}{k \cdot \omega(\overline{I})} \left[ -\frac{\partial K}{\partial \varphi} \right]^{(k)}. \quad (18)$$

- 1 As a result,  $p_\varphi$  oscillates with zero mean about  $\overline{p_\varphi}$ , and the drift between  
2  $p_I(t)$  and  $\overline{p_I}(t)$  is drastically reduced.

Besides, changing  $p_\varphi$  is mandatory to have consistent trajectories of the averaged and original systems. Transforming the initial value of slow variables and their adjoints is less important, but it can further reduce the drift between these trajectories. Reconstructed trajectories (dash-dotted lines) of  $I$  and  $p_\varphi$  well overlap with their original counterpart, see Figure 5. Nevertheless, the reconstruction of  $p_I$  is wrong (in the very-specific case of the simple example,  $\nu_{p_I} = 0$ ). Again, the term  $p_\varphi \partial \omega / \partial I$  in the dynamics of  $p_I$  is responsible for this error. In fact, if short-period variations of  $p_\varphi$  are neglected, the Fourier expansion of the right-hand side is carried out by introducing  $\varepsilon$ -small errors in the evaluation of the  $\varepsilon$ -slow dynamics. The transformation of  $p_I$  should be carried out by including  $\nu_{p_\varphi}$  in the Fourier expansion, namely

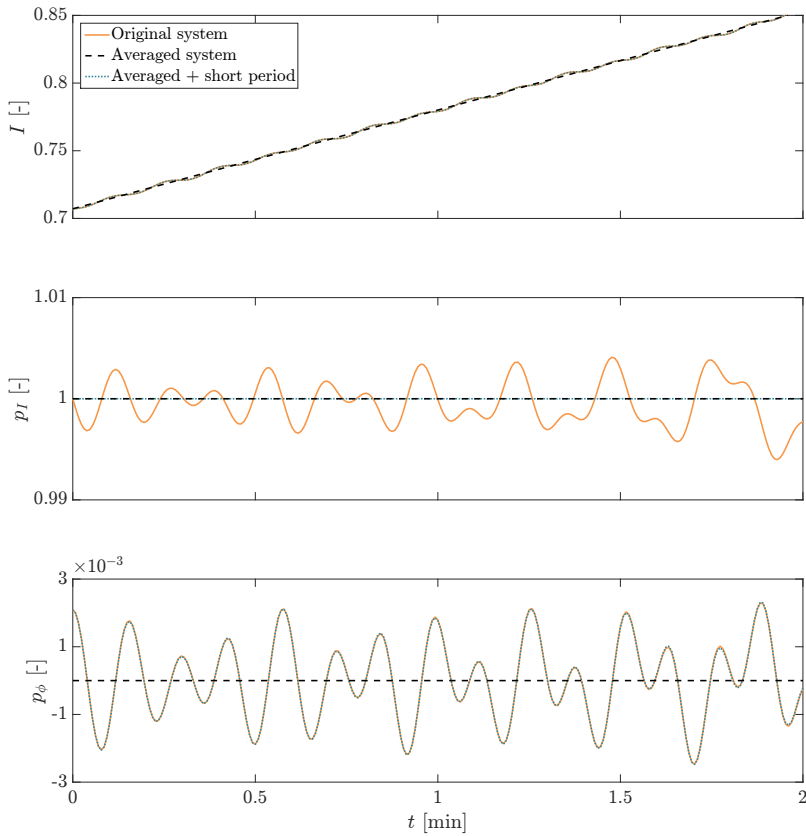
$$\nu_{p_I} = -i \sum_{0 < |k| \leq N} \frac{e^{ik \cdot \overline{\varphi}}}{k \cdot \omega(\overline{I})} \left[ -\left(\overline{p_\varphi} + \nu_{p_\varphi}\right) \frac{\partial \omega}{\partial I} - \frac{\partial K}{\partial I} \right]^{(k)}. \quad (19)$$

- 3 Ongoing work is concerned with the extension of this analysis to resonant  
4 zones. When resonances of rather low order are crossed, one has to patch to-  
5 gether resonant and non-resonant normal forms. Detecting properly where  
6 to patch these approximations will be the subject of further studies.

7 **Acknowledgements** Work supported by the French Space Agency (CNES R&T contract  
8 no. R-S13/BS-005-012); by Thales Alenia Space, Inria and UCA-JEDI Investissements  
9 d'avenir (ANR-15-IDEX-01, PEPS MSI); by the FMJH Program PGMO and EDF-Thales-  
10 Orange (PGMO grant no. 2016-1753H).

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**Fig. 5** Reconstruction of short-period variations using an appropriate transformation of the initial state and costate.

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