Transition between Two Oscillation Modes

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Abstract

A model for the symmetric coupling of two self-oscillators is presented. The non-linearities cause the system to vibrate in two modes of different symmetries. The transition between these two regimes of oscillation can occur by two different scenarios. This might model the release of vortices behind circular cylinders with a possible transition from a symmetric to an antisymmetric Bénard-von Karman vortex street.

Keywords: fluid instability, vortex dynamics, dynamical systems

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Nowadays the understanding of self-oscillators is fairly complete thanks to the theory of bifurcation and of normal forms. A familiar model for this is the van der Pol system \( \Pi \) that displays a wide range of behavior, from weakly nonlinear to strongly nonlinear relaxation oscillations, making it a good model for many practical situations. However there are physical situations characterized by spontaneous self-oscillations with certain basic features that are absent from the "generic" van der Pol system. Take for instance the Bénard-von Karman vortex street in the wake of a cylinder. Its phenomenology is approximately as follows \([2, 3, 4]\): the velocity field remains two-dimensional for Reynolds number \((Re)\) less than 160 (creeping flow for \(Re < 4\); recirculation zone with two steady symmetric eddies attached behind the cylinder for \(4 < Re < 45\); instability at \(Re \simeq 45\) at which these eddies are released alternatively to form a double row of opposite sign vortices, the Bénard-von Karman vortex street) and for \(Re > 160\) three-dimensional and irregular fluctuations are superimposed on the dominant periodic vortex shedding.

It is tempting to say that the periodic vortex shedding provides a classical example of the Poincare-Andronov bifurcation to a limit cycle. However, one fundamental ingredient would be missing if one insisted in describing these oscillations by the van der Pol equation: no equivalent of the symmetry of the system would be present in this mathematical description. That is, this mathematical picture would make no difference between a symmetric and an antisymmetric release of vortices, both would be fairly described by the same van der Pol equation, although they are clearly physically different.

We propose here to implement the major symmetries of the Bénard-von Karman oscillations by assuming that they result from the symmetric coupling of two identical oscillators, each one responsible of the periodic release of vortices on one side of the cylinder. The interest of this approach is that it shows two possible stable oscillating states: one symmetric, one antisymmetric, depending on the value of some coupling parameter. By varying continuously the coupling, it is possible to monitor the transition between these two regimes, something that is beyond an approach using a single van der Pol equation.
A dynamical model for representing these properties is presented and some in-
formations about the transitions between the two oscillation modes are obtained.
We make no attempt to relate our model to the fluid mechanical equations. The
symmetry properties of the system are used as a basic ingredient, as well as the fact
that it operates in a stable way in an oscillating mode.

Let us assume that there is an oscillator (the 'vortex' emitter) on each side
(side\(_1\), side\(_2\)) of the cylinder \([5]\) and let \((x_1, x_2)\) be their amplitudes of oscillation. If
\((x_1(t), x_2(t))\) is a possible dynamics, \((x_2(t), x_1(t))\) is also realizable by symmetry. If
a vortex is emitted from side\(_i\) whenever \(x_i(t)\) reaches a maximum then the symmet-
rical and antisymmetrical vortex streets (Fig. 1) appear as two oscillation modes,
one with the two oscillators in phase and the other one with the two oscillators out
of phase. The symmetric mode \(\Theta_1\) verifies \(x_1(t) = x_2(t)\) and the antisymmetric one
\(\Theta_2\) verifies \(x_1(t) = x_2(t + T/2)\) with \(T\) the period.
The simplest model representing these properties is a system of two coupled har-
monic oscillators with a small coupling \(\beta\):

\[
\ddot{x}_1 + x_1 + \beta x_2 = 0 \\
\ddot{x}_2 + x_2 + \beta x_1 = 0
\]  

(1)
The normal modes verify: \(\dot{\Theta}_i + (1 - (-1)^i \beta) \Theta_i = 0\) \((i = 1, 2)\), with \(\Theta_1 = x_1 + x_2\)
and \(\Theta_2 = x_1 - x_2\), each one with frequencies \(\omega_1 = 1 + \beta\) and \(\omega_2 = 1 - \beta\). But this
model is Hamiltonian and it is not useful to describe self-oscillations (i.e. oscillations
resulting from balance between energy input and dissipation). It does not present
any Poincaré-Andronov bifurcation, although it was shown experimentally that the
vortex shedding behind a cylinder results from that type of bifurcation \([2]\). To
remedy this, we can introduce, as in the van der Pol system, a nontrivial damping
term \(\dot{x}f(x)\) in equations (1). The van der Pol oscillator of equation \(\ddot{x} - \epsilon(1-x^2)\dot{x} + x = 0\), is probably the simplest example of a system with one stable limit cycle: a fixed
point at the origin and an unstable closed orbit for \(\epsilon < 0\) and an attractive cycle for
\(\epsilon > 0\). A natural extension of the van der Pol system to the representation of two
symmetric coupled oscillators is:

\[
\ddot{x}_1 - \epsilon(1 - (x_1^2 + x_2^2))\dot{x}_1 + x_1 + \beta x_2 = 0
\]
\[
\ddot{x}_2 - \epsilon(1 - (x_1^2 + x_2^2))\dot{x}_2 + x_2 + \beta x_1 = 0
\]

(2)

The small displacements near \(x_1 = x_2 = \dot{x}_1 = \dot{x}_2 = 0\) are damped to zero when \(\epsilon < 0\) and give sustained oscillations when \(\epsilon > 0\). The birth of a stable limit cycle is then governed by the parameter \(\epsilon\) and our interest rests in this regime \((\epsilon > 0)\).

Other properties of (2):

(i) If \(\beta = 0\), equations (2) present an \(O(2)\) symmetry. If the complex variable \(z = x_1 + ix_2\) is defined, system (2) becomes: \(\ddot{z} - \epsilon(1 - |z|^2)\dot{z} + z = 0\), which has the symmetries: \(z \rightarrow e^{i\phi}z\) and \(z \rightarrow \bar{z}\). A stable solution is \(z = e^{i\phi}r(t)\) with \(\phi\) constant and \(r(t)\) solution of: \(\ddot{r} - \epsilon(1 - r^2)\dot{r} + r = 0\). Its representation point is a straight line through the origin in the \((x_1, x_2)\) plane at constant angle \(\phi\), \(r(t)\) oscillating along this line. The periodic solution \(z = e^{\pm it}\) is unstable.

(ii) If \(\beta \neq 0\) the phase symmetry is destroyed, although a \(Z(2)\) symmetry \(z \rightarrow \pm i\bar{z}\) remains. The equations (2) become:

\[
\ddot{z} - \epsilon(1 - |z|^2)\dot{z} + z + i\beta \bar{z} = 0
\]

Now there are two oscillating solutions: the symmetric mode \(\Theta_1 \equiv (x_1 = x_2)\) given by \(z_1 = e^{i\pi/4}r_1(t)\) and the antisymmetric mode \(\Theta_2 \equiv (x_1 = -x_2)\) given by \(z_2 = e^{-i\pi/4}r_2(t)\), where \(r_1(t)\) and \(r_2(t)\) verify: \(\ddot{r}_i - \epsilon(1 - r_i^2)\dot{r}_i + (1 - (-1)^i\beta)r_i = 0\) \((i=1,2)\).

This system presents stable oscillations when \(|\beta| < 1\) and diverges to infinity when \(|\beta| > 1\) (except for initial conditions \(r = \dot{r} = 0\)). One finds a parameter value \(\beta_c > 0\) such that: if \(0 < \beta < \beta_c\) then \(\Theta_1\) is stable and \(\Theta_2\) unstable and, if \(-\beta_c < \beta < 0\), \(\Theta_1\) is unstable and \(\Theta_2\) stable. Also, if \(\beta_c < |\beta| < 1\) the two modes \(\Theta_1\) and \(\Theta_2\) are linearly stable. Let us remark that this simple model brings all the information we are looking for. The range of parameters \(\epsilon > 0\) would modelize the situations of stable limit cycle oscillations observed experimentally for for \(Re > Re_c\), where \(Re_c\) is the Reynolds number at the onset of vortex shedding. The parameter
would represent for instance the aspect ratio in the experiments of Le Gal and collaborators [6].

In model equation (2) the transition from $\Theta_1$ to $\Theta_2$ stable oscillation occurs at $\beta = 0$. In this case the coupling is lost and the system becomes degenerate at transition (the phase difference between the two oscillators is arbitrary) presenting an infinity of stable oscillating states. In order to remove this degeneracy, we need to have more than one coupling parameter. This means that the dimension of parameter space for a transition between two modes of oscillation should be greater than one: the unfolding of this transition should be controlled by two parameters at least. Thus, a more general and 'robust' scheme of transition from mode $\Theta_1$ to mode $\Theta_2$, and vice versa, is achieved by introducing another phase symmetry breaking term (proportional to $\gamma$) in the dissipative force of equations (2):

\[
\ddot{x}_1 - \epsilon(1 - x_1^2 - (1 + \gamma)x_2^2))\dot{x}_1 + x_1 + \beta x_2 = 0 \\
\ddot{x}_2 - \epsilon(1 - x_2^2 - (1 + \gamma)x_1^2))\dot{x}_2 + x_2 + \beta x_1 = 0
\]

(4)

where $\gamma$ and $\beta$ are the coupling constants. Symmetries $(x_1, x_2) \leftrightarrow (x_2, x_1)$ and $(x_1, x_2, \beta) \leftrightarrow (x_2, -x_1, -\beta)$ are preserved.

We have numerically studied the solutions of this system in two different regimes and found the following results for $\gamma$ and $\beta$ near zero:

(a) When $|\beta| \ll |\gamma|$ there are four oscillatory states: the pure symmetric mode $\Theta_1 \equiv (x_1 = x_2)$, the pure antisymmetric mode $\Theta_2 \equiv (x_1 = -x_2)$ and two new mixed modes $\Theta_{12} \equiv (x_1, x_2)$ and $\Theta_{21} \equiv (x_2, x_1)$ intermediate between $\Theta_1$ and $\Theta_2$. If $\gamma > 0$ the mixed modes are stable and the pure modes unstable. If $\gamma < 0$ the mixed modes are unstable and the pure modes stable.

(b) When $|\beta| \gg |\gamma|$ equations (4) tend to equations (2) (the perturbation introduced by $\gamma$ can be neglected in front of $\beta$), the mixed modes $\Theta_{12}$ and $\Theta_{21}$ collide and disappear, and the pure mode $\Theta_1$ and $\Theta_2$ remain.

Let us explain in more detail the two different scenarios (Fig. 2) that can be found for the transition between the pure modes $\Theta_1$ and $\Theta_2$ when $\gamma$ is fixed and $\beta$
is varied ($\epsilon$ is kept constant and of order 1, but the results are not sensitive to its specific value):

**Scenario I:** $\gamma < 0$ (Fig. 2a):

(I$_1$) $\beta < -c(\epsilon)|\gamma|$ (c(\epsilon) positive constant, depending on $\epsilon$ and of order 1 for $\epsilon$ of order 1): $\Theta_1$ is unstable and $\Theta_2$ stable. No mixed modes.

(I$_2$) $-c(\epsilon)|\gamma| < \beta < c(\epsilon)|\gamma|$: the two unstable mixed modes $\Theta_{12}$ and $\Theta_{21}$ grow from $\Theta_1$ for $\beta = -c(\epsilon)|\gamma|$. In this regime the two pure modes are stable. Depending on initial conditions the system oscillates in the symmetric or in the antisymmetric mode. When $\beta \to c(\epsilon)|\gamma|$ the two mixed modes approach $\Theta_2$, collide with it for $\beta = c(\epsilon)|\gamma|$ making $\Theta_2$ linearly unstable. It transfers the stability from $\Theta_2$ to $\Theta_1$.

(I$_3$) $\beta > c(\epsilon)|\gamma|$: $\Theta_1$ is stable and $\Theta_2$ unstable. No mixed modes.

Summarizing: there is a range of parameters $I_2$ where $\Theta_1$ and $\Theta_2$ are both stable, and each mode ($\Theta_1$ or $\Theta_2$) loses its stability by a supercritical bifurcation on the edges of $I_2$.

**Scenario II:** $\gamma > 0$ (Fig. 2b):

(II$_1$) $\beta < -c(\epsilon)|\gamma|$: $\Theta_1$ is unstable and $\Theta_2$ stable. No mixed modes.

(II$_2$) $-c(\epsilon)|\gamma| < \beta < c(\epsilon)|\gamma|$: the two mixed modes $\Theta_{12}$ and $\Theta_{21}$ bifurcate from $\Theta_2$ for $\beta = -c(\epsilon)|\gamma|$. These are stable (which makes the difference with scenario I). In this $II_2$ regime the two pure modes are unstable and the system will decay in one of the two mixed modes according to the initial conditions. When $\beta \to c(\epsilon)|\gamma|$ the mixed modes approach $\Theta_1$ and collide with it for $\beta = c(\epsilon)|\gamma|$. It transfers the stability from the mixed modes to $\Theta_1$.

(II$_3$) $\beta > c(\epsilon)|\gamma|$: $\Theta_1$ is stable and $\Theta_2$ unstable. No mixed modes.

Summarizing, there is a range of parameters $II_2$ where the two mixed modes are stable, and collide with $\Theta_1$ or $\Theta_2$ on the edge of $II_2$ to exchange stability.

A derivation of the dynamics of equations (4) can be obtained in the formalism of a slow phase dynamics [7]. (A different calculation can be found in reference [8] where two nonlinear oscillators with diffusive coupling, not the one we consider, are studied in the vicinity of a Hopf (Poincaré-Andronov) bifurcation). When $\beta = \gamma = 0$, the
set of equations (4) present phase symmetry ($\phi$) and temporal translation symmetry ($\psi$), and when $\beta$ or $\gamma$ are different from zero the phase symmetry is broken. For small $\beta$ or $\gamma$ (of the same order of magnitude) the general solution of equations (4) can be written:

$$x_1 = r_0(t + \psi) \cos \phi + \delta x_1$$
$$x_2 = r_0(t + \psi) \sin \phi + \delta x_2$$

where $r_0(t)$ is the periodic non zero solution of the van der Pol equation: $\dddot{r}_0 - \epsilon(1 - r_0^2) \ddot{r}_0 + r_0 = 0$, $\psi$ and $\phi$ follow a slow dynamics ($\ddot{\psi}, \dot{\phi} \ll \dddot{r}_0$), and $\delta x_1, \delta x_2, \dot{\psi}, \dot{\phi}$ are small and of order ($\gamma, \beta$). Linearising equations (4) to order ($\gamma, \beta$) we obtain a set of coupled equations to be solved for $\delta x_1$ and $\delta x_2$. These equations are written in matrix notation to make their structure more transparent:

$$\mathbf{L} \begin{pmatrix} \delta x_1 \\ \delta x_2 \end{pmatrix} = \begin{pmatrix} f(r_0) \sin \phi & g(r_0) \cos \phi \\ -f(r_0) \cos \phi & g(r_0) \sin \phi \end{pmatrix} \begin{pmatrix} \dot{\phi} \\ \dot{\psi} \end{pmatrix} - r_0[\beta + \gamma \frac{1}{2} h(r_0, \phi)] \begin{pmatrix} \sin \phi \\ \cos \phi \end{pmatrix}$$

(5)

where

$$\mathbf{L} = \begin{pmatrix} \mathbf{F}_t & 0 \\ 0 & \mathbf{F}_t \end{pmatrix} + h(r_0, \phi) \begin{pmatrix} \cot \phi & 1 \\ 1 & \tan \phi \end{pmatrix}$$
$$\mathbf{F}_t = \partial_{tt} - \epsilon(1 - r_0^2) \partial_t + 1$$
$$f(r_0) = 2 \dot{r}_0 - \epsilon(1 - r_0^2) r_0$$
$$g(r_0) = -[2 \ddot{r}_0 - \epsilon(1 - r_0^2) \dot{r}_0]$$
$$h(r_0, \phi) = \epsilon r_0 \dot{r}_0 \sin(2\phi)$$

The relevant solution of equation (5) is made of periodic functions of time, with the same period $T$ as $r_0(t)$. This excludes functions with a secular growth and leads to a solvability condition that will ultimately become an equation of evolution for $\phi(t)$. To write this solvability condition, one needs to define first an inner product of functions of time with period $T$ as: $<\bar{\theta}|\bar{\sigma}> = \int_0^T (\theta_1 \sigma_1 + \theta_2 \sigma_2) dt$, ($\bar{\theta} = (\theta_1, \theta_2)$ is written as a two component vector). One notices now that the linear operator $\mathbf{L}$ has a nonempty kernel:

$$\mathbf{L}\bar{\omega} = 0 \Rightarrow \bar{\omega}_a = r_0 \begin{pmatrix} \sin \phi \\ -\cos \phi \end{pmatrix}, \bar{\omega}_b = \dot{r}_0 \begin{pmatrix} \cos \phi \\ \sin \phi \end{pmatrix}$$
Because of this non empty kernel, the equation (5) has no solution in general that is periodic with period $T$. To have such a solution, the right hand side $\vec{\varphi}$ of this equation must be orthogonal to the kernel of the adjoint operator $\mathcal{L}^+$, made of two functions, $\vec{\chi}_i$ ($i = a, b$), of $t$ that are solution of the formal equation $\mathcal{L}^+ \vec{\chi} = 0$. The solvability condition is then that the two inner products $\langle \vec{\chi}_i | \vec{\varphi} \rangle$ ($i = a, b$) are zero. The operator $\mathcal{L}^+$ can be written explicitely as:

$$\mathcal{L}^+ = \begin{pmatrix} \mathcal{F}_t^+ & 0 \\ 0 & \mathcal{F}_t^+ \end{pmatrix} + h(r_0, \phi) \begin{pmatrix} \cot \phi & 1 \\ 1 & \tan \phi \end{pmatrix}$$

where $\mathcal{F}_t^+ = \partial_t + \epsilon \partial_t (1 - r_0^2) + 1$. Since the two left vectors $\vec{\chi}_{a,b}$, once multiplied with the inner product, $\langle | >$, with the left side of equation (5) give zero, the same product with the right side of (5) should give zero as well. This gives two coupled equations for $\dot{\phi}$ and $\dot{\psi}$:

$$\begin{pmatrix} h_{a1} & h_{a2} \\ h_{b1} & h_{b2} \end{pmatrix} \begin{pmatrix} \dot{\phi} \\ \dot{\psi} \end{pmatrix} = \beta \begin{pmatrix} m_a \\ m_b \end{pmatrix} + \gamma \begin{pmatrix} n_a \\ n_b \end{pmatrix}$$

(6)

where $h_{i1}, h_{i2}, m_i, n_i$ ($i = a, b$) are functions of $\epsilon$ and $\phi$ after the time integration coming from the scalar product:

- $h_{i1} = \int_0^T f(r_0) \sin \phi \chi_{i1} - \cos \phi \chi_{i2} dt$
- $h_{i2} = \int_0^T g(r_0) \cos \phi \chi_{i1} + \sin \phi \chi_{i2} dt$
- $m_i = \int_0^T r_0 \sin \phi \chi_{i1} + \cos \phi \chi_{i2} dt$
- $n_i = \frac{1}{2} \int_0^T r_0 h(r_0, \phi) \sin \phi \chi_{i1} + \cos \phi \chi_{i2} dt$

The $\phi$-dependance of the vectors in the kernel of $\mathcal{L}^+$ can be factored out by noticing that these vectors can have the following $\phi$-dependance:

$$\vec{\chi}_a = h_a(t) \begin{pmatrix} -\sin \phi \\ \cos \phi \end{pmatrix}, \quad \vec{\chi}_b = h_b(t) \begin{pmatrix} \cos \phi \\ \sin \phi \end{pmatrix}$$

From this the two functions $h_{a,b}(t)$ are the non trivial (=non zero) solutions of period $T$ of the two linear homegeneous equations:

$$\mathcal{F}_t^+ [h_a(t)] = 0 \Rightarrow [\partial_t + \epsilon \partial_t (1 - r_0^2) + 1] h_a(t) = 0$$
$$[\mathcal{F}_t + 2\epsilon (1 - r_0^2) \partial_t] [h_b(t)] = 0 \Rightarrow [\partial_t + \epsilon (1 - r_0^2) \partial_t + 1] h_b(t) = 0$$
Then the equation for $\dot{\phi}$ is simplified to:

$$k_a(\epsilon)\dot{\phi} = l_a(\epsilon) \cos(2\phi) + s_a(\epsilon) \sin(4\phi) \gamma$$

(7)

where $k_a$, $l_a$ and $s_a$ are functions of $\epsilon$ only that are proportional to various scalar product of functions on the equation (6) with $h_a(t)$. Thus, $k_a(\epsilon) = -\int_0^T f(r_0) h_a(t) dt$; $l_a(\epsilon) = \int_0^T r_0 h_{a,b}(t) dt$; and $s_a(\epsilon) = \frac{\epsilon}{2} \int_0^T r_0^2 h_{a,b}(t) dt$.

The equation (7) presents, as $\beta$ and $\gamma$ vary, the same bifurcations as the one found numerically for the original set of equations (4). To show this, let us define $\beta' = \frac{\beta l_a(\epsilon)}{k_a(\epsilon)}$ and $\gamma' = 2\gamma \frac{s_a(\epsilon)}{k_a(\epsilon)}$, that will be considered now as the bifurcation parameters (the quantities $\frac{l_a(\epsilon)}{k_a(\epsilon)}$ and $\frac{s_a(\epsilon)}{k_a(\epsilon)}$ are constants of order 1 at a fixed finite value of $\epsilon$, and so can be get rid off by scaling). The fixed points of (7) are roots (in $\phi$) of:

$$\beta' \cos(2\phi) + \frac{\gamma'}{2} \sin(4\phi) = 0$$

(8)

or of $\cos(2\phi) = 0$ or $\beta' + \gamma' \sin(2\phi) = 0$.

If $|\beta'| > |\gamma'|$, this corresponds to scenario $I_{1,3}$ and $II_{1,3}$. The only steady states are at the zeroes of $\cos(2\phi)$, that are at $\phi = \frac{\pi}{4}$ and $\phi = -\frac{\pi}{4}$, with one stable and the other unstable, depending of the sign of $\beta'$ (and consequently of $\beta$) in agreement with what was found numerically. If $|\beta'| < |\gamma'|$, they are two more fixed points, that are $\frac{1}{2} \sin^{-1}(-\frac{\beta'}{\gamma'})$ and $\frac{\pi}{2} - \frac{1}{2} \sin^{-1}(-\frac{\beta'}{\gamma'})$. They correspond to the mixed modes and, as $\beta'$ goes for instance from $-\gamma'$ to $\gamma'$ (if $\gamma' > 0$), one finds the same bifurcation structure as found for the original equations (4), as explained formerly under the heading "Scenario II" (Fig. 2).

In this rapid communication, we have presented a simple model for systems made of two symmetric coupled self-oscillators [9]. This might be a theory for one of the most studied instabilities in real fluid mechanics, the periodic release of vortices in the wake of cylinders, a phenomenon studied experimental and theoretically long ago by H. Bénard and T. von Karman [10, 11] and his collaborators. The connection of the present work with the Bénard-von Karman phenomenon could be as follows. Our idea is that the wake is created by two symmetrically coupled self-oscillators,
one on each side of the cylinder. We have shown that, depending on the coupling, these two systems may either oscillate in phase or out of phase (as in the Bénard-von Karman wake in a normal viscous fluid). Moreover, the transition from one of these two states to the other is realized by two different scenarios depending of the parameters. This might describe recent experiments by Le Gal and collaborators [4], who observe this transition when the flow around the cylinder is more and more constrained by plates perpendicular to the axis of this cylinder.

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Figure Captions

**Fig 1.** A graphical representation of the two oscillation modes: (a) the symmetric vortex street $\Theta_1$ and (b) the antisymmetric one $\Theta_2$.

**Fig 2.** Nonlinear transition between the two oscillation modes ($\Theta_1, \Theta_2$): (a) in scenario I ($\gamma < 0$) the two intermediary mixed modes, $\Theta_{12}$ and $\Theta_{21}$, are unstable and (b) in scenario II ($\gamma > 0$) these mixed modes are stable. (c) Another representation of scenarios I and II (inspired from figure 3 in reference [8]).