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INTRODUCTION TO THE 1966 EDITION

Many mathematicians will welcome the new edition of G. D. Birkhoff's book on Dynamical Systems. It represents essentially a continuation of Poincaré's profound and extensive work on Celestial Mechanics. Altogether Birkhoff was strongly influenced by Poincaré and devoted a major part of his mathematical work to subjects arising from Poincaré's tradition. The present book contains Birkhoff's views and ideas of his earlier period of life—it appeared when Birkhoff was 43.

To the modern reader the style of this book may appear less formal and rigorous than it is now customary. But just the informal and lively manner of writing has been inspiring to many mathematicians. The effect of this inspiration is visible in a number of later papers. For example, Morse's theory on geodesics on a closed manifold originated directly in Birkhoff's ideas in dynamical systems. The recent work by Anosov on *U-Systems* answers the question of ergodicity and density of periodic solutions for a wide class of differential equations—a problem which in Birkhoff's book was studied for a single model system. These and other examples (given below) justify the hope that the reprinting of this book again will stimulate further progress.

Of course, after nearly 40 years a number of statements are outdated. For this reason I have selected a list of references to pertinent literature after 1927. Naturally, the list cannot be complete and further references can be found in the books and survey articles quoted. In the Addendum section at the back of this book I added some general remarks to various chapters. More specific comments are supplied as footnotes at the end of the book. References to these footnotes are given as small numbers in the margin of the text.*

JURGEN MOSER

*I am indebted to Dr. R. Sacker for his assistance.

A PREFACE TO THE 1966 EDITION

I met George Birkhoff in 1914, the year after he published his "Proof of Poincaré's Geometric Theorem" [1]. In a paper [2] in 1912 Poincaré had enunciated a theorem of great importance for the restricted problem of three bodies, but had succeeded in treating only a variety of special cases after long efforts. Poincaré had also referred to this theorem in lectures in Göttingen. Birkhoff formulated this theorem in [1] as follows.

"Let us suppose that a continuous one-to-one transformation T takes the ring R formed by concentric circles C_a and C_b of radii a and b respectively ($a > b > 0$) into itself in such a way as to advance the points of C_a in a positive sense, and the points of C_b in a negative sense and at the same time preserve areas. Then there *are at least two invariant points.*"

Birkhoff's proof of this theorem in 1913 was one of the most exciting mathematical events of the era and was widely acclaimed.

In 1912 in [3] Birkhoff outlined the conjecture of Poincaré that the "general" motion in dynamics in phase space was of the so-called "discontinuous type". It was in this paper that Birkhoff introduced his novel and beautiful conceptions of "minimal" or equivalently "recurrent" sets of motions. A minimal non-periodic set of motions is of "discontinuous" type if in phase space it possesses no subsets which are continua except arcs of motions. Birkhoff asked me in 1915 to examine the conjecture of Poincaré. My answer was by way of a "symbolic dynamics". A non-periodic recurrent symbol introduced at that time was discovered independently by a Russian in 1934 and used by Novikov in his disproof of the Frobenius-Burnside conjecture in group theory.

The problem of the generality of "non-degenerate" periodic orbits, that is orbits whose equations of variation admit no non-

trivial periodic solutions was often emphasized by Birkhoff. It is now of major interest to differential topologists of whom Birkhoff and Poincaré were among the first, although not so called. The work of Moser, Arnol'd and others on stability belongs to a related field, one close to the center of Birkhoff's interest.

The above merely samples the many aspects of dynamics in which Birkhoff introduced new ideas, new theorems and new questions. One of Birkhoff's theorems which has aroused the greatest interest was his so-called "Ergodic Theorem" with its subsequent variations, interpretations and consequences in measure theory and probability.

Birkhoff once remarked that "it is fortunate that the world of mathematics is as large as it is". Only by bringing to bear the genius and imagination of many lands and intellectual origins can one be sure of adequate appreciation of new mathematical ideas and significant responses.

History has responded to these pages on Dynamical Systems in an unmistakable way. For this we are more than content.

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2. Poincaré, H., *Sur un théorème de géométrie*, Rend. del Cir. Mat. di Palermo 33(1912), 375-407.
3. Birkhoff, George, *Quelques théorèmes sur le mouvement des systèmes dynamiques*, Bull. Soc. Math. France 40(1912), 305-323.

MARSTON MORSE

PREFACE TO THE 1927 EDITION

The Colloquium Lectures which I had the privilege of delivering at the University of Chicago before the American Mathematical Society, September 5-8, 1920, contained a large part of the material presented in the following pages. The delay in publication has been due to several causes, one of which has been my desire to wait until some of my own ideas had developed further. I have taken advantage of a well-established tradition of our Colloquia by giving particular emphasis to my own researches on dynamical systems. It is my earnest hope that the lectures may serve to stimulate others to investigate the outstanding problems in this most fascinating field.

It is only necessary to recall the work of Galileo, Newton, Laplace, Clausius, Rayleigh in the physical applications of dynamics, of Lagrange, W. R. Hamilton, Jacobi in its formal development, and of Hill and Poincaré in the qualitative treatment of dynamical questions, in order to realize the remarkable significance of dynamics in the past for scientific thought. At a time when no physical theory can properly be termed fundamental—the known theories appear to be merely more or less fundamental in certain directions—it may be asserted with confidence that ordinary differential equations in the real domain, and particularly equations of dynamical origin, will continue to hold a position of the highest importance.

In looking back over my own dynamical work, of which a certain period is finished with the publication of this book, I cannot but express my feeling of deep admiration and gratitude to Hadamard, Levi-Civita, Sundman and Whittaker, to whom many important recent advances in theoretical dynamics are due, and in whose work I have found especial inspiration. It is with much regret that I have been unable to give adequate space to their achievements.

Professor Philip Franklin coöperated with me in a first re-writing of part of my notes on these lectures. I owe him cordial thanks for his help.

November 18, 1927.

GEORGE D. BIRKHOFF.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION TO THE 1966 EDITION	iii
PREFACE TO THE 1966 EDITION.....	iv
PREFACE TO THE 1927 EDITION.....	vi

CHAPTER I

PHYSICAL ASPECTS OF DYNAMICAL SYSTEMS

	PAGE
1. Introductory remarks	1
2. An existence theorem.....	1
3. A uniqueness theorem	5
4. Two continuity theorems.....	6
5. Some extensions	10
6. The principle of the conservation of energy. Con- servative systems	14
7. Change of variables in conservative systems	19
8. Geometrical constraints.....	22
9. Internal characterization of Lagrangian systems.....	23
10. External characterization of Lagrangian systems	25
11. Dissipative systems.....	31

CHAPTER II

VARIATIONAL PRINCIPLES AND APPLICATIONS

1. An algebraic variational principle.....	33
2. Hamilton's principle.....	34
3. The principle of least action.....	36
4. Normal form (two degrees of freedom)	39
5. Ignorable coördinates.....	40
6. The method of multipliers.....	41
7. The general integral linear in the velocities	44
8. Conditional integrals linear in the velocities.....	45

9.	Integrals quadratic in the velocities	48
10.	The Hamiltonian equations	50
11.	Transformation of the Hamiltonian equations	53
12.	The Pfaffian equations	55
13.	On the significance of variational principles	55

CHAPTER III

FORMAL ASPECTS OF DYNAMICS

	PAGE
1. Introductory remarks	59
2. The formal group	60
3. Formal solutions	63
4. The equilibrium problem	67
5. The generalized equilibrium problem	71
6. On the Hamiltonian multipliers	74
7. Normalization of H_2	78
8. The Hamiltonian equilibrium problem	82
9. Generalization of the Hamiltonian problem	85
10. On the Pfaffian multipliers	89
11. Preliminary normalization in Pfaffian problem	91
12. The Pfaffian equilibrium problem	93
13. Generalization of the Pfaffian problem	94

CHAPTER IV

STABILITY OF PERIODIC MOTIONS

1. On the reduction to generalized equilibrium	97
2. Stability of Pfaffian systems	100
3. Instability of Pfaffian systems	105
4. Complete stability	105
5. Normal form for completely stable systems	109
6. Proof of the lemma of section 5	114
7. Reversibility and complete stability	115
8. Other types of stability	121

CHAPTER V

EXISTENCE OF PERIODIC MOTIONS

1. Role of the periodic motions	123
2. An example	124

3.	The minimum method.....	128
4.	Application to symmetric case.....	130
5.	Whittaker's criterion and analogous results	132
6.	The minimax method.....	133
7.	Application to exceptional case.....	135
8.	The extensions by Morse	139
9.	The method of analytic continuation	139
10.	The transformation method of Poincaré.....	143
11.	An example	146

CHAPTER VI

APPLICATION OF POINCARÉ'S GEOMETRIC THEOREM

1.	Periodic motions near generalized equilibrium ($m = 1$)	150
2.	Proof of the lemma of section 1.....	154
3.	Periodic motions near a periodic motion ($m = 2$).....	159
4.	Some remarks	162
5.	The geometric theorem of Poincaré.....	165
6.	The billiard ball problem	169
7.	The corresponding transformation T	171
8.	Area-preserving property of T	173
9.	Applications to billiard ball problem	176
10.	The geodesic problem. Construction of a transformation TT^*	180
11.	Application of Poincaré's theorem to geodesic problem.....	185

CHAPTER VII

GENERAL THEORY OF DYNAMICAL SYSTEMS

1.	Introductory remarks	189
2.	Wandering and non-wandering motions.....	190
3.	The sequence M, M_1, M_2	193
4.	Some properties of the central motions	195
5.	Concerning the role of the central motions.....	197
6.	Groups of motions.....	197
7.	Recurrent motions	198
8.	Arbitrary motions and the recurrent motions	200
9.	Density of the special central motions	202
10.	Recurrent motions and semi-asymptotic central motions.....	204
11.	Transitivity and intransitivity	205

CHAPTER VIII

THE CASE OF TWO DEGREES OF FREEDOM

	PAGE
1. Formal classification of invariant points	209
2. Distribution of periodic motions of stable type	215
3. Distribution of quasi-periodic motions	218
4. Stability and instability	220
5. The stable case. Zones of instability	221
6. A criterion for stability	226
7. The problem of stability	227
8. The unstable case. Asymptotic families	227
9. Distribution of motions asymptotic to periodic motions	231
10. On other types of motion	237
11. A transitive dynamical problem	238
12. An integrable case	248
13. The concept of integrability	255

CHAPTER IX

THE PROBLEM OF THREE BODIES

1. Introductory remarks	260
2. The equations of motion and the classical integrals	261
3. Reduction to the 12th order	263
4. Lagrange's equality	264
5. Sundman's inequality	265
6. The possibility of collision	267
7. Indefinite continuation of the motions	270
8. Further properties of the motions	275
9. On a result of Sundman	283
10. The reduced manifold M_7 of states of motion	283
11. Types of motion in M_7	288
12. Extension to $n > 3$ bodies and more general laws of force	291
ADDENDUM	293
FOOTNOTES	296
BIBLIOGRAPHY	300
INDEX	303