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D'Alembert's Principle & Lagrange's eqⁿ

A virtual displacement of a system refers to a change in the configuration of the system as the result of any arbitrary infinitesimal change of the co-ordinates δr_i , consistent with the forces & constraints imposed on the system at the given instant t . The displacement is called virtual to distinguish it from an actual displacement of the system occurring in a time interval dt , during which the forces & constraints may be changing. Suppose the system is in equilibrium; i.e. the total force on each particle vanishes, $F_i = 0$.

Then clearly the dot product $F_i \cdot \delta r_i$, which is the virtual work of the force F_i in the displacement δr_i , also vanishes. The sum of these vanishing products over all particles must likewise be zero.

$$\sum_i F_i \cdot \delta r_i = 0. \quad \text{--- (1)}$$

As yet nothing has been said that has any new physical content. Decompose F_i into the applied force, $F_i^{(a)}$, & the force of constraint f_i ,

$$F_i = F_i^{(a)} + f_i, \quad \text{--- (2)}$$

so that, eqⁿ ① becomes,

$$\sum_i F_i^{(a)} \cdot \delta r_i + \sum_i f_i \cdot \delta r_i = 0 \quad \text{--- ③}$$

We now restrict ourselves to systems for which the net virtual work of the forces of constraint is zero.

We therefore have as the condition for equilibrium of a system that the virtual work of the applied forces vanishes.

$$\sum_i F_i^{(a)} \cdot \delta r_i = 0 \quad \text{--- ④}$$

Eqⁿ ④ is often called the principle of virtual work.

Note that, the coefficients of δr_i are not completely independent but are connected by the constraints. In order to equate the coefficients to zero, we must transform the principle into involving the virtual displacements which are independent. Eqⁿ ④ satisfies our needs as it does not contain f_i , but it deals only with the virtual work we want involving the general motion of the system.

To obtain such a principle, we use a device thought of by James Bernoulli & developed by D'Alembert. The eqⁿ of motion,

$$F_i = \dot{p}_i,$$

can be written as,

$$F_i - \dot{p}_i = 0$$

which states that the particles in the system will be in equilibrium under a force equal to the actual force or a "reversed effective force" $-\dot{p}_i$. Instead of (1) we can immediately write,

$$\sum_i (F_i - \dot{p}_i) \cdot \delta r_i = 0, \quad \text{--- (5)}$$

& , making the same resolution into applied forces & constraint, there result,

$$\sum_i (F_i^{(a)} - \dot{p}_i) \cdot \delta r_i + \sum_i f_i \cdot \delta r_i = 0.$$

we again restrict ourselves to systems for which the work of the forces of constraint is therefore obtained

$$\sum_i (F_i^{(a)} - \dot{p}_i) \cdot \delta r_i = 0 \quad \text{--- (6)}$$

which is often called D'Alembert's principle.

The translation from r_i to q_j language starts from the transformation eqⁿ

$$r_i = r_i(q_1, q_2, \dots, q_n, t) \quad \text{--- (6)}$$

(assuming n independent co-ordinates), & is carried out by means of the usual "chain rules" of the calculus of partial differentiation.

Thus, V_i is expressed in terms of the \dot{q}_k by the formula

$$V_i = \frac{dr_i}{dt} = \sum \frac{\partial r_i}{\partial q_k} \dot{q}_k + \frac{\partial r_i}{\partial t} \quad \text{---}$$

By, the arbitrary virtual displacement δr_i can be connected with the virtual displacements δq_j by

$$\delta r_i = \sum_j \frac{\partial r_i}{\partial q_j} \delta q_j \quad \text{--- (8)}$$

In terms of the generalized co-ordinates, the virtual work of the F_i becomes.

$$\begin{aligned} \sum_i F_i \cdot \delta r_i &= \sum_{i,j} F_i \cdot \frac{\partial r_i}{\partial q_j} \delta q_j \\ &= \sum_j Q_j \delta q_j. \quad \text{--- (9)} \end{aligned}$$

where the Q_j are called the components of the generalized force, defined as

$$Q_j = \sum_i F_i \cdot \frac{\partial r_i}{\partial q_j} \quad \text{--- (10)}$$

We turn now to the other term involved in eqⁿ (6) which may be written as

$$\sum_i \dot{P}_i \cdot \delta r_i = \sum_i m_i \dot{r}_i \cdot \delta r_i.$$

Expressing δr_i by (8), in this becomes.

$$\sum_{i,j} m_i \dot{r}_i \cdot \frac{\partial r_i}{\partial q_j} \delta q_j$$

consider, now the relation.

$$\sum_i m_i \ddot{r}_i \cdot \frac{\partial r_i}{\partial q_j} = \sum_i \left[\frac{d}{dt} \left(m_i \dot{r}_i \cdot \frac{\partial r_i}{\partial q_j} \right) - m_i \dot{r}_i \cdot \frac{d}{dt} \left(\frac{\partial r_i}{\partial q_j} \right) \right] \quad \text{--- (11)}$$

In last term of eqⁿ (11) we can interchange the differentiation w.r.t. t & q_j , for, in analogy --- (1)

$$\begin{aligned} \frac{d}{dt} \left(\frac{\partial r_i}{\partial q_j} \right) &= \frac{\partial \dot{r}_i}{\partial q_j} = \sum_k \frac{\partial^2 r_i}{\partial q_j \partial q_k} \dot{q}_k + \frac{\partial^2 r_i}{\partial q_j \partial t} \\ &= \frac{\partial v_i}{\partial q_j} \end{aligned}$$

by eqⁿ (11). further, we also see from eqⁿ (11) that,

$$\frac{\partial v_i}{\partial q_j} = \frac{\partial r_i}{\partial q_j} \quad \text{--- (12)}$$

Substitution of these changes in (11) leads to the result that,

$$\sum_i m_i \ddot{r}_i \cdot \frac{\partial r_i}{\partial q_j} = \sum \left[\frac{d}{dt} \left(m_i v_i \cdot \frac{\partial v_i}{\partial \dot{q}_j} \right) - m_i v_i \cdot \frac{\partial v_i}{\partial q_j} \right],$$

& the second term on the left-hand side of eqⁿ (6) can be expanded into.

$$\sum_j \left\{ \frac{d}{dt} \left[\frac{\partial}{\partial \dot{q}_j} \left(\sum_i \frac{1}{2} m_i v_i^2 \right) \right] - \frac{\partial}{\partial q_j} \left(\sum_i \frac{1}{2} m_i v_i^2 \right) - Q_j \right\} \delta q_j$$

Identifying $\sum_i \frac{1}{2} m_i v_i^2$ with the system K.E. T. D'Alembert principle (eqⁿ (6)) becomes,

$$\sum_j \left\{ \left[\frac{d}{dt} \left(\frac{\partial T}{\partial \dot{q}_j} \right) - \frac{\partial T}{\partial q_j} \right] - Q_j \right\} \delta q_j = 0$$

(13)

Any virtual displacement δq_j is then independent of δq_k & \therefore the only way (13) to hold individual Co-efficients to vanish.

$$\frac{d}{dt} \left(\frac{\partial T}{\partial \dot{q}_j} \right) - \frac{\partial T}{\partial q_j} = Q_j \quad \text{--- (14)}$$

There are n such eq^t in all.

When the forces are derivable from a scalar potential func^t V ,

$$F_i = -\nabla_i V.$$

Then the generalized forces can be written as,

$$Q_j = \sum_i F_i \cdot \frac{\partial r_i}{\partial q_j} = -\sum_i \nabla_i V \cdot \frac{\partial r_i}{\partial q_j},$$

partial derivative of a func^t $-V(r_1, r_2, \dots, r_n, t)$ w.r.t. q_j

$$Q_j = -\frac{\partial V}{\partial q_j} \quad \text{--- (15)}$$

see eq^t (8) eq^t (14) can then be rewritten as,

$$\frac{d}{dt} \left(\frac{\partial T}{\partial \dot{q}_j} \right) - \frac{\partial (T - V)}{\partial q_j} = 0 \quad \text{--- (16)}$$

Hence, we can include a term in V in the partial derivative w.r.t. q_j .

$$\frac{d}{dt} \left(\frac{\partial (T-V)}{\partial \dot{q}_j} \right) - \frac{\partial (T-V)}{\partial q_j} = 0.$$

or, defining a new funcⁿ, the Lagrangian L , as.

$$L = T - V, \quad \text{--- (17)}$$

the eqⁿ (14) become,

$$\frac{d}{dt} \left(\frac{\partial L}{\partial \dot{q}_j} \right) - \frac{\partial L}{\partial q_j} = 0 \quad \text{--- (18)}$$

expression referred to as "Lagrange's eqⁿ."

Simple Applications of the Lagrangian formulation.

The previous section show that for system where we can define a Lagrangian.

Thus, T is given in general by,

$$T = \sum_i \frac{1}{2} m_i v_i^2 = \sum_i \frac{1}{2} m_i \left(\sum_j \frac{\partial x_i}{\partial q_j} \dot{q}_j + \frac{\partial x_i}{\partial t} \right)^2$$

The expression for T in generalized co-ordinates have the form.

$$T = M_0 + \sum_j M_j \dot{q}_j + \frac{1}{2} \sum_{j,k} M_{jk} \dot{q}_j \dot{q}_k \quad \text{--- (1)}$$

Where M_0 , M_j , M_{jk} are definite funct of q 's & t & e of q 's & t . show that.

$$M_0 = \sum_i \frac{1}{2} m_i \left(\frac{\partial r_i}{\partial t} \right)^2$$

$$M_j = \sum_i m_i \frac{\partial r_i}{\partial t} \cdot \frac{\partial r_i}{\partial q_j} \quad \text{--- (2)}$$

$$M_{jk} = \sum_i m_i \frac{\partial r_i}{\partial q_j} \cdot \frac{\partial r_i}{\partial q_k}$$

hence, the K.E. of system can always written as sum of three homogeneous funct of generalized velocities.

$$T = T_0 + T_1 + T_2 \quad \text{--- (3)}$$

simple example of procedure.

- a) single particle in space.
 - 1) cartesian co-ordinate.
 - 2) plan polar co-ordinate.

2) Atwood's machine

3) Time-dependent constraint - bead sliding on rotating

4) Motion of one particle, using Cartesian co-ordinates.

The generalized forces needed F_x , F_y & F_z then

$$T = \frac{1}{2} m(\dot{x}^2 + \dot{y}^2 + \dot{z}^2)$$

$$\frac{\partial T}{\partial x} = \frac{\partial T}{\partial y} = \frac{\partial T}{\partial z} = 0.$$

$$\frac{\partial T}{\partial \dot{x}} = m\dot{x}, \quad \frac{\partial T}{\partial \dot{y}} = m\dot{y}, \quad \frac{\partial T}{\partial \dot{z}} = m\dot{z},$$

& the eqⁿ of motion are,

$$\frac{d}{dt} (m\dot{x}) = F_x, \quad \frac{d}{dt} (m\dot{y}) = F_y, \quad \frac{d}{dt} (m\dot{z}) = F_z$$

— (4)

thus led back to the original Newton's eqⁿ of motion.

Reference -

H. Goldstein, Charles Poole, John Safko :

Classical Mechanics, Pearson 3rd Edition, 2002.