

The Vorticity equation

- Use of the streamfunction allows us to automatically satisfy the continuity equation. Now we will try to transform the momentum equation

$$\frac{\partial \mathbf{u}}{\partial t} + (\mathbf{u} \cdot \nabla) \mathbf{u} = -\frac{1}{\rho} \nabla p + \nu \nabla^2 \mathbf{u}$$

into an equation for the vorticity $\boldsymbol{\omega} = \nabla \times \mathbf{u}$.

- Here are a few results that we will use in the derivation:

$$\frac{1}{2} \nabla (\mathbf{u} \cdot \mathbf{u}) = (\mathbf{u} \cdot \nabla) \mathbf{u} + \mathbf{u} \times (\nabla \times \mathbf{u}), \quad (1)$$

$$\nabla \times \nabla \phi = 0, \quad (2)$$

and

$$\nabla \times (\mathbf{u} \times \boldsymbol{\omega}) = (\boldsymbol{\omega} \cdot \nabla) \mathbf{u} - (\mathbf{u} \cdot \nabla) \boldsymbol{\omega} + \underbrace{\mathbf{u} \nabla \cdot \boldsymbol{\omega}}_0 - \boldsymbol{\omega} \underbrace{\nabla \cdot \mathbf{u}}_0, \quad (3)$$

where the last two terms vanish because

$$\nabla \cdot \boldsymbol{\omega} = \nabla \cdot (\nabla \times \mathbf{u}) = \text{div curl } \mathbf{u} = 0$$

and

$$\nabla \cdot \mathbf{u} = 0.$$

- First, we use (1) in the momentum equation to obtain

$$\frac{\partial \mathbf{u}}{\partial t} + \frac{1}{2} \nabla(\mathbf{u} \cdot \mathbf{u}) - \mathbf{u} \times \underbrace{(\nabla \times \mathbf{u})}_{\boldsymbol{\omega}} = -\frac{1}{\rho} \nabla p + \nu \nabla^2 \mathbf{u}$$

i.e.

$$\underbrace{\frac{\partial \mathbf{u}}{\partial t} + \frac{1}{2} \nabla(\mathbf{u} \cdot \mathbf{u}) - \mathbf{u} \times \boldsymbol{\omega}}_{LHS} = \underbrace{-\frac{1}{\rho} \nabla p + \nu \nabla^2 \mathbf{u}}_{RHS}$$

- Now take the curl of the LHS:

$$\nabla \times LHS = \frac{\partial}{\partial t} \underbrace{(\nabla \times \mathbf{u})}_{\boldsymbol{\omega}} + \frac{1}{2} \underbrace{\nabla \times \nabla(\mathbf{u} \cdot \mathbf{u})}_{0 \text{ because of (2)}} - \underbrace{\nabla \times (\mathbf{u} \times \boldsymbol{\omega})}_{\text{see (3)}}$$

i.e.

$$\nabla \times LHS = \frac{\partial \boldsymbol{\omega}}{\partial t} - (\boldsymbol{\omega} \cdot \nabla) \mathbf{u} + (\mathbf{u} \cdot \nabla) \boldsymbol{\omega}$$

- ...and the RHS:

$$\nabla \times RHS = -\frac{1}{\rho} \underbrace{\nabla \times \nabla p}_{0 \text{ because of (2)}} + \nu \nabla^2 \underbrace{(\nabla \times \mathbf{u})}_{\boldsymbol{\omega}}$$

- Now combine the remaining non-zero terms

$$\underbrace{\frac{\partial \boldsymbol{\omega}}{\partial t} + (\mathbf{u} \cdot \nabla) \boldsymbol{\omega}}_{D\boldsymbol{\omega}/Dt} - (\boldsymbol{\omega} \cdot \nabla) \mathbf{u} = \nu \nabla^2 \boldsymbol{\omega}.$$

- The resulting equation is the *vorticity transport equation*

$$\frac{D\boldsymbol{\omega}}{Dt} = (\boldsymbol{\omega} \cdot \nabla)\mathbf{u} + \nu\nabla^2\boldsymbol{\omega} \quad (4)$$

which shows that the rate of change of the vorticity of material particles, $D\boldsymbol{\omega}/Dt$, is controlled by ‘vortex stretching’ (described by $(\boldsymbol{\omega} \cdot \nabla)\mathbf{u}$; this is a familiar result from inviscid fluid mechanics) and by diffusion (described by $\nu\nabla^2\boldsymbol{\omega}$). The diffusion of vorticity only occurs in viscous flows.

- For 3D flows, the first term on the RHS in (4) represents vortex stretching: velocity gradients lead to a change in the rate of rotation of material particles.
- Note that for 2D flows, vortex stretching is absent since $\mathbf{u} = u(x, y)\mathbf{e}_x + v(x, y)\mathbf{e}_y$ and $\boldsymbol{\omega} = \omega(x, y)\mathbf{e}_z$ and therefore $(\boldsymbol{\omega} \cdot \nabla)\mathbf{u} = 0$.
- The vorticity transport equation provides an interesting interpretation of the kinematic viscosity ν : The kinematic viscosity is the diffusion coefficient for the diffusion of vorticity.
- Many phenomena in viscous fluid mechanics can be interpreted in terms of the diffusion of vorticity but this is (unfortunately) beyond the scope of this course.

- For 2D flows, the vorticity transport equation

$$\frac{D\omega}{Dt} = \nu \nabla^2 \omega$$

together with the equation for the vorticity in terms of the streamfunction

$$\omega = -\nabla^2 \psi$$

and

$$u = \partial\psi/\partial y \quad \text{and} \quad v = -\partial\psi/\partial x$$

provide the streamfunction-vorticity formulation of the Navier-Stokes equations, which consists of only two PDEs for the scalars ω and ψ rather than the three equations for u , v and p in the 'primitive variable' form.

- Scaling arguments show that in the limit of zero Reynolds number, only one fourth-order PDE for the streamfunction ψ needs to be solved, namely the biharmonic equation

$$\nabla^4 \psi = 0,$$

where

$$\nabla^4 = \frac{\partial^4}{\partial x^4} + 2\frac{\partial^4}{\partial x^2 \partial y^2} + \frac{\partial^4}{\partial y^4}.$$

- This can also be shown directly by taking the curl of the Stokes equations.
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Nondim/Scaling of the vorticity transport eqn

3D: from ~~steps~~ printouts:

$$\frac{D\omega}{Dt} = (\omega \cdot \nabla) u + \nu \nabla^2 \omega$$

Scale:

$$u = U \tilde{u}$$

$$r = a \tilde{r}$$

$$t = \frac{a^2}{\nu} \tilde{t}$$

$$\omega = \frac{U}{a} \tilde{\omega}$$

$$\frac{U^2}{a^2} \frac{\partial \tilde{\omega}_i}{\partial \tilde{t}} + \frac{U^2}{a^2} \tilde{\omega}_j \frac{\partial \tilde{\omega}_i}{\partial \tilde{x}_j} = \nu \frac{\partial^2 \tilde{\omega}_i}{\partial \tilde{x}_j^2}$$

$$\Rightarrow \frac{U^2}{a^2} \tilde{\omega}_j \frac{\partial \tilde{\omega}_i}{\partial \tilde{x}_j} + \frac{\nu}{a^3} \frac{\partial^2 \tilde{\omega}_i}{\partial \tilde{x}_j^2}$$

$$\left(\frac{Ua}{V}\right) \frac{D\omega}{Dt} = \left(\frac{Ua}{V}\right) \left(\frac{\omega \cdot \nabla}{|\omega|}\right) \frac{\omega}{|\omega|} + \frac{\nabla^2 \omega}{|\omega|} \quad (2)$$

$$\frac{Ua}{V} = \frac{Uga}{\mu} = Re$$

Now if $Re \rightarrow \infty$

$$\nabla^2 \omega = 0$$

$$\boxed{\nabla^2 \omega = 0}$$

Also from Stokes eqns.

$$\underline{0} = -\nabla p + \mu \nabla^2 \underline{u}$$

Take curl:

$$\underline{0} = -\cancel{\nabla \times \nabla p} + \mu \nabla^2 (\nabla \times \underline{u})$$

$$\underline{0} = \nabla^2 \underline{\omega}$$

Now for 2D Stokes flow 3

$$\underline{\omega} = \omega \underline{e}_z$$

So $\nabla^2 \omega = 0$

Recall: $\omega = -\nabla^2 \psi$

$$\Rightarrow \nabla^2 \nabla^2 \psi = 0$$

$\nabla^4 \psi = 0$

Biharmonic
eqn.

4th order
PDE for ψ

$$\nabla^4 = \frac{\partial^4}{\partial x^4} + 2 \frac{\partial^4}{\partial x^2 \partial y^2} + \frac{\partial^4}{\partial y^4}$$