INFINITE SQUARE WELL - MOMENTUM SPACE WAVE FUNCTIONS

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We've calculated the momentum space wave function for the ground state of the harmonic oscillator, and we can use the same technique to investigate the infinite square well. We have:

$$\Phi_n(p,t) = \frac{1}{\sqrt{2\pi h}} \int_0^a e^{-ipx/\hbar} \Psi_n(x,t)\,dx \tag{1}$$

$$= \frac{1}{\sqrt{2\pi h}} \int_0^a e^{-ipx/\hbar} \sin\left(\frac{n\pi x}{a}\right) e^{-i(n^2\pi^2\hbar/2ma^2)t}\,dx \tag{2}$$

$$= \frac{n\hbar^{3/2}\sqrt{\pi a}}{p^2a^2 - n^2\pi^2\hbar^2}\left((-1)^n e^{-ipa/\hbar} - 1\right) e^{-i(n^2\pi^2\hbar/2ma^2)t} \tag{3}$$

where I used Maple to do the integral.

The square modulus of this function is

$$|\Phi_n(p,t)|^2 = 2\pi n^2\hbar^3 a \frac{1+(-1)^{n+1}\cos(ap/\hbar)}{(p^2a^2 - n^2\pi^2\hbar^2)^2} \tag{4}$$

We can write this in terms of the auxiliary variable

$$\rho \equiv pa/\hbar \tag{5}$$

so we have

$$|\Phi_n(p,t)|^2 = \frac{2\pi n^2 a}{\hbar}\left[\frac{1+(-1)^{n+1}\cos\rho}{\left(\rho^2 - n^2\pi^2\right)^2}\right] \tag{6}$$

To investigate the behaviour of this formula around the points $\rho = n\pi$, we can write it as

$$|\Phi_n(p,t)|^2 = \frac{2\pi n^2 a}{\hbar}\left[\frac{1+(-1)^{n+1}\cos\rho}{\left(\rho+n\pi\right)^2\left(\rho-n\pi\right)^2}\right] \tag{7}$$

We can now expand the numerator in a Taylor series about the point $\rho_0 = n\pi$. Using

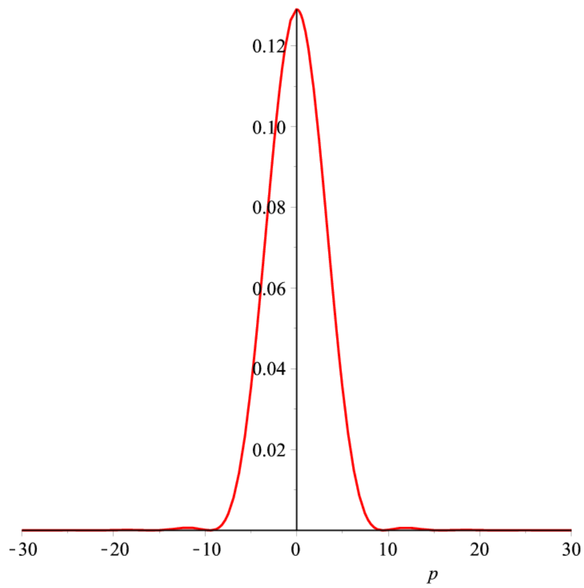

FIGURE 1. $|\Phi_1|^2$.

$$\cos\rho_0 = \cos n\pi = (-1)^n \tag{8}$$

we have

$$1+(-1)^{n+1}\cos(\rho-n\pi) = 1+(-1)^{2n+1} - \frac{(-1)^{2n+1}}{2}(\rho-n\pi)^2 + \frac{(-1)^{2n+1}}{24}(\rho-n\pi)^4+\ldots \tag{9}$$

$$= \frac{1}{2}(\rho-n\pi)^2 - \frac{1}{24}(\rho-n\pi)^4+\ldots \tag{10}$$

where we've used the fact that $(-1)^{2n+1} = -1$ for all n, since the exponent is always odd.

Dividing by the denominator, we get

$$|\Phi_n(p,t)|^2 = \frac{2\pi n^2 a}{\hbar(\rho+n\pi)^2}\left(\frac{1}{2}-\frac{1}{24}(\rho-n\pi)^2+\ldots\right) \tag{11}$$

If we now take the limit, we get

$$\lim_{\rho\to n\pi}|\Phi_n(p,t)|^2 = \frac{a}{4\pi\hbar} \tag{12}$$

The limit is independent of n. $|\Phi_1|^2$ is shown in Fig. 1 and $|\Phi_2|^2$ in Fig. 2.

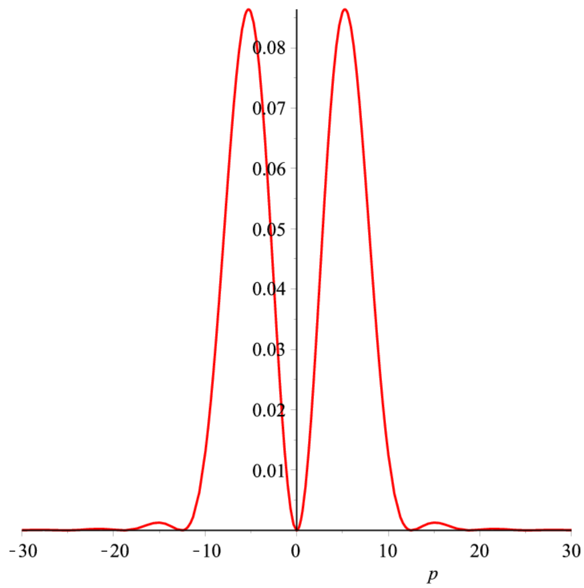

FIGURE 2. $|\Phi_2|^2$.

By direct calculation using 4 (and Maple), we can get

$$\langle p^2 \rangle = \int_{-\infty}^{\infty} p^2 |\Phi_n(p,t)|^2 dp \tag{13}$$

$$= (n\pi\hbar/a)^2 \tag{14}$$

which is the same as that obtained by doing the calculation in position space. For good measure, we can also calculate $\langle p \rangle = 0$, either by direct calculation or by observing that since $|\Phi_n(p,t)|^2$ is even for all n, $\langle p \rangle$ is always the integral of an odd function over a symmetric interval, so is always zero.