

# Strong and Strange Attractors



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**I**n mathematics, an attractor is a sticky situation toward which a system tends to evolve once more transient factors have played themselves out. For example, a lot of things happen during a round of golf, but gravity guarantees that the ball will always wind up on the ground and stay there until some work is done to put it back in play. Gravity is a strong attractor. Social psychology is not as advanced as physics, so human relationships are not understood with the same mathematical precision as golf, but a quick review of the frantic coupling and uncoupling you have witnessed throughout your life should convince you that intimate relationships are strong and sometimes strange attractors. This is written in the inscrutable genome and it plays out like clockwork whenever existing relationships are disrupted by a *force majeure* such as puberty, death or a mid-life crisis. Once they have been established, even the most painful relationships can be incredibly sticky, sometimes to the ongoing bewilderment of the principals themselves.

Careers, friends, artistic preferences, politics, cable drama, addiction, sports, news, gossip, hobbies, habits, obsessions, memes, ruts and routines are also strong attractors. Once you are stuck to them it requires an intentional effort to break free. In the worst cast you could remain stuck to whatever solution you first stumbled upon in each category and your life could be fully defined and unbearably dull. A pervasive sense of staleness will alert you to this danger. You should take strong but judicious action to liberate yourself from your most oppressive attractors. Trust me. Call me.

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