SECTION 12
A STRANGE, STRANGE ATTRACTOR
BY
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Examples have been given by Abraham-Smale [1], Shub [1], and Newhouse [2] of diffeomorphisms on a compact manifold which are not in the closure of diffeomorphisms satisfying Smale's Axiom A or in the closure of the set of \( \Omega \)-stable diffeomorphisms (Smale [1]). The suspension construction (Smale [1]) allows one to give analogous examples for vector fields on compact manifolds.

This note gives another example of a vector field on a compact manifold which does not lie in the closure of \( \Omega \)-stable or Axiom A vector fields. The interest of this example is that the violation of Axiom A' occurs differently than in the examples previously given. This example has additional instability properties not verified for the previous

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examples. A vector field $X$ is said to be topologically $Ω$ stable if nearby vector fields (in the $C^1$ topology on the space of vector fields) have nonwandering sets homeomorphic to the nonwandering set of $X$. Our example is not topologically $Ω$ stable. Moreover, it provides another negative answer to the following question about dynamical systems: is it generically true that the singularities of a vector field are isolated in its nonwandering set? Previous examples of Newhouse have nonisolated singularities in non-attractive parts of the nonwandering set.

The example is based upon numerical studies of a system of differential equations introduced by Lorenz [1]. The system studied by Lorenz seems to have the dynamical behavior of our example, but we do not attempt to make the estimates necessary to prove this statement. I would like to acknowledge the assistance of Alan Perelson in doing the numerical work which underlies this note and conversations with R. Bowen, C. Pugh, S. Smale, and J. Yorke. Finally, we mention the explicit equations of Lorenz which display such marvelous dynamics (see Example 4B.8, p. 141):

$$\dot{x} = -10x + 10y, \quad \dot{y} = -xz + 28x - y, \quad \dot{z} = xy - 8/3 z.$$  

We define a $C^∞$ vector field $X$ in a bounded region of $\mathbb{R}^3$. Inside the region there will be a compact invariant set $A$ which is an attractor in the sense that $A$ has a fundamental system of neighborhoods, each of which is forward invariant under the flow of $X$. The set $A$ is two dimensional. To describe the construction of $X$, we use coordinates $(x,y,z)$ in $\mathbb{R}^3$.  

The vector field $X$ is to have three singular points. The first, $p = (0,0,0)$, is a saddle with a two dimensional stable manifold $W^S(p)$. The rectangle $\{(x,y,z)| x = 0, -1 \leq y \leq 1, 0 \leq z \leq 1\}$ is to be contained in $W^S(p)$. The stable eigenvectors of $X$ at $p$ are $\frac{\partial}{\partial y}$ with an eigenvalue of large absolute value and $\frac{\partial}{\partial z}$ with an eigenvalue of small absolute value. The unstable manifold $W^U(p)$ contains the segment from $(-1,0,0)$ to $(1,0,0)$ and has an eigenvalue of intermediate absolute value. Other conditions on $W^U(p)$ are imposed below.

The other two singular points of $X$ are $q_\pm = (\pm 1, \pm 1/2, 1)$. These are saddle points with one dimensional stable manifolds $W^S(q_\pm)$. The segments from $(\pm 1, -1, 1)$ to $(\pm 1, 1, 1)$ are contained in $W^S(q_\pm)$. The negative eigenvalues of $X$ at $q_\pm$ have large absolute values. The remaining eigenvalues of $q_\pm$ are complex with eigenspaces spanned by $\frac{\partial}{\partial y}$ and $\frac{\partial}{\partial z}$. The real parts of these eigenvalues are small.

Consider the square $R = \{(x,y,z)| -1 \leq x \leq 1, -1 \leq y \leq 1, z = 1\}$ and its Poincaré return map $\theta$. The map $\theta$ is not defined when $X$ is $\pm 1$ or $0$ since these points lie in the stable manifold of one of the singular points. The orbits in $R$ for $X = \pm 1$ never leave $R$ while those for $X = 0$ never return. At all other points of $R, \theta$ is defined. Let $R_+$ be the set $R \cap \{(x,y,z)| 0 < x < 1\}$ and $R_-$ be the set $R \cap \{(x,y,z)| -1 < x < 0\}$. Define $\theta_\pm$ to be $\theta$ restricted to $R_\pm$. We assume that there are functions $f_\pm, g_\pm$ and a number $\alpha > 1$ with the properties that
$\theta_\pm(x,y) = (f_\pm(x), g_\pm(x,y))$, $0 < \partial g_\pm / \partial y < 1/2$, and $df_\pm / dx > \alpha$.

The numbers $\lim_{x \to 0} f_\pm(x)$, denoted $\rho_\pm$, are assumed to have the properties $\rho_+ < 0$, $\rho_- > 0$, $\theta_-(\rho_+) < 0$, and $\theta_+(\rho_-) > 0$. The first intersections of $W^s(p)$ with $R$ occur at the points with $x = \rho_\pm$. Finally, it is assumed that the images of $g_\pm$ are contained in the intervals $[\pm 1/4, \pm 3/4]$. Figure 12.1 illustrates these essential features of the flow $X$.

![Diagram of the Hopf bifurcation](image)

**Figure 12.1**

We remark that the conditions imposed on the eigenvalues of $X$ at $p$ imply that $\lim_{x \to 0} \partial g_\pm(x,y) / \partial y = 0$ and $\lim_{x \to 0} df_\pm / dx = \infty$. The reason for this behavior is given by solving a linear system of differential equations near a saddle point. The return maps $\theta_\pm$ acquire singularities like a power of $x$ because the trajectories of $R_\pm$ come arbitrarily close to $p$.

In the theorems which we now state, we assume that the
vector field $X$ is extended to a vector field on a compact three manifold $M$. We continue to denote the extended vector field $X$. Note that the only properties used in defining $X$ which do not remain after perturbation are the existence of the functions $f_\pm$ and $g_\pm$. These functions are introduced to simplify the discussion and are not essential properties of $X$.

\begin{equation}
\text{(12.1) Theorem. There is a neighborhood } \mathcal{U} \text{ of } X \text{ in the space of } C^r \text{ vector fields on } M \text{ (} r \geq 1 \text{) and a set } \mathcal{V} \text{ of second category in } \mathcal{U} \text{ such that if } Y \in \mathcal{V}, \text{ then } Y \text{ has a singular point which is not isolated in its nonwandering set.}
\end{equation}

\begin{equation}
\text{(12.2) Theorem. The vector field } X \text{ has a neighborhood } \mathcal{U} \text{ in the space of } C^r \text{ vector fields on } M \text{ (} r \geq 1 \text{) with the property that if } \mathcal{V} \subset \mathcal{U} \text{ is an open set in the space of } C^r \text{ vector fields, then there are vector fields in } \mathcal{V} \text{ whose nonwandering sets are not homeomorphic to each other.}
\end{equation}

Theorem (12.2) states that $X$ is not in the closure of the set of topologically $\mathcal{U}$-stable vector fields.

We attack the proofs of both of these theorems by giving a description of the nonwandering set of $X$. This description is given largely in terms of "symbolic dynamics" (Smale [4]).

Consider the return map $\theta$ of $\mathbb{R}$. We pick out four subsets of $\theta(\mathbb{R})$ which will be used in analyzing the symbolic dynamics of the nonwandering set of $X$. Denote
Figure 12.2 shows these sets. The image of $R_1$ under $\theta$ extends horizontally across $R_3$ and $R_4$. $\theta(R_2)$ extends horizontally across $R_1$. Similarly, $\theta(R_3)$ extends across $R_4$, and $\theta(R_4)$ extends across $R_1$ and $R_2$.

Now consider sequences $\{a_k\}_{k=0}^\infty$ of the integers 1, 2, 3, and 4 such that, for each $k$, $(a_k, a_{k+1})$ is one of the pairs $(3,1)$, $(4,1)$, $(1,2)$, $(4,3)$, $(1,4)$, or $(2,4)$. The set of such sequences forms the underlying space $\Sigma$ of a "subshift of finite type" with transition matrix.
Corresponding to each finite sequence \( \{a_0, \ldots, a_n\} \) constructed from "admissible" pairs listed above, the intersection
\[
\bigcap_{k=0}^{n} \theta^k(R_{a_k})
\]
contains a component which extends horizontally across \( R_{a_0} \). For example, if \( a_0 = 1 \), then the images of \( R_2 \) and \( R_4 \) extend across \( R_1 \). If \( a_1 = 2 \), then only the image of \( R_4 \) need extend across \( R_2 \). Hence \( a_2 = 4 \), \( \theta(R_4) \) extends across \( R_{a_2} \), and \( \theta^2(R_4) \) extends across \( R_1 \). As \( n \) increases, the vertical height of these strips decreases exponentially. If \( \{a_k\} \in \Lambda \), then
\[
\bigcap_{k=0}^{\infty} \theta^k(R_{a_k})
\]
contains an arc crossing \( R_{a_0} \) horizontally. There are an uncountable number of sequences in \( \Lambda \), hence \( S = \bigcap_{k=0}^{\infty} \theta^k(\cup_{i=1}^{4} R_i) \) contains an uncountable number of arcs extending across each \( R_1 \).

We want to investigate whether \( S \) is contained in the nonwandering set of \( \theta \). If each arc contained in \( S \) has an image under some iterate of \( \theta \) which extends across each \( R_1 \), then \( S \) will be contained in the nonwandering set of \( \theta \). In these circumstances, we prove that \( 0 \) is not isolated in the nonwandering set of \( X \). Whether or not every arc in \( S \) has an image extending across the set \( R_1 \) depends only on the functions \( f_\pm \) acting on the intervals \((\rho_+, 0)\) and \((0, \rho_-)\). Denote by \( f \) the discontinuous map \( f: (\rho_+, \rho_-) \rightarrow (\rho_+, \rho_-) \) determined by \( f_\pm \) (with, say, \( f(0) = 0 \)). Consider a sub-interval \( \gamma \subset (\rho_+, \rho_-) \). Since \( df_\pm/dx > a > 1 \), the sum of the
lengths of the components of $f^k(\gamma)$ is at least $cu^k$. Therefore, some image of \( \gamma \) has more than one component. The only point of discontinuity for \( f \) is \( x = 0 \), so there is a \( k > 0 \) and an \( x \in \gamma \) with \( f^k(x) = 0 \).

The map \( \theta \) has a periodic point of period 2 in \( R_1 \) because \( \theta^2(R_1) \) crosses \( R_1 \) horizontally. Therefore, \( f \) has a point \( r \) of period 2. Any neighborhood of \( r \) has an image which eventually covers \((\rho_+,\rho_-)\). Now assume that there is an open set \( U \subset (\rho_+,\rho_-) \), none of whose images cover \((\rho_+,\rho_-)\). Then no image of \( U \) contains \( p \). It follows that if \( U_1 \) and \( U_2 \) are two open sets, none of whose images cover \((\rho_+,\rho_-)\), then \( U_1 \cup U_2 \) also has this property (because \( r \) is in none of its images.) Thus there is a largest open set \( U \subset (\rho_+,\rho_-) \) with the property that none of its images cover \((\rho_+,\rho_-)\). It follows that \( f^{-1}(U) = U = f(U) \).

We observed above that any interval contains a point which is eventually mapped to 0 by the iterates of \( f \). Thus \( U \) contains a neighborhood of 0 and, hence, neighborhoods of \( \rho_\pm \). This implies that \( U \) contains a neighborhood of each point which eventually maps to 0. Since these points are dense, \( U \) is a dense subset of \((\rho_+,\rho_-)\). Notice that the property \( f^{-1}(U) \subset U \) implies that the components of \( U \) must map onto the components of \( U \). Let \((\xi_-,\xi_+)\) be the component of \( U \) containing 0. Some image of \((\xi_-,0)\) contains 0, and hence \((\xi_-,\xi_+)\). (Since \( f_-(0) = \rho_- \), the images of 0 are endpoints of components of \( U \).) The first time an image of \((\xi_+,0)\) contains 0, that power of \( f \) is continuous on \((\xi_-,0)\). Since \( f \) is orientation preserving, it follows that
\( \xi_- \) is mapped by this power of \( f \) to \( \xi_- \). Therefore \( \xi_- \) is a periodic point of \( f \). We conclude that \( \rho_\pm \) have images for some power of \( f \) which are periodic points of \( f \).

For the return map \( \theta \) of \( R \), this implies that the images of the vertical lines \( x = \rho_\pm \) each remain within a finite set of vertical lines. Because \( \theta \) contracts in the vertical direction, the intersections of \( R \) with \( W^u(p) \) have \( \theta \)-trajectories which tend asymptotically to periodic orbits of \( \theta \). These periodic \( \theta \) trajectories lie on periodic orbits \( \gamma_1, \gamma_2 \) for the flow \( X \). Because \( \theta \) is uniformly hyperbolic (apart from its discontinuity), these periodic orbits are hyperbolic with two dimensional stable and unstable manifolds. Applying the Kupka-Smale Theorem (Smale [1]), we note that it is a generic property of vector fields that the stable manifold of a hyperbolic periodic trajectory intersect the unstable manifold of a singular point transversally. This is not the case here. Thus we conclude that in the open set of vector fields which we have described, those vector fields for which any arc of \( S \) eventually extends across each \( R_i \) form a set of second category. I do not know whether there is an open set of vector fields with this property.

**Proof of Theorem (12.1):** Let us assume now that \( X \) is chosen so that \( \theta \) has the property that some image of every arc in \( S \) eventually extends across each \( R_i \). If \( w \in S \) and \( U \) is a rectangular neighborhood of \( w \) in \( R \), then \( \theta^k(U) \) extends across each \( R_i \) for \( k \) sufficiently large. Also \( \theta^{-k}(U) \) extends vertically across \( R \) for \( k \) sufficiently large because \( \theta \) contracts the vertical direc-
tion. It follows that $\emptyset -^k(U) \cap \emptyset^k(U) \neq \emptyset$ for $k$ very large. Thus $\emptyset^{2k}(U) \cap U \neq \emptyset$ and $w$ is nonwandering. We conclude that $S$ is contained in the nonwandering set of $\emptyset$. Since $S$ intersects $W^s(p)$, $p$ is in the nonwandering set of $X$. This proves Theorem (12.1).

The nonwandering sets of the vector fields satisfying Theorem (12.1) have a two dimensional attractor $A$ which contains the origin. The intersection of $A$ with $R$ contains $S$. We want to go further in describing the structure of $A$.

This can be done most completely when $p$ is a homoclinic point with $W^u(p) \subset W^s(p)$. This happens when there are powers of $f$ which map $p_+$ and $p_-$ to 0.

For purposes of definiteness, we shall describe $A$ in the case that $f^2(p_+) = 0$. Afterwards we indicate the modifications which are necessary when higher powers of $f$ map $p_+$ and $p_-$ to 0. Now $R \cap A = \emptyset$. If $f^2(p_+) = 0$, then $\emptyset(R_1) \subset R_3 \cup R_4$, $\emptyset(R_2) \subset R_1$, $\emptyset(R_3) \subset R_4$, and $\emptyset(R_4) \subset R_1 \cup R_2$. Consequently, if $\{a_k\}_{k=0}^\infty$ is a sequence with $a_i \in \{1,2,3,4\}$, then $\bigcap_{k=0}^\infty \emptyset^k(R_{a_k}) \neq \emptyset$ if and only if $\{a_k\} \in \Sigma$. If $\{a_k\} \in \Sigma$, then there is a segment extending across $R_{a_0}$ which lies in $S$ and hence in $A$. This presents the following picture for $A$. There is a Cantor set of arcs, corresponding to points of $\Sigma$, each of which extends across some of the $R_i$'s. These are joined at their ends by $W^u(p)$. See Figure 12.3. Note that points of $A-W^u(p)$ have neighborhoods which are homeomorphic to a 2-disk x Cantor set.
If higher powers of $\varphi$ map $\rho_+$ and $\rho_-$ to 0, then we construct another subshift of finite type as follows. Cut the image of $\theta(R)$ along vertical lines passing through each point in the orbit. $\theta(\rho_+)$ and $\theta(\rho_-)$. This will divide $\theta(R)$ into a number of components, say $R_1, \ldots, R_n$. Define the $n \times n$ matrix $T$ by

$$
T_{ij} = \begin{cases} 
1 & \text{if } \theta(R_j) \cap R_i \neq \emptyset \\
0 & \text{if } \theta(R_j) \cap R_i = \emptyset.
\end{cases}
$$

Let $\Sigma$ be the (one-sided) subshift of finite type with transition matrix $T$. Corresponding to each sequence in $\Sigma$, there will be exactly one arc crossing $R_i$ which lies in the attractor $\Lambda$. The closure of these segments will be $\Lambda \cap R$ as before, because $\bigcap_{k=0}^{\infty} \theta^k(R_{a_k}) = \emptyset$ if $\{a_k\} \notin \Sigma$. Finally, we remark that if $\varphi$ does not preserve vertical segments in $R$, then $R$ is to be cut along components of $W^s(p) \cap R$ which also contain points of $W^u(p)$.
Proof of Theorem (12.2): We prove Theorem (12.2) in two steps. In the first step, we consider two flows, $X$ and $\tilde{X}$, of the general sort considered in this paper such that, for the flow $X$, $W^u(p) \subseteq W^s(p)$, and for the flow $\tilde{X}$, $W^u(p) \cap W^s(p) = \{p\}$. We prove that $X$ and $\tilde{X}$ have nonwandering sets which are not homeomorphic. The second step demonstrates that vector fields of each of these two classes are dense in some open set in the space of $C^r$ vector fields.

We have described above the attractor $\Lambda(X)$ of a vector field $X$ for which $W^u(p) \subseteq W^s(p)$. In this case, $\Lambda$ is path connected and $\Lambda - W^u(p)$ is locally homeomorphic to the product of a 2-disk and a Cantor set. Furthermore, $W^u(p)$ is homeomorphic to the wedge product of two circles, a "figure eight."

Now consider the attractor $\Lambda(\tilde{X})$ of a vector field $\tilde{X}$ for which $W^u(p) \cap W^s(p) = \{p\}$ and $\Lambda$ is a two dimensional set containing $p$. If $\Lambda(\tilde{X})$ is to be homeomorphic to $\Lambda(X)$, then $\Lambda(\tilde{X})$ must be path connected. Consider the set $C$ of points $w \in \Lambda(\tilde{X})$ such that no neighborhood of $w$ is homeomorphic to a 2-disk x Cantor set. It is easily seen that $W^u(p) \subseteq C$ since there are no points of $\Lambda \cap R$ to the left of the line $\rho_+ = x$ or to the right of the line $\rho_- = x$.

If $\Lambda(X)$ is homeomorphic to $\Lambda(\tilde{X})$, then $C$ is homeomorphic to the wedge product of two spheres. Since $W^u(p) \subseteq W^s(p)$ for $\tilde{X}$ and $W^u(p) \subseteq C$, there must be two points of $C - \{p\}$ which are the $\omega$-limit sets of the two trajectories in $W^u(p) - \{p\}$. A single point which is the $\omega$-limit set of a trajectory must be a singular point. There are no singular points of $\tilde{X}$ in $\Lambda(\tilde{X})$ other than $p$, so we conclude that $C$
is not homeomorphic to the wedge product of two spheres. Hence \( \Lambda(X) \) and \( \Lambda(\tilde{X}) \) are not homeomorphic. This concludes the first step of the proof.

We now prove that the sets of vector fields \( X, \tilde{X} \) of the sort considered above are each dense in some open set. The Kupka-Smale Theorem implies that vector fields like \( \tilde{X} \) in that \( W^S(p) \cap W^U(p) = \{p\} \) form a set of second category. Since the set of vector fields with \( p \in \Lambda \) and \( \Lambda \) two dimensional is a second category subset of an open set, there is a dense set of vector fields of the form of \( \tilde{X} \) in some open set of vector fields.

The only thing remaining to prove is that there is a dense subset of an open set of vector fields for which \( W^U(p) \subset W^S(p) \). Consider the effect on \( W^U(p) \) of a perturbation \( Y \) of \( \tilde{X} \) parallel to the x-axis which has the effect of decreasing \( \rho_- \) and increasing \( \rho_+ \). See Figure 12.4.

![Figure 12.4](image-url)
We examine successive intersections of \( W^u(p) \) with \( R \) for the vector fields \( Y \) and \( \bar{X} \). The functions \( f_+ \) and \( f_- \) are orientation preserving. Consequently, as long as the corresponding, successive intersections for the two vector fields lie on the same side of the line \( x = 0 \) in \( R \), the effect of the perturbation is push the intersections following \( \rho_- \) along \( W^u(p) \) to the left and to push the intersections following \( \rho_+ \) to the right. Furthermore, since the map \( \theta \) expands in the \( x \) direction, the distance between the corresponding, successive points of intersection grows exponentially. The distance cannot grow indefinitely, so after sometime, the corresponding points of intersection lie on opposite sides of the line \( x = 0 \). Thus, for some perturbation intermediate between \( Y \) and \( \bar{X} \), there are points of intersection of \( W^u(p) \) with \( R \) which lie on the line \( x = 0 \) (in both directions along \( W^u(p) \)). This means that \( W^u(p) \subseteq W^s(p) \) for the intermediate perturbation. We conclude that there is a dense set of vector fields in some open set of the space of vector fields for which \( W^u(p) \subseteq W^s(p) \) to finish the proof of Theorem (12.2).

As is traditional in dynamical systems, we end with a question. The vector fields described here are very pathological from the point of view of topological dynamics. Yet they seem to preserve as much hyperbolicity as they possibly could without satisfying Axiom A. There is now a well developed "statistical mechanics" for attractors satisfying Axiom A (Bowen-Ruelle [1]). How much of this statistical theory can be extended to apply to the vector fields described here?
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