

The whole is sometimes greater than the sum of its parts

If you broke down every cell in my body, right down to the elements and atoms, what would be there to distinguish me from any other human being? Give or take a few elements, there isn't really anything to distinguish me from anything else on the planet. This is truly a humbling thought, but I also instinctively know that I am somehow more than a pile of atoms. I am experiences, thoughts and feelings. I am made of people I meet, books I read and things I learn. The human body has developed in a certain way that makes it unique. So why is a living organism more than a collection of cells? What makes a painting more than random brush strokes on a canvas? Intention and purpose and eventually complexity are what let a whole be great than the sum of its parts.

Life. First there was a whole lot of primordial soup. Somehow, over a very long period of time, we showed up. The primordial soup had everything life needed to get started, but what it needed to evolve or develop was competition and incentive; the Darwinian 'survival of the fittest'. Organisms grew and changed and they adopted features and skills which increased their chance of survival, simply because they all had an innate will to survive. I think that this desire to survive, the drive to go to any means or extent to thrive is the beginning of complexity.

This desire to optimize survival adds incentive to wish to become part of an established group; chances for survival are much higher when you have someone else looking out for you and the odds of being able to reproduce are higher if you are with your own kind. Human civilization is composed of roughly seven billion people. Together we *are* humankind. It is true that we are made up of individual humans that seem insignificant compared to the big picture, but it is the collective actions and lives of humans that dictates exactly what we are collectively. The beauty of complexity is that every member of a complex system is really just acting under a set of their own personal rules, there is no omnipotent overseer dictating every one of our lives. Complexity is what emerges as a result of all of our behaviors and needs. It is the greater whole.

Needs or goals are an inherent factor in determining the behavior of the parts of a whole. As discussed earlier, life is driven by the need to survive. This breaks down further into the needs for sustenance, shelter and security. I believe that almost every action can be attributed to these needs. For an example, imagine a city. There are huge skyscrapers built where many people can live, where they work to earn money, where they spend the money to gain sustenance and shelter. There are trains and roads so people can move more efficiently and quickly, saving energy in their quests for further shelter and sustenance and security. Inventions are developed to help people survive. Science itself can be looked at simply as a survival tool, used because the more curious life forms were the fittest.

One thing I have neglected to mention is happiness. Can a quest for happiness really be considered motivation? Are the emotions such as love or sadness true emotions even though they don't result directly from physical sensation? Maybe happiness is nothing but fulfillment of your survival needs, but maybe it is caused by love and love by some formula of fulfillment and emotion that there is no real way to quantify. I suppose what I am trying to get across is that human motivation is inordinately complex and that, when it comes down to it, all action is dictated by emotion, emotions that build off of emotions and appear in endless combinations. Grocery stores are opened because people need food, but music is made because people need that too. Our world, as a whole, is composed of beauty and pain and complexity, but those things are caused by the individual emotions and desires of seven billion people. The fact that the word *human* can somehow encompass all of this and be just five letters long shows that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts by its remarkable ability to contain all of them.