

I have written a lot about experience.

We used to think that the mind was made of rules and calculations.

But it is made first and foremost of patterns found in lived experience.

We use these patterns as bets and guides for future decisions and actions.

The old scout sits in the stands.

"I've done this for 30 years".

"I know 'em when I see 'em".

"That guy's a keeper".

Now a quant runs some numbers.

Numbers originally dreamed up by amateur baseball fanatics.

The numbers say he's not a keeper.

And he's not.

Alan Greenspan says "I've been doing this for 40 years".

"I've run this economy for a long time".

"I know my markets".

"I know business and business is the business of America".

The global economy tanked in 2008, thanks to AI and US.

Alan said "I never saw it coming".

In fact, he had advised people to trade in their fixed mortgages for balloon payments.

He had said the price of houses would never fall.

Alan went to Congress after the collapse.

"Nothing in my 40 years of economics told me this would happen".

"I believed that free markets always give rise to the best outcomes".

"I believed CEOs would never purposely harm the companies they run".

But Alan! There were no free markets.

You deregulated them.

Frost said you cannot play tennis without a net.

Alan, you removed the referees and were surprised the thugs cheated.

But Alan! The CEO's companies were "companies" no more.

You thought a company made something that made profit.

But now companies are just holds for quick bets on their stock price.

Bet now and get out quick before customers find out no one cares what the company makes.

The quant guys with their Big Data ran the numbers.

Alan, they knew it was a House of Cards and it was all going to fall.

The smart guys on the Street took the short bets and got vastly richer yet.
The "little" guys saw their houses, families, and lives blow away.

Karl Rove fell apart on Fox News when Ohio was called for Obama.

"It can't be so", he said.

"I've done this for many many years".

"I was Bush's Brain".

"I know there are Red Votes still out there. I just know it".

But Karl missed the Puerto Ricans moving into the Red county in Florida.

He missed demographic changes that had been predicted and in motion since the 1970's.

He missed facts of human nature:

Trying to stop people from doing something (i.e., voting) makes them want to do it more.

Insulting people doesn't make them want to vote for you.

You can't buy votes unless you buy the voters.

Money to ad companies and television channels won't cut it.

And you don't buy the voters by knocking down their wages.

The quant guys ran their algorithms and massaged their data seven ways to Sunday.

They said here is how the election will go.

And that is just how it went.

And the people on Fox looked like someone had killed their dog.

Nate Silver called the election.

He had started as an amateur baseball stats guy.

Numbers are dangerous, of course.

Algorithms on computers now buy and sell stocks on the fly at warp speed.

There is the danger they will all get in synch and sink the market.

Getting in synch is what complex systems often do, like fireflies.

But numbers are benignly indifferent, too.

They don't care that the catcher is bald.

They don't care that Puerto Ricans moved in.

They don't care that the Alan and Karl are powerful, elite, old, and sad.

Numbers are humane or, at least, tolerant.

The problem is that experience isn't what it used to be.

Experts are people with credentials who have had lots of experience.

But even a vast amount of experience is a small sample in the face of Big Data.

And credentials are for being good at one narrow thing.

Yet the important stuff today is all about many complex interactions.
Today, the expert's one thing is soon gone or vastly changed anyway.
Furthermore, amateurs on the Web can now beat experts at their own game.

But, alas, experience is the foundation of human learning and intelligence.
We build our knowledge on the basis of patterns we have found in our experience.
We make our choices on the basis of patterns we have found in our experience.
No experience, no knowledge—we are left with only words floating free from the world.
But now that Big Data trumps experience, we can all look like someone killed our dog.

Big Data can level the proud and humble alike.

But numbers have their limits.

They can predict what will happen,
But they cannot say what should happen.

To trump Big Data—to tame it for the good—we need Big Experience.

Yours and mine alone will no longer do.

We need to pool our experiences.

To get diverse minds and souls in synch, like fireflies.

To make everyone count.

To seek out the mutant, the odd man out.

To find the datum Big Data will never find,

Because it is just the odd thing one person saw or felt,

A thing too small to see and too big to miss.

On the savannah, as we evolved, human experience was usually veridical because the world was small.

But today our world is big and our experiences of it are small and limited.

Our unaided minds—no matter how expert we are—are no good anymore.

Big Data will always show us the world does not fit our preconceptions.

But Big Data will face the same problem the Social Sciences have always faced.

Humans can make things true by willing and doing them.

They can change the Data.

Unlike an atom they pay attention to what is said about them.

The question is: What should we make?

We can make more than ever before with Fab Labs soon to be as prevalent as computers at home.

We can make change through networks and social media outside the strictures of institutions.

We will soon be able to make worlds as easily as we can now destroy them.

But what will we make?

Will we save the planet only to make hell on earth, perhaps even by trying to make heaven on earth?

When you can make Karl Rove cry, what will you do next?

Collective Intelligence

Wisdom of the Crowd

Crowd Sourcing

Synchronized Minds

Shared Minds

Networked Intelligence

Distributed Intelligence

It's all Big Experience, the mental analogue of Big Data

Let's hope it is wiser than our savannah minds have been.