

From Groups to Individuals

Evolution and Emerging Individuality

Our intuitive assumption that only organisms are the real individuals in the natural world is at odds with developments in cell biology, ecology, genetics, evolutionary biology, and other fields. Although organisms have served for centuries as nature's paradigmatic individuals, science suggests that organisms are only one of the many ways in which the natural world could be organized. When living beings work together—as in ant colonies, beehives, and bacteria-metazoan symbiosis—new collective individuals can emerge. In this book, leading scholars consider the biological and philosophical implications of the emergence of these new collective individuals from associations of living beings. The topics they consider range from metaphysical issues to biological research on natural selection, sociobiology, and symbiosis.