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# Going Live: The Origin of (Artificial) Life

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## Abstract

The problem of determining when life originated on earth may be seen as a special case of the problem of detecting when life presents itself for the first time in any previously lifeless environment. If one wanted to build a scanner that would detect lifeforms, what properties should it key on? The design of such a scanner is not merely a scientific or technical problem. The conceptual questions that are involved in adjudicating scientific disputes about the origin of lifeforms on earth are equally at issue when thinking about the possibility of alien lifeforms on other planets. Assuming that one had successfully designed a scanner that could work in both terrestrial and extraterrestrial environments, would that be sufficient for it to also work for the possibility of artificial lifeforms so one would be able to detect when a new lifeform was successfully created? Artificial life research falls into three broad categories -Wet, Hard and Soft-which attempts to simulate or synthesize life with different kinds of components (organic molecules, mechanical parts, or software, respectively). I have previously argued that explicating the concept of life may be facilitated using theoretical insights from Darwin and Wittgenstein. Here I consider what are the advantages and limitations of this approach for solving the scanner design problem for the detection of the origin of artificial life.

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