

Can science create life?

That depends on what we mean by "creating" life. ~~If you take a living cell,~~ certainly today no scientist could produce anything that resembles it, but as science progresses and knowledge and techniques improve, I see no reason why one day a scientist couldn't - if he wants to go through such useless labor - produce an exact copy of that cell. ^{Get} ~~But~~ if this is what is meant by "science creating life" then this is certainly not a very interesting proposition. ~~But~~ ^{however} science might create life in a very different and much more significant sense.

"Cogito ergo sum" said Descartes, which somewhat freely translated means "I think and therefore I live." Why should science not one day construct a machine that can think? Our present-day calculating machines do, of course, nothing of the sort. The mathematician thinks, the machine merely calculates. A calculating machine has never an idea, whereas a mathematician occasionally has one. No one knows today how such a thinking machine could be built. In many respects its functions would have to resemble some of the functions of the brain, even though the machine would be constructed of ^{very different} technical materials ~~and not of~~ ~~organic compounds~~. That such a machine might be very large and expensive matters little. As technical advances proceed, the machine might be smaller than we might suppose. But difficulties of technique and financing are not ^{relevant} relative for the purpose of ^{my} discussions in any case.

Suppose such a machine could be built and could communicate using some sign language? Suppose it were taught as children are taught ~~today~~ until they are ready to take over and are capable of thinking productively, would we not have to regard such a machine as living? And if a scientist were to converse with such a machine and learn from it new ideas that had not occurred to him before, wouldn't he gradually come to regard the machine affectionately as a fellow scientist? If science is going to create life, ^{my guess is} this is the kind of life science ^{might} will first attempt to create.