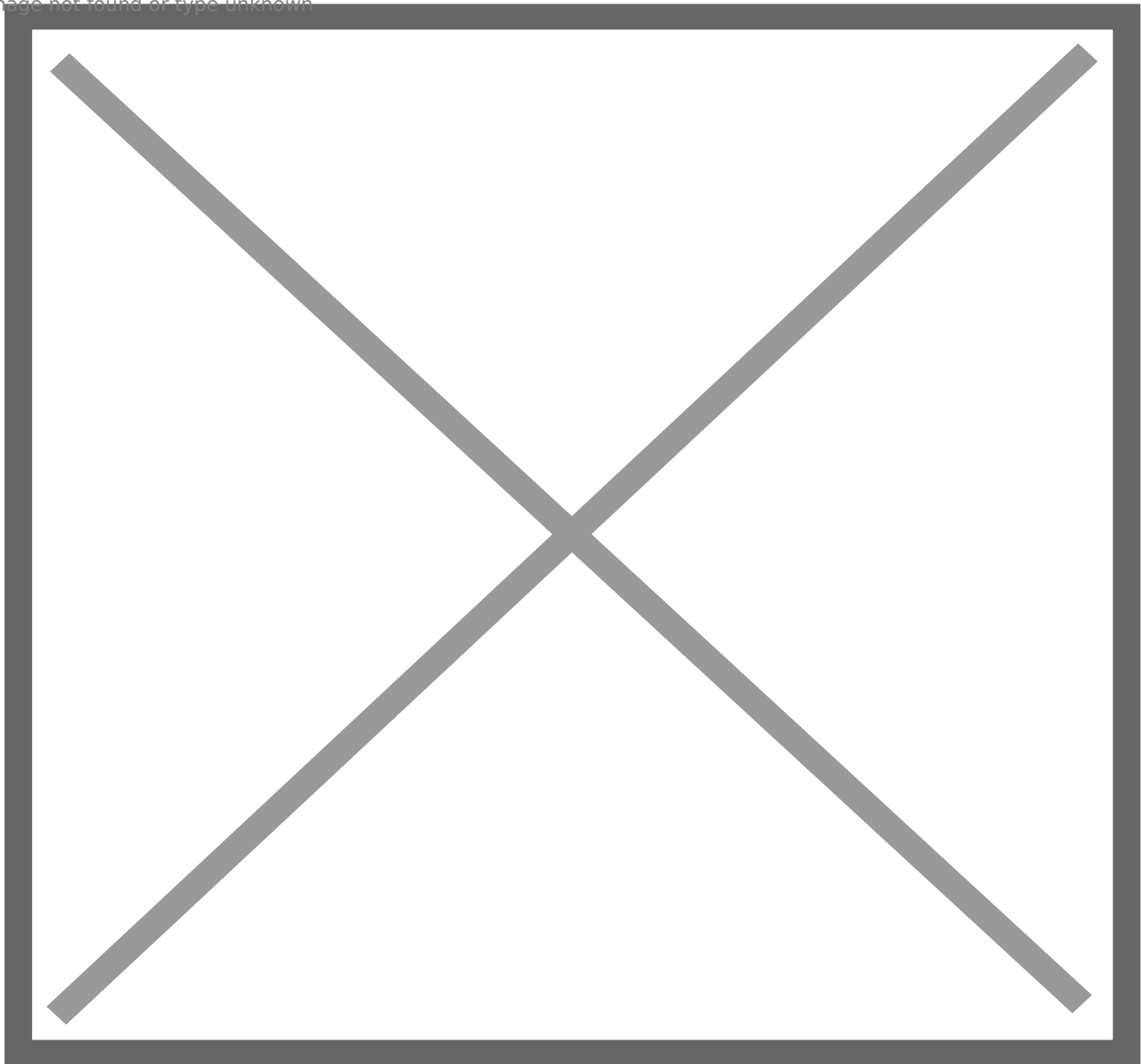


Article On Issues As to The Existence of Life: Yates - "Fantasizing About The Origin Of Life"

Post by "Cassius" of September 7, 2025 at 2:28 PM

Martin has brought the attached article to my attention. First let me state the usual caveats: no endorsement of the author or the author's views (here or elsewhere) is expressed or implied by posting this here. At first glance, however, it does appear that the article does a good job of bringing up competing explanations for the existence of life, although it arrives at answers that disagree with Epicurus. For those who find this subject interesting (as do I) I am posting this as another exercise in our ability to understand and respond to issues regarding the existence of life both here on earth and elsewhere in the universe.

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[Fantasizing About the Origin of Life](#)

A hundred years of materialist science comes up empty.
stevenyates.substack.com

Post by “ScottW” of September 8, 2025 at 1:28 PM

Thanks for sharing the article Cassius. It's an interesting topic. I have doubts that we have the capacity for a definitive answer given an infinite chain of cause and effect that brought the universe to its current state, and we lack a complete understanding of Nature's laws. Likewise,

<http://www.epicureanfriends.com/thread/4715-article-on-issues-as-to-the-existence-of-life-yates-fantasizing-about-the-origin/>

it would seem difficult given this lack of information to accurately calculate the probability or improbability of a material/physical cause of life.

Post by “Cassius” of September 8, 2025 at 1:57 PM

Hi Scott:

To me, these discussions are almost as interesting for what they say about the terminology as what they say about the science. What does "definitive answer" or "certainty" really mean? In order to say that anything is definitive do we have to stand in the shoes of a Plato in contact with ideal forms, or a supernatural god who can claim "I know the real answer because I created everything"?

I think the answer to both those is of course "no, we can't and shouldn't and don't claim such levels of authority." And in fact anyone who does claim them is a sham and a fraud.

On the other hand what we can talk in terms of is "confidence" give the observations that re possible and our logical reasoning based on those observations.

And what it appears that Epicurus has done is to take as starting point that the universe is eternal in time (nothing can come from nothing) and infinite in size (there can logically be no ultimate boundaries, and combine those with the observation that what we see here on earth is that nature never makes a single thing of kind, and that what happens here we would logically expect to happen wherever conditions are similar.

And from those and similar observations it's a hop skip and jump to conclude that there is really "nothing new under the sun," and that life as a category (not the same living things, but "life") has always existed throughout the universe.

At least for me, once I discard the fake standards of certainty suggested by religion and Platonists, I have no problem accepting Epicurus, line of reasoning, so I personally am as confident that "life" has always existed in the universe just as all other natural processes have existed, and will exist, forever.

Of course my confidence and a dollar will buy you a cup of coffee, but I think an approach similar to this is inherent once the problem of skepticism is identified for the self-contradictory nonsense that it really is. Sure there are lots of specifics that we don't have enough evidence to be confident about. Has life existed on Mars subsequent to its formation? That's a specific question where we can do nothing but weigh and balance the evidence as it changes, but the "universal" or "cosmic" scale is different, and generalizations about infinity and eternity are as

logically compelled as just about anything can be -- at least enough that it is more rational to be confident that life does exist elsewhere than earth than it is to say that we are unique in the universe.

I would argue that saying "I don't know, maybe life only exists here" is as good as laying down to be walked over by the religionists or Platonists on every other issue as well. So the issues of eternity and infinity of both the universe and of life within it seems about as good a place to start in standing up to those guys as anywhere else. And again regardless of what I think, that seems to have been Epicurus own approach.

Post by “Joshua” of September 8, 2025 at 6:59 PM

I wrote this reply yesterday in response to the article but decided not to post it. But it saved as a draft, and someone might find it interesting, so here it is:

From the article:

Quote

But this says nothing about the origins of such life, either here or elsewhere. The salient question: is it physically or chemically possible for living, self-replicating organisms with internal metabolic processes to come about through entirely naturalistic processes unaided by intelligence?

The evidence seems to say, resoundingly, No.

The evidence is inconclusive. To say that the evidence is inconclusive is not at all the same as saying that the evidence suggests (resoundingly or otherwise) that abiogenesis is impossible.

A relevant example of this principle can be found in astronomy. When in the 16th century Tycho Brahe critiqued the Copernican model of the solar system, his objection was grounded in (among other things) the fact that stellar parallax had never been observed. Attempts to observe this hypothetical parallax had been made, and in the event would go on being made for nearly three hundred years before the phenomena was finally and conclusively measured scientifically by Henderson, Struve, and Bessel in independent experiments in the 1830s.

If Yates were writing in the 1820s, would he have confidently pronounced (resoundingly!) that the measurement of stellar parallax in our cosmos was impossible? Perhaps not. Well, then he

shouldn't say it or imply it here. Inconclusive does not mean impossible; it just means inconclusive.

He then delivers himself of the opinion that abiogenesis cannot be tested, on the grounds that the men and women performing the test would themselves be intelligent. Therefore, any proto-organism or self-replicating molecule produced in a laboratory experiment by those men and women would, by definition, have been created by one or more intelligent beings. By this logic we should disregard all laboratory experiments. That legumes fix nitrogen into the soil they grow in in a laboratory experiment would tell us nothing about the nitrogen cycle in nature, but ONLY if we are foolish enough to insist that the cause of their fixing nitrogen is to be found in the intelligence of the researcher and not in the biochemistry of the legume. The researcher arranges the conditions in which nitrogen is fixed, but he does not fix the nitrogen. Likewise with abiogenesis. Arranging the conditions in which life emerges from non-life would not be an act of intelligent creation.

Post by “Cassius” of September 8, 2025 at 7:15 PM

Quote

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[Quote from Joshua](#)

The evidence is inconclusive. To say that the evidence is inconclusive is not at all the same as saying that the evidence suggests (resoundingly or otherwise) that abiogenesis is impossible.

My slight twist on Joshua's point would be to differ on whether the evidence is inconclusive. I think Epicurus would likely say that the evidence IS conclusive.

We do see the existence of living self-replicating organisms with internal metabolic processes in existence, and the examples include us as human beings.

We (Epicurus) also holds that the eternality of the universe as (1) uncreated by an intelligence force, and (2) infinite in extent, to be rendering impossible that there is an intelligent force

before or over or outside the universe. Our observations and the logic supporting these conclusions are "conclusive evidence" in the only real meaning that that term can have.

There are no gods or supernatural forces or higher realms to overrule these conclusions, and absolutely no reason to believe that any "new evidence" will be discovered to overturn that conclusion. Speculation without evidence is not admissible in most court, nor should it be admissible in a rational discussion of these issues.

And if someone wants to appeal to irrationality, then that's why there are wars and all sorts of lesser levels of expressing disagreement. But while wars and the like do exist, if you're going to approach life as an Epicurean, you aren't going to be considering irrational and groundless speculation about important issues.

So I would not admit that the existence of life without the supervision of intelligent design is an open or undetermined question or that the evidence is inconclusive. We have all the evidence we need to conclude firmly that life is a product of natural processes and did not originate from a supernatural intelligence. And we have absolutely no evidence on which to base a supposition that the gods of the supernaturalists or the platonists or anyone else are going to appear tomorrow or at any time in the future.

Post by "TauPhi" of September 8, 2025 at 11:45 PM

You can learn about few studies in favour of abiogenesis, conveniently overlooked by the author of the article, here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jyacVQPzke0>

Nothing definite yet but definitely interesting.

Post by "Don" of September 9, 2025 at 4:33 AM

I just skimmed the original article, including reading the authors "credentials" and sour grapes ranting at the end, and my primary reaction is "those are several minutes of my life I'll never get back."

Quote from Joshua

By this logic we should disregard all laboratory experiments.

[Quote from Cassius](#)

We have all the evidence we need to conclude firmly that life is a product of natural processes and did not originate from a supernatural intelligence.

Both of those 👍

Substack provides *anybody* a platform. Anybody can "publish" a book now. My other primary result from that Yates article is to know to avoid anything by Yates now.

Post by “Cassius” of September 9, 2025 at 8:06 AM

Yes Don, I don't think the article came to Martin's attention because it was the best science available or particularly well written. It's more of a data point give a current generic summary of arguments we seen thrown around by average people (to the extent average people get around to discussing the issue). You're certainly right about how easy it is to publish things nowadays.

Post by “Don” of September 9, 2025 at 9:50 AM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

I don't think the article came to Martin's attention because it was the best science available or particularly well written. It's more of a data point give a current generic summary of arguments we seen thrown around by average people (to the extent average people get around to discussing the issue).

Oh, I didn't mean to insinuate that I faulted Martin for anything! I completely fault the author for putting that drivel out into the world to begin with.

And I understand your point about knowing what's being said and having a summary of the pseudo-intellectual drivel that comes dangerously close (or crosses into) to the "just asking questions" strategy.

I see *no* evidence for "intelligence" - benevolent or otherwise - inherent in the cosmos or the wider universe. That which is held up as "evidence" requires a suspension of critical thinking that I am unwilling to partake in.