

E.O. Wilson: Synthetic life isn't going to kill us

Biologist [Edward O. Wilson](#), a two-time Pulitzer Prize recipient and the author of [*The Meaning of Human Existence*](#), sees the future of biology rooted in what he calls “[ultimate biology](#).” There are several domains in which ultimate biology will emerge in the coming decades. The first and most notable, says Wilson, is the creation of artificial life. This is also called synthetic biology and it's already happening as you read this today: “Scientists have just very recently put together from chemicals off the shelf a genome that is of the entire DNA of a bacterium, inserted it into a bacterial shell and created a functioning reproducing bacterium that way; chemicals off the shelf; a very simple organism.”

This is momentous for many reasons. For example, Wilson explains that advancements in synthetic biology open the door to eventually being able to produce multicellular organisms. This means the opportunity to create food plants and boost our global food supply. It also means a boatload of questions, consequences, and opportunities that'll have to be ironed out by ethicists and other experts.

One thing's for sure, at least in Wilson's mind. We shouldn't worry ourselves too much at the prospect of being annihilated by our robot creations. Naturally, it's ultimate biology that'll save our skin: “What's running through your mind, if you're listening to me or seeing me now is, ‘Uh-oh, if we keep on going, can the robots with their artificial organisms around them and their intelligence and ability to make decisions then replace us?’ No way. That's great for Hollywood, but since we're going to be approaching robot capacity and genome modification of other organisms, and then even ourselves, we can change our own genomes in some respects; we're going to see the risk of giving control to any other intelligent agent and make sure that it's just not going to happen.”

Read full, original article: [Edward O. Wilson explores the Potential of Ultimate Biology](#)