



## Kevin Kelly, executive editor of [Wired](#) magazine

"You know, I don't like computers. Computers as things frustrate me. I'm not a nerd. I still don't know how to program everything, I'm just really very, very behind the times. But I'm interested in computers and their consequences because ... they're the greatest philosophical instruments that we have made so far. ...

You've heard of artificial intelligence? So the guys that are doing artificial intelligence are going to try to make a machine that thinks, and so they try to wire some stuff and very quickly they come to the question: What is intelligence? How will we know when something was intelligent if we came across it?

OK, there's a group of scientists right now that are working with what's called artificial life, and they're trying to make life, like a computer virus and stuff, so they very quickly -- from the very first meetings -- they start to have questions about: What is life?

OK, so then you have virtual reality people: Besides just working in virtual reality, they start making things where you put goggles and gloves on and go inside and make reality. The first thing they start talking about is: What is reality? How do we know if this is really real or not?

So what I'm saying is that these questions -- what is reality? what is intelligence and consciousness? what is humanness, what is life? -- are not being asked anymore [only] in book-lined academic settings with jacketed professors who are just sitting there talking about it. They're being answered by a bunch of people who are trying out things, who are doing things sort of experimentally, trying to answer these questions of what is life, and what is reality?

And then you have the online people who are trying to make democracy online and they start saying: What is democracy? What are the ingredients of democracy? It's very evident this is not electronic voting and so they say: How do we do this? And they have these great big discussions about democracy and its sense of character. And they try to make it, and if it doesn't work, they try again.

And this is the great renaissance of the human spirit."

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**Kevin Kelly, interviewed in October by phone from his San Francisco office, is executive editor of Wired magazine, the hip chronicle of the Digital Revolution.**