

"One of the deepest, most illuminating books about the history of life to have been published in recent years." — *The Economist*

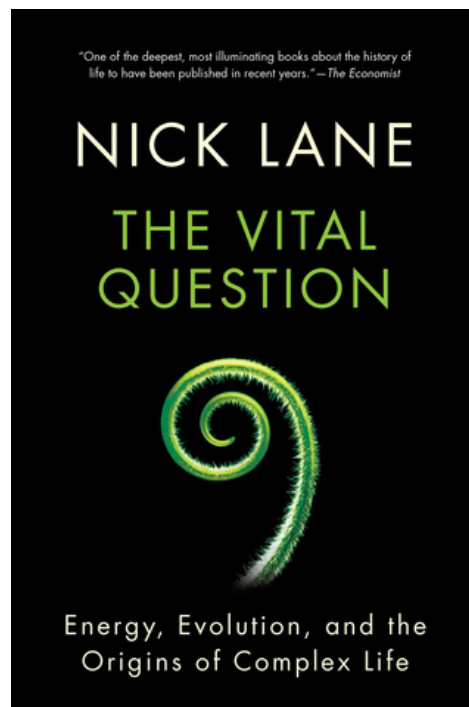
NICK LANE

THE VITAL  
QUESTION



Energy, Evolution, and the  
Origins of Complex Life

## \* The Vital Question: Energy, Evolution, and the Origins of Complex Life \*



### Books Details

Author : Nick Lane Pages : 368 pages Publisher : W. W. Norton Company  
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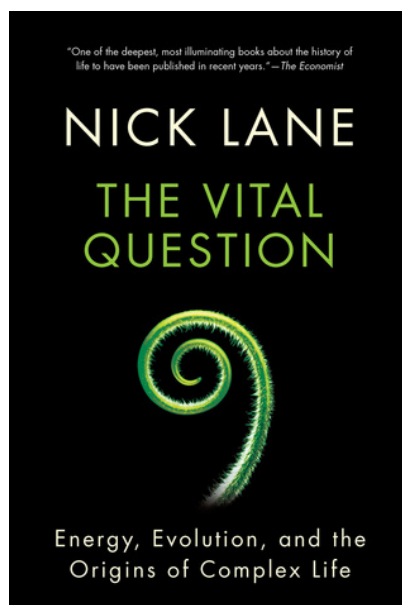
### Books Descriptions

The Earth teems with life: in its oceans, forests, skies and cities. Yet there's a black hole at the heart of biology. We do not know why complex life is the way it is, or, for that matter, how life first began. In *The Vital Question*, award-winning author and biochemist Nick Lane radically reframes evolutionary history, putting forward a solution to conundrums that have puzzled generations of scientists. For two and a half billion years, from the very origins of life, single-celled organisms such as bacteria evolved without changing their basic form. Then, on just one occasion in four billion years, they made the jump

to complexity. All complex life, from mushrooms to man, shares puzzling features, such as sex, which are unknown in bacteria. How and why did this radical transformation happen? The answer, Lane argues, lies in energy: all life on Earth lives off a voltage with the strength of a lightning bolt. Building on the pillars of evolutionary theory, Lane's hypothesis draws on



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