

# Genes, Nanobots, and the Human Future: High-tech's Quest for Moral Responsibility —An Allegory in One Act

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## Introduction

*A Prefatory Note.* In March 2000 two seemingly unrelated events occurred. On March 12, Pope John Paul II, in a special Mass at the Vatican, acknowledged certain historical transgressions committed by members of The Church. These were widely interpreted to refer to forced conversions, excesses committed during the Crusades, punitive acts during the Inquisition, negative attitudes toward Jews, and other actions often cited by critics. That same week, *Wired*, a magazine catering to computer-industry aficionados, carried an article by Bill Joy, chief scientist of SunMicrosystems, predicting a future world in which the human species risked being replaced by artificial, computer-generated forms of life. Whereas the Pope seemed to be embracing institutional responsibility for actions taken in the name of The Church, Bill Joy seemed to be searching for some way to have scientists accept a similar moral responsibility for their actions. The following allegorical conversation between two fictional characters is intended to reflect the views

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