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Synthetic biology, which aims to design and build organisms that serve human needs, has potential applications that range from producing biofuels to programming human behavior. The emergence of this new form of biotechnology, however, raises a variety of ethical questions_ first and foremost, whether synthetic biology is intrinsically troubling in moral terms. Is it an egregious example of scientists "playing God"? Synthetic Biology and Morality takes on this threshold ethical question, as well as others that follow, offering a range of philosophical and political perspectives on the power of synthetic biology.

The contributors consider the basic question of the ethics of making new organisms, with essays that lay out the conceptual terrain and offer opposing views of the intrinsic moral concerns; discuss the possibility that synthetic organisms are inherently valuable; and address whether, and how, moral objections to synthetic biology could be relevant to policy making and political discourse. Variations of these questions have been raised before, in debates over other biotechnologies, but, as this book shows, they take on novel and illuminating form when considered in the context of synthetic biology.