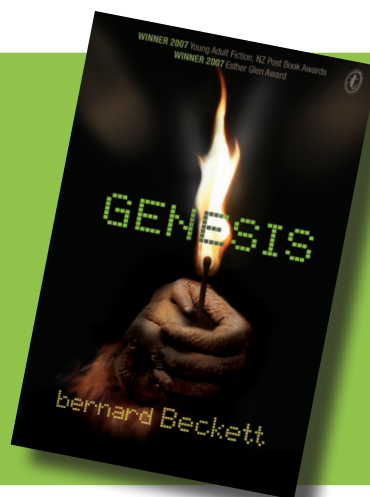


# Genesis

Bernard Beckett

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Fiction paperback



## Praise for *Genesis*

'Sophisticated sci-fi that explores thorny issues in philosophy and science. ... Beckett presents a series of philosophical conundrums with lucid and penetrating intelligence, and weaves them into a bleak but compelling futuristic vision.' Age

'Beckett accelerates the pace and heightens the tension until his narrative reaches a conclusion so shocking, it's like a blow to the head. Highly recommended.' *Weekend Australian*

## About Bernard Beckett

Bernard Beckett is one of the most provocative and inventive writers for young people. His books are extremely popular with teenagers. He has won many awards and fellowships for his fiction. *Genesis* is his eighth novel and is winner of the 2007 NZ Post Award for Young Adult Fiction and the 2007 Esther Glen Award. In 2007 Bernard was also awarded a NZ Science, Mathematics and Technology Fellowship where he was exploring DNA mutations.

## A reader's introduction to *Genesis*

In a terrifying and stifling examination environment a young Academy candidate, Anaximander, is put through a gruelling exercise in interpreting the history and origins of her society.

Through her answers, we learn that in 2052, New Zealand has been renamed The Republic after a reforming Governor, Plato. It has separated itself from a plague-ridden globe with a gargantuan ring-fence guarded with military outposts. All approaching boats, exploratory aircraft or refugees are shot on sight. Society is strictly divided and individuals deviate from their assigned roles at their peril.

When one man, Adam Forde (2058–2077) insists on his right to independent thought and action, The Republic is set at grave risk. Adam is imprisoned: his sentence is to become the participant in a programming experiment with a new brand of Artificial Intelligence.

Through Anaximander's rendition of Adam's debates with Artfink, the android, and her own increasingly

disturbing encounter with members of The Academy, we are confronted with unresolved questions raised by science and philosophy. Centuries old, these conundrums have gained new urgency in the face of rapidly developing technologies. What is consciousness? What makes us human? What separates us from the animal and mechanistic worlds? If Artificial Intelligence were developed to a high enough capability, what status could humanity still claim? As a species, we may have built in our own obsolescence, even if the planet itself is preserved.

Outstanding and original, Beckett's dramatic narrative has a stunning closure that turns the reading experience on its head. *Genesis* will fuel intense debate about ethics and meaning between intellectually hungry young adults.

## Questions for discussion

1. '...the only thing the population had to fear, was fear itself. The danger humanity faced during this period was the shrinking of its own spirit.' (p. 5). Does this statement translate to current society. If so, what can be done to combat this?
2. Does Beckett rely on superstition and conspiracy in his novel, or does he attempt to break away from these?
3. In the novel, Plato's five great threats to order are: Impurity of Breeding, Impurity of Thought, Indulgence of the Individual, Commerce, and The Outsider. What organisations/philosophies have these ideas appeared in before? Are there instances in history when these ideas been feared/abhorred? Can you find a parallel in our recent history?
4. What makes human life different from any other life on our planet? Re-read Adam's speech about what it is to be human (p95-96) and discuss both his and the group's arguments.
5. Discuss the ethical and moral questions raised by artificial fertility programmes and artificial intelligence research.