 第九篇 The Economics of Cloning (1) Any normal species would be delighted at the prospect of cloning. No more nasty surprises like sickle cell? or Down syndrome? just batch after batch of high-grade and, genetically speaking, immortal offspring! But representatives of the human species are responding as if someone had proposed adding Satanism to the grade-school Curriculum. Suddenly, perfectly secular? folks are throwing around words like sanctity and picking up medieval-era arguments against the arrogance of science. No one has proposed burning him at the stake, but the poor fellow who induced a human embryo to double itself has virtually abandoned proclaiming his reverence for human life in a voice, this magazine reported, “ choking with emotion. ” (2) There is an element of hypocrisy to much of the anticloning frenzy, or if not hypocrisy, superstition. The fact is we are already well down the path leading to genetic manipulation of the depressing sort. Life-forms can be patented, which means they can be bought and sold and potentially traded on the commodities markets. Hu-man embryos are life-forms, and there is nothing to stop anyone from marketing them now, on the same shelf with the Cabbage Patch dolls. (3) In fact, any culture that encourages in vitro fertilization? has no right to complain about a market in em-bryos. The assumption behind the in vitro industry is that some people ’ s genetic material is worth more than others ’

and deserves to be reproduced at any expense. Millions of low-income babies die every year from pre-ventable ills like dysentery?, while heroic efforts go into maintaining yuppie zygotes? in test tubes at the unicel-lular stage. This is the dread “ nightmare ” of eugenics in familiar, marketplace form which involves breeding the best-paid instead of the best. Cloning technology is an almost inevitable by-product of in vitro fertilization. Once you decide to go to the trouble of in vitro, with its potentially hazardous megadoses of hormones? for the female partner and various indignities for the male, you might as well make a few backup copies of any viable? embryo that ’ s produced. And once you ’ ve got the backup copies, why not keep a few in the freezer, in case Junior ever needs a new kidney or cornea?? (4) No one much likes the idea of thawing out? one of the clone kids to harvest its organs, but according to Andrew Kimbrell, author of The Human Body Shop, in the past few years an estimated 50 to 100 couples have produced babies to provide tissue for an existing child. Plus there is already a thriving market in Third World kidneys and eyes. Is growing your own really so much worse than robbing the bodies of the poor? Or maybe we ’ ll just clone for the fun of it. If you like a movie scene, you can rewind the tape, so when Junior gets all pimply? and nasty, why not start over with Junior II? Sooner or later, among the in vitro class, instant replay will be considered a human right. (5) The existential objections ring a bit hollow. How will it feel to be one _____ among hundreds? The anti-cloners ask. Probably no worse than it feels to be the 3 millionth 13-year-old dressed in identical baggy trousers,

untied sneakers and baseball cap a feeling usually described as “cool.” In a mass-consumer society, notions like “precious individuality” are best reserved for the Nike ads. (6) Besides, if we truly believed in the absolute uniqueness of each individual, there would be none of this unseemly eagerness to reproduce one’s own particular genome. What is it, after all, that drives people to in vitro rather than adoption? Deep down, we don’t want to believe we are each unique, one-time-only events in the universe. We hope to happen again and again. And when the technology arrives for cloning adult individuals, genetic immortality should be within reach of the average multimillionaire. Ross Perot will be followed by a flock of little re-Rosses. (7) As for the argument that the clones will be sub-people, existing to live up to the vanity of their parents (or their “originals,” as the case may be), since when has it been illegal to use one person as a vehicle for the ambi-tions of another? If we don’t yet breed children for their SAT scores, there is a whole class of people, heavily overlapping with the in vitro class, who coach their kids to get into the nursery schools that offer a fast track to Harvard. You don’t have to have been born in a test tube to be an extension of someone else’s ego. (8) For that matter, if we get serious about the priceless uniqueness of each individual, many distinguished so-cial practices will have to go. It’s hard to see why people should be able to sell their labor, for example, but not their embryos of eggs. Labor is also made out of the precious stuff of life energy and cognition? and so forth which is hardly honored when “unique individuals” by the millions are condemned to mind-killing,

repetitive work. (9) The critics of cloning say we should know what we ’ re getting into, with all its Orwellian implications. But if we decide to outlaw cloning, we should understand the implications of that. We would be saying in effect that we prefer to leave genetic destiny to the crap shooting? of nature, despite sickle-cell anemia and Tay-Sachs and all the rest, because ultimately we don ’ t trust the market to regulate life itself. And this may be the hardest thing of all to acknowledge: that it isn ’ t so much 21st century technology we fear, as what will happen to that tech-nology in the hands of old-fashioned 20th century capitalism. 