

REVIEWS

Human Cloning: Reality or Fiction?

In His Image: The Cloning of a Man by David M. Rorvik, Lippincott, New York, 1978, 239pp., references, bibliography, index, \$8.95. Paperback: Pocket Books, New York, \$2.50.

Reviewed by S. SCOTT ZIMMERMAN who is Assistant Professor in the Graduate Section of Biochemistry and Cancer Research Center, Brigham Young University.

More important than the book itself is the furor it raised. When *In His Image* was published, people were forced to ask some provocative questions: Is human cloning actually possible? What are its social, moral and religious implications? What psychological problems will a human clone and his parent/twin encounter? What benefits can come from human cloning? Mormons too began asking questions: How will a cloned baby be assigned a spirit? What will be recorded for a clone's genealogy? Would God really allow cloning?

But first, did it really happen? Rorvik describes how he was contacted by a multimillionaire bachelor (called "Max" to protect his identity) who wanted himself cloned. Rorvik purports to have found a willing and able scientist ("Darwin") who secretly organizes a research team in an isolated hospital in a uniden-

tified far-away land, and succeeds in replacing the genetic material from a human egg with a complete set of Max's genes. Then he implants the now fertile egg in the womb of a surrogate mother ("Sparrow") who subsequently delivers a healthy boy—the son and identical twin of Max. Max and Sparrow fall in love, and the new "family" presumably lives happily ever after.

The story strains at credibility. I question that a scientist of the purported ability of "Darwin" would give up a normal research career, even risk finding future employment, simply for money. The possibility of being the first to clone a human, or the first to clone any mammal for that matter, would be an allurements to many scientists, *if*—and this is one of the snags in Rorvik's story—*if* the results could be published openly in a reputable scientific journal. Being recognized by peers, being known as the "first," being honored for advancing the frontiers of science—these are the major motives of scientists. Not money.

I also question that a project of this magnitude could be accomplished, as Rorvik claims, in two short years. Two years—to set up the complete laboratory complex, to hire and train the scientists and technicians, to carry out the experiments, to develop the right techniques,

and to find final success—is several years too few. Has Rorvik never heard of Murphy's Law?

I think that Rorvik wrote the book as a means to summarize his career as a science writer in human reproduction, or to fulfill a desire to become involved in, and not just report on, a major scientific happening, or even to fulfill an ambition to write a novel. Or maybe he wrote it, as he admits in the afterword, to test the public conscience regarding human cloning.

Whatever his intentions, Rorvik produces what seems like an odd hybrid between a masters thesis in philosophy (complete with footnotes and bibliography) and a cheap science fiction novel. He presents a fairly complete discussion of the pros and cons of human cloning, test-tube fertilization and genetic engineering, but does so in an unorganized stream-of-consciousness style. Especially annoying are his frequent pseudo-conversations ("I said that I felt that . . . And he said that he felt . . . Then I said that . . . Then he said that . . .") Evi-

dently Rorvik shuns conversational quotations to avoid the appearance of a novel, and presumably shuns direct presentation of the issues in essay form to avoid the appearance of a technical review. The main failure is the attempt to combine serious philosophy with fictitious narrative, without complete sincerity in either. As a result the characters are stereotyped, the descriptions shallow, and the events predictable. The book is simply weak fiction.

But whether or not a human actually has been cloned, as described by Rorvik, is beside the point. Molecular biology is developing at such a pace that human cloning will soon be with us, if it is not here already. I see no way of avoiding it (and no, I don't think God will prohibit it). Rorvik succeeds in warning us of this eventuality and of some of the ethical questions involved. We should seek individually and collectively to answer some of these questions before human cloning becomes another "achievement" of technology for which we are morally and emotionally unprepared.

Heavenly Bound

Life After Life by Raymond A. Moody, Jr. New York: Bantam Books, 1975, 189pp., \$2.25.

Reviewed by BARBARA SHAW CLARK, a specialist in leukemia and other cancers of childhood, who works intensively with dying children in Seattle, Washington, and OWEN E. CLARK, her husband, who is a psychiatrist in private practice in Seattle, Washington.

Medicine has rediscovered that all life ends in death, and now seems marginally willing to explore the possibility of life after death. Raymond Moody, a psychiatrist trained in philosophy, writes one of the more straightforward and more widely circulated books on this topic. He draws on intensive interviews with some

fifty persons who were medically resuscitated, who came near death, or who observed a near death, in order to give a composite description of the experience immediately after dying.

Life after life includes a surprisingly pleasant sensation of leaving one's body and of reorientating oneself in a timeless, weightless state in which one's vision and hearing remain definitely intact but one is invisible and inaudible to others in the mortal state. One becomes aware of other spiritual beings and of a unique being of light who radiates love and warmth. The being of light extends perfect and instantaneous understanding without need of spoken language and draws one's reflections upon one's own life; in effect asking, are you prepared to die and what have you done with your