

# Friday's World

*This was originally written for the Lynchburg, VA News & Advance, in 1994. It amazes me today how much further we are down the wrong roads.*

Perhaps the best thing about good science fiction novels is the strangely powerful perspectives they can lend to today's reality, simply by fantasizing about tomorrow. *Friday*, by Robert Heinlein, is one such uncomfortably perceptive and prophetic book.

The book is the story of a woman (named Friday) who lives in a weird world of the future, in which the United States has ceased to exist as a political unit, interstellar flight is a routine event, and people get around primarily by horse and buggy.

Friday's problem is that she is an artificial person: that is, she is a laboratory-bred and -birthed human clone, genetically engineered for optimum physical and intellectual prowess. Not only is she the equal of the normal humans among whom she lives, she is actually superior to most of them, having been "built" that way. Yet the great irony of her life is that she must hide the truth about her origins; her society believes that only natural-born individuals have souls, and can be considered truly human. Clones like Friday may be human organisms, genetically speaking, but they are not true human beings.

In Friday's world, cloning humans is a lucrative business. Genetically semi-human creatures are engineered for certain highly dangerous tasks; genetically human male clones are built for back-breaking labor; genetically human female clones are designed for exquisite beauty and heightened sexual response; all are readily available – for the right price.

None of this is considered to be any sort of ethical problem whatsoever in Friday's world, since clones have no rights. How could they have rights? They're soulless sub-humans! The crucial hurdle Friday's culture crossed was when they bought into one logically, ethically, and scientifically indefensible – but pragmatically expedient – notion. That was the idea that there could be such thing as an organism that was fully human genetically, but less than human spiritually – a human organism that was not a human being. Once they had crossed that line, all the rest was simply a matter of following things to their logical conclusions.

Of course, the truly disturbing thing about Heinlein's apocalyptic vision is that our culture has already leaped over that hurdle and arrogated to itself the right to distinguish between full human beings and mere human organisms. Having determined that unborn human organisms are somehow less than human beings, we slaughter them wholesale, usually simply as a matter of convenience. We

are engineering more and more drugs which will prevent human zygotes (which, remember, are fully human so far as genetics are concerned, but less than human so far as our culture's ethics are concerned) from being implanted in the uterine wall, thus dooming them to swift and certain death. Our president's administration [*Bill Clinton's, at the time*] is seeking to relax restrictions on the use of fetal tissues in research. "Quality of life" has become a pet phrase of those who seek some moral justification for terminating human lives. In our world, as in Friday's, trading in human flesh has become a lucrative business – simply because the majority of us have believed the lie that there can be such thing as a human organism that is not a human being. Friday's world is coming to our world. . . perhaps it's already here.

What is this? Sensationalism? Alarmism? Just another narrow-minded fundamentalist frothing at the mouth? Possibly. Just show me where I have made a logically unwarranted progression in my thinking. Point out a non-sequitur, and I'll happily recant. But don't just put this down in a huff and call me something ugly, simply because my words are offensive to you. If you do, you might be guilty of your own kind of closed-mindedness.

You see, I might just be right. It may be that Friday's world is coming to our world. If it is, then may Heaven help us. Only Heaven can. Think about it.

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*Here's an I-told-you-so that literally makes my skin crawl. Last night at the Democratic National Convention, live on national television, Ron Reagan called for human cloning for the purpose of providing material for embryonic stem cell research. I literally jumped out of my seat when the former president's son spoke these words: "How'd you like to have your own personal biological repair kit standing by at the hospital?" He actually advocated cloning human beings to provide spare parts! If you want to read an extremely insightful article on the issue of embryonic stem cell research and Reagan's speech, just go to <http://www.bpnews.net/bpnews.asp?ID=18773>. Friday's world *is* coming to our world. May Heaven help us. Only Heaven can. Think about it.*

– CG, July 29, 2004