“If we had enough information would we know the consequences of our actions?” Code 46’s forte’ is asking probing questions about destiny in a society where genetic predisposition defines “acceptable” actions. Code 46 envisions an insurance company—called Phoenix—that prescribes what risks are worth taking based on genetics. Individuals are given clearance or “coverage” to live only within specific zones. In order to travel, special insurance, a “papelle,” is issued by Phoenix. If Phoenix decides there is too much risk, three choices remain: do not travel, obtain a forged papelle, or live outside the boundaries.

Because in vitro fertilization, embryo splitting, and cloning technologies have been used heavily, society also must monitor unwanted incestuous relationships based on genetic overlap. (Image having offspring with your mother’s genetic twin!) The regulation “Code 46” details how to prevent and deal with incestuous genetic relationships: pregnancy termination and viruses that cause physical aversion to illicit partners. The plot explores an incestuous love affair and how this future society manages a “Code 46” violation.

At least two areas for discussion emerge from the movie. First, how should society deal with genetic information? The movie portrays the use of novel viruses to transmit genetic “enhancement” features, and insurance companies that guarantee secure lives by denying high-risk activities such as travel. How much should society or insurance coverage control what risks are worth taking? How much of our fate is controlled by our biology?

Second, the movie attempts to address deeper questions regarding the meaning of life. What is our purpose, our destiny, our fate? Code 46 offers a morose acquiescence wondering if it is those who live inside the boundaries or those who live outside the boundaries who merely exist. The movie presents a contrast between a few people who are willing to take risks, and the security loving multitudes who are content to play by the rules. If caught, risk takers either are exiled or allowed to remain in society but have memories of their rebellion wiped out.

What is security? Even in the improbable event that we could manage the risks associated with our biological frailness, other world events—9/11, wars, pestilence, tsunamis—point to a world that is not under human control. The idea that we are ever in control is an illusion. Evil men, nature, or accidents are apt to circumvent society’s most ardent measures to provide stability and security. In the movie, one character tells another, “my fate was in your hands.” In reality, our fate does not lay in our biological make-up, with other people, or insurance companies. We are inscribed on the palm of His hand. Society (insurance coverage) or biological perfection can neither give us ultimate security nor elevate us from meaningless existence. However, by faith we have a security that is not based on a perfect life without risk. Rather, it is a security within the will and redemptive purposes of God.

Code 46 appropriately is rated R for a scene of sexuality, including brief graphic nudity.