



*Scenarios*

By

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# One

**“A woman has a right to do what she wants with her own body.”**

**J**ane and Janet were siamese twins, born attached at the chest. Their parents asked to have them separated, but were told that they shared a vital organ, and if they were separated, only one of them would live. They grew up together, each living a healthy and happy, if unusual, life, though Jane was the quiet sort who liked to read, while Janet was the partying type. They had worked out a compromise, with Jane going to some parties that she really would have preferred to miss, and Janet staying home sometimes when she really would have preferred going out.

All was well until Janet fell in love, and decided that she couldn't live with the idea of Jane's sharing her bedroom. So they went to a doctor again, and once again were told that if they were to be separated, one

or the other of them would die. Janet then said, “She’s been using my organ long enough. I want the separation. I have a right to do what I want with my body.” Jane answered, “Whose organ? Whose body?”

**Question:** Which one of them is the person, and which one is only a part?

**Fact:** The mere fact that two organisms are attached to each other does not make one a part of the other. A tick is not part of the organism it attaches itself to, nor is a tapeworm, even though the tapeworm lives completely inside the body. Something is only a *part* of an organism when it is *functional* for that organism: that is, when it exists for and acts for the benefit of the organism as a whole.

But a human embryo or fetus (a) makes its mother sick in the early stages of development, (b) is regarded by the mother-organism as a foreign object to be rejected (it blocks the rejection mechanism), (c) takes nutrients from the mother (such as calcium) even at the mother’s expense, (d) sometimes has a blood-type that is incompatible with the mother’s. No, the human embryo or fetus, biologically speaking, is a *parasite*, not a part; like a tapeworm, it is living for itself even sometimes at the expense of the host organism.

So a pregnant woman is *two organisms*, two bodies. If she “has a right to do what she wants with

her body," then, like the siamese twin, she has no right to do it if it involves killing the other body.

## Two

**“Rights are granted by society, and our society has not granted to fetuses the right to life. Case closed.”**

**D**iJuan was a black slave in America in 1832. He sued to gain his freedom, and was told that his suit was useless, since American society did not grant the right of freedom to black people. DiJuan then said to the judge. “Doesn’t your Declaration of Independence say that all men are created equal and are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, and among these are the right of liberty? America seceded from England because England was claiming that these basic rights were given by society, and society could withhold them if it chose. We said that this is false; we have rights because we are persons, not members of society; and it is up to society to *secure* these rights. It can’t grant them. If you deny me

my freedom, you are treating a human being as if he wasn't human, because you yourself say that you are free because you are human. And I don't care what your laws say; you can't treat a human being as if he weren't a human being."

**Question:** What is wrong with his argument?

**Fact:** The answer is Nothing. *Some* rights, such as the right to drive a car, are acquired by doing something to earn them; *other* rights, such as the right to vote, are granted by the society, and depend on the form of government the society has. But there are *basic* rights we have as human beings, and if we can't exercise them, then we are a human-being-who-is-not-human, which is a contradiction in terms. And, of course, among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

It is society's task to *discover* what the basic human rights are, and *secure* them. It has no say in "granting" or "withholding" them, and if it presumes to do so, its law contradicts the government's function, making it (depending on the right and the inability to secure redress) illegitimate.

Therefore, if a fetus is a human person, then he has the basic human right to life, and if the society does not secure this right, the society is doing evil.

## Three

**“If a fetus is human for you, fine, respect ‘his’ or ‘her’ rights. But a fetus is not human for me, and therefore I don’t find any rights I have to respect.”**

**A**braham Rabinowitz was a Jew living in Germany in 1928. He had, of course, been accustomed to the insults he received from the Aryans around him, and one day, he was talking to one of them and asked, “I can’t understand why you hate us so much. What have we done to you? *We* of this generation did not kill your Christ. So why do you call us ‘pigs’?”

The answer was, “You don’t understand. We don’t hate you, and we’re not trying to insult you. It’s just a shorthand way of saying that you’re an animal, not a human being. You can do what you want; but don’t go intermarrying with human beings, because then

you contaminate humanity.”

“What do you mean, I’m an animal?” said Abraham. “I’m as human as you are.”

“No, you’re not,” was the reply. “You’re a lower form of life. The same as a dog.”

“You mean that *literally*?” said Abraham. “I can’t believe it.”

“I realize that *you* think you’re human. But you’re not human for *us*. You’re just an animal. I’m sorry if you resent it, but there it is.”

**Question:** Did the Aryans’ thinking that the Jews were not human beings *make* them really not human?

**Fact:** You can’t *make* something be a certain way just by thinking that it is. If you think that you are an elm tree, you can’t produce leaves or photosynthesize. If you think that someone else is an elm tree, this doesn’t give him leaves or sap in his veins. It’s ridiculous to say that he’s “really an elm tree” for you. He’s not an elm tree at all; and if you sincerely believe he is, you’re just making a sincere mistake. His reality is not dependent on your knowledge of it; it’s the other way round.

So with the Jew. The fact that someone else might sincerely believe that a Jew is not really a human being and just looks more or less like one doesn’t change what the facts really are. And since rights create obligations, rights are based on the

*facts* of what you are, not what others *think* you are. What, for instance, the feminist movement is about is that women *in fact* are different from what they were *thought* to be by society, and so they have rights that society has not recognized up to now. And they fight for them even against other's opinions of what they supposedly "really are."

But if your having rights depended on what other people thought you were, then "fighting for your rights" would make no sense, because you wouldn't *have* a right to "fight for" unless the other people already thought you had it.

So the question of whether a fetus is a human being or not is an *objective* question, a question of *fact*, and it does not depend on what anyone *thinks* the fact is.

## Four

**“Well, but don’t you agree that abortions should be allowed in cases of rape or incest?”**

Sally was leading a happy married life with Frank, her husband. Sally’s former boyfriend Edward, however, began causing them trouble after a couple of years of marriage by writing torrid love letters to her—which she showed to Frank, and then destroyed. She even called the police to ask for protection from Edward, but was told that they couldn’t do anything unless Edward actually committed a criminal act. But since Edward never seemed to be around Sally, they continued with their lives.

But one day, Sally went into the hospital for an appendectomy. It happened that Edward worked as an orderly in that hospital, and when he discovered that Sally was a patient there, he crept into her room while

she was still unconscious after the surgery, and raped her, slipping away without having Sally wake up or anyone notice him.

Sally returned from the hospital, and three weeks later discovered that she was pregnant. Thinking it was Frank's child, she continued the pregnancy with joy, and returned to the same hospital to give birth. While there, as she nursed her baby on the second day, she saw by her bedside a card, which seemed to be in Edward's handwriting. She was about to tear it up, but for some reason opened it first. It said. "Congratulations on having my son! Do a DNA test, and you will see that I am his father, and not Frank."

Terrified, she ordered a DNA test on the baby, and it turned out that it was not Frank's. Edward's card went on to explain how he had had sex with her while she was unconscious in the hospital nine months previously. Edward was arrested and put into prison for rape.

But two weeks after Sally returned home, she told Frank. "He looks just like Edward. Every time I see him, I get reminded of Edward. I can't deal with this. Kill him."

Frank said. "We can't kill him. Put him up for adoption."

"No, that would take too long," she answered. "And even the thought of him existing as my child by that man is too much. I want him dead."

**Questions:** If you think she can kill him now (because he's a child of rape), suppose Edward waited for the child's tenth birthday to send the letter. Could she kill him then? Could she if she found out when he was thirty? If you don't think she can kill him any of these times after birth because he's a child of rape, then could she have had an abortion if she found out before he was born? The basic question in all of these is When did he turn into something that can't be killed, and why?

**Fact:** First of all, if you say that he can be killed at some time after birth, what you are saying is this: The fact that he's the result of a rape makes him a *different kind of thing* from the human being he would be if his mother weren't raped. But the *act* that produced him is the same act as it would have been if it were not rape; the only difference is that the act is rape if the woman is unwilling to submit to it. But what you are, as we saw from Scenario 3, does not depend on someone's thoughts or intentions, but is an objective fact. So a person born of rape is not by that fact anything other than a human being.

If the contention is that children of rape cannot be killed after birth, but the woman can have an abortion, this is the equivalent of saying that, though at all times the fetus is a different *organism* from the mother (as we saw from Scenario 1), before birth

he's a *different kind of thing* from what he gets transformed into at birth.

But a human fetus is not like a caterpillar that gets transformed into a butterfly, because a caterpillar's organs, metabolism, and life, are completely different from those of the butterfly it will become, and all of its organs adapt it to its life as a caterpillar. But the human embryo from the earliest stages develops eyes, hands, ears, stomach, lungs, and so on, which are no use to him at all inside the uterus, but only after birth. So from the start, the human embryo and fetus are not a different kind of thing, but exactly the same kind of thing he will be once he emerges from the womb.

So if you can't kill him after birth, you can't kill him before, even if he's the result of a rape. It's not *his* fault that his mother was raped. Why should he have to suffer for it?

## Five

**“But certainly a human *embryo* isn’t a human being; it’s just a blob of tissue. Separate the cells at the early stages and each one grows into a separate organism, which proves that at the beginning, the mass isn’t a unit.”**

**P**rofessor Goudy was a cell biologist who sometimes grew tissue cultures of human skin cells for experimental purposes. He knew that each of these cells (which he had taken from his own skin) had exactly the same genes as the original cell which grew into him; but they didn’t form little clones of Professor Goudy; they just grew as a mass of skin tissue.

He used to do experiments on human embryos also, and felt no more qualms about it than he did when he was experimenting on the human skin tissue. “These are human cells,” he would say, “but they aren’t human beings; and the mass is just a mass of

cells in both cases, not a human being. How could you call skin cells, even living skin cells, a human being?”

One day, he was out in Chesapeake Bay, watching the oyster fishermen. One of them pulled a starfish out of the water, saying, “These pesky things are eating all our oysters. We have to get rid of them.” He gave it to Professor Goudy to show him, and Professor Goudy said, “You’re right,” and took out his Swiss Army knife and cut up the starfish, and was about to throw the pieces back into the sea, when the oyster fisherman grabbed his arm and cried. “Wait! Don’t do that! I thought you were a biologist! Don’t you know that every one of those pieces will grow into a whole other starfish?”

**Question:** Does the fact that the starfish can be separated into parts that then grow into separate starfish prove that the starfish is just a mass of cells?

**Fact:** Obviously not, because the intact starfish *acts* as a unit, with clearly differentiated functional parts, not a colony of organisms (like a coral reef). The fact that the parts can also grow into whole starfish does not argue against the unity of the whole or the special function of any of the parts while it’s a part of the whole.

Then what’s the difference between the mass of

skin cells and the human embryo? Are they the same, or is the embryo a unit like a starfish? They aren't the same, because, though the cells are *undifferentiated* (to our eyes) at this very early stage, they are *organized* in a way that the skin cells aren't. That is, certain cells (that *look* just like the others) will turn into eyes, and certain other ones into the heart, and lungs, and so on. And there will be just two eyes and two ears and one heart. As these cells differentiate, they don't do it "on their own," but they differentiate into the parts needed by the whole organism—which shows that they are not just lying there in the same place, but are *interacting* with each other to form the unit which will be the functioning unit we call a human being. Therefore, the *human organization* (which non-scientists call the "soul") is there from the start. How else would these undifferentiated cells "know" what they're supposed to turn into?

On the other hand, each skin cell just does what it is pre-programmed to do, and they're just there, physically linked to each other into a mass, but not connected *dynamically* to form a single functioning body. So while they're living human *cells*, they're not a human *being*.

## Six

**“But even if the fetus is biologically a human being, you can’t call it a human *person*, with rights, because it has no consciousness yet, and no interactions with others.”**

**H**enry stabbed his father to death while he was sleeping, and came up with this ingenious defense: “I can’t be guilty of murder, because murder means depriving a person of his right to life. But I learned in class that to be a person means that you’re conscious and can interact with other people. But at the time I killed my father, he was asleep, and so he wasn’t conscious and wasn’t capable of interacting with other people. So at that time, he wasn’t a person, and didn’t have any right to life. I just killed an organism that happened biologically to be a human being, but it wasn’t a human person.”

**Question:** If you were on the jury, would you acquit him?

**Fact:** When we say that being a person and possessor of rights implies consciousness and interaction with others, we are saying this because a *person*, as opposed to a non-personal animal (such as a starfish) can *decide what kind of life he wants to live*, and can control his actions to this purpose. But the problematic word here is “can.” Clearly, you aren’t a person *only* when you’re deciding, because then you’d lose all rights when you weren’t making decisions. But when you’re asleep, there is a sense in which you “can’t” make choices or interact with others, and a sense in which you “can.” You “can” do it in the sense that at any moment, you can wake up and make a choice. A chair or a corpse “can’t” do this.

Even a person who has been knocked out for four hours “can” make choices during that period; it’s just that the anesthesia prevents him from *exercising* for a while what he has the ability to do. The proof of this is that when the dose wears off, he wakes up and makes choices as before. If you said he lost his personhood during that time, it would have to have been resurrected by the simple wearing off of the medicine.

What about a human being in a coma? Many people wake up from comas, and there isn’t any discernible difference between being in a coma and

being knocked out. If they wake up, then while they were in the coma they “could” make choices in the same sense as the unconscious person or sleeping person is still a person. (Some people who have been in a coma also report that they were conscious during that time, but were incapable of showing it.)

And what this indicates is that this sense of “can” (“he can, basically, even though in practice he can’t”) has to mean *his body is organized as a basically choice-making kind of thing*. But all human beings are choice-making kinds of things; and therefore, every human being is a person, whether or not he’s *actually* capable of making a choice at the moment.

It follows from this that the human embryo or fetus is not only a human being, but a human person, because he is basically organized as a choice-maker, and is only prevented from making choices at the moment because the mechanism for doing so (the brain) is not fully functioning yet. There is, incidentally, plenty of evidence that long before birth human fetuses are conscious; and there’s every reason to believe that once a choice-maker is conscious, he is capable of making choices.

It may seem odd to say that what looks like a mass of tissue is a person, but if you don’t say so, then logically you have to say that sleeping people aren’t persons either.

## Seven

**“Personhood is a developmental concept. You aren’t fully a person from the very beginning, and therefore you don’t have all your rights at the beginning. We don’t say that five-year-olds have the right to drive a car or get married.”**

**M**elanie was being driven crazy by her five-year-old and her ten-year-old. One day, it occurred to her that neither of them had reached puberty yet, and so they weren’t fully human yet (there were times they seemed to her not human at all). But if they weren’t fully human, they weren’t fully persons either; and so she put them in her car, headed it toward the lake, and jumped out, leaving them to drown.

People called her insane, but in her own mind, she felt that what she had done was justified. “I am a full person,” she said to herself, “with all my rights. They

were not fully persons yet, and so had no right to life. So how could I have been doing something wrong in killing them?”

**Question:** Does the lack of some human traits make you not fully a person, and therefore take away your right to life?

**Fact:** A person, remember, is the *kind* of thing who can choose, or sleeping people would not be “full persons” either, as we saw, and in losing their personhood, would lose all rights.

So while it may be true that humanity, like personhood, is a developmental concept, and until you have reached your full human potential, you can be called “not fully human,” this implies nothing about rights, or logically we have to say that the sleeper, who at the moment is not “fully human,” is not a possessor of rights.

This is not to say that we can’t *acquire* special rights as we grow and mature, such as the right to drive a car. Such rights do not belong to us *because we are human*, but because we have fulfilled certain conditions (like passing the driving test).

There are even some *human* rights that we do not have from birth, such as the right to marry. This is because marriage naturally results in children, who need to be brought up properly. But no one ever has any right which would imply the violation of

anyone else's right; and since a child would not be able to bring up his own children properly, then to "exercise" his right to marriage would violate his childrens' rights to a decent upbringing.

But there is no way in which the exercise of the right to life violates someone else's right (though it may violate someone else's *convenience*, which is not the same thing). And since it is a contradiction to say that something is a (living) human being who isn't allowed to live, then the right to life belongs to a person from the moment he exists as a human being.

## Eight

**“If the option of abortion is not kept open to a woman, she can never be the equal of a man in her sexuality, since a man can make a woman pregnant and not even know he has done it, while the woman is stuck with the consequences of the act.”**

Ruth was a dedicated feminist, and fought with all her strength to keep the option of abortion open to women now that they had acquired the right. “Otherwise,” she said, “we can’t be the equal of men; and we *are* men’s equal. It is unfair and unjust and a violation of our right as equal to men that men can get away with sex without consequences and we can’t.”

Once, she became pregnant by her husband, and told him, “I don’t want to go through with this; I’m going to have an abortion.”

“Wait a minute,” he said. “That’s my child. I

always wanted to have a child, and now you're saying you'll kill him."

"I'm sorry, Joe, but this is *my* choice, not yours. You have nothing to do with it."

"Nothing to do with it! *I* got you pregnant."

"No, you had sex with me. I forgot to take the Pill, that's all."

"In other words," said Joe, "you won't let me take responsibility for my own actions. I have no say in the consequences of what I have done."

**Question:** How equal does the abortion option make men and women, sexually?

**Fact:** Not at all. Abortion as a way of achieving "equality" is an attempt by women to be as *irresponsible* as men are biologically in their sexual activity. But this kind of irresponsibility is achieved only if a woman can kill her own child without penalty. How "equal" does this make a woman and a man if, to maintain a semblance of equality she is forced into a position of killing her own child?

But the abortion option also forces *men* into not being *able* to take responsibility for their own sexual activity, since a person is responsible only for what he has control over, and men have no control over whether a child will result from their sexual activity or not, since the choice to have an abortion is *solely* the woman's, and the man can't stop her. Hence,

the abortion option *encourages* irresponsible sexual behavior among men. Women, however, are in any case faced with the consequences of their sexual activity, since they either have to have the child or kill him. So there is only the *illusion* of “freedom from consequences” here.

Then is it impossible for women and men to be sexually equal? Of course not. The *biology* of the male and the female is such that the female has the results of the act within her and the male does not. But men and women are not just biological organisms; they are persons, who live in a society, which can impose *social* consequences upon what a member does.

The feminist movement has taken a tragic wrong turn. Instead of trying to be as irresponsible as men (which in the last analysis is neither possible nor desirable, and even makes men more irresponsible), women should be fighting to have society impose *social penalties* upon men who use their sexuality irresponsibly.

A man must be made to realize that if he has sex, that sexual activity might result in a child, and he has the obligation to see to it that that child has the conditions for being raised as a decent human being. And this means more than just money, as we can see from the statistics dealing with children of single-parent families. He has to be prepared to team up with the woman, so that both of them will nurture and rear the child they might produce.

Only in this way will women be the sexual equal of men. If this means reversing the sexual revolution, so be it. But until we take our heads out of the sand and realize that the sexual revolution has wrought, not freedom and joy, but anguish and misery, particularly for our children, the horrors of abortion will remain with us, and women will always be in an inferior position to men.