



What Is a Person? (Contemporary Issues in Biomedicine, Ethics, and Society)

Michael F. Goodman

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The idea for an anthology on personhood grew out of two things, viz. , the work I did with Martin Benjamin during the Summer of 1982 at Michigan State University on the question, What is a person?, and the amount of time, effort, and expense required for serious research on the topic itself. The former experience taught me the importance of, among other things, attempting to get clear about what we are to mean by 'person,' while the latter experience suggested a possible course of action whereby getting clear might be made more manageable simply by having relatively convenient access to some of the most insightful and stimulating writings on the topic. The problems of personhood addressed in this book are central to issues in ethics ranging from the treatment or termination of infants with birth defects to the question whether there can be rational suicide. But before questions on such issues as the morality of abortion, genetic engineering, infanticide, and so on, can be settled, the problems of personhood must be clarified and analyzed. Hence *What Is a Person?* has as its primary theme the examination of various proposed conditions of personhood.

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