Noonan “Abortion is Morally Wrong” Notes

* “an entity at conception becomes a person” – “ensoulment” – it has a soul in theological terms
* “if you are conceived by human parents, you are human” – you have potential from the moment you are conceived and that is all you need to be considered human
* **Supporting idea for abortion 1:** Before a certain time (month) the fetus is reliant on the mother and cannot live without her, so it is not a full functioning human
  + Objection 1: Many factors go into viability of a fetus: (length of life is not a good measure, needs to be based on “anatomical and functional development”) weight, length, race (cannot set one standard bc viability varies so much from person to culture to gender)
  + Objection 2: Just because you depend on a mother in the early stages does not mean you are not human, after all even toddlers are still dependent on their mothers and would most likely die without them but they are considered humans
* **Supporting idea for abortion 2:** “a being who has had experience, has lived and suffered, who possesses memories, is more human than one who has not” – fetus does not meet these criteria
  + Objection 1: embryos and zygotes respond to their environment from the moment of conception and therefore are “experiencing”; aphasia – erased adult memory “has it erased humanity?”; toddlers also don’t experience enough would they be treated as inhuman
  + Response to “certain central experiences such as loving or learning are necessary to make a man human”: then how do you classify those who have never loved nor learned are they also inhuman
* **Supporting idea for abortion 3:** the fetus is an “it” till birth and the parents would feel less grief over losing it than they would if they lost a living child (after the “fourth month of existence when movements in the womb manifest”)
  + Objection 1: feeling is not a guide to humanity (we don’t care about each other enough to rely on just that); we see people of another tongue, color, religion, sex as being less than us but they are human are they not; we mourn the loss of a ten year old more and a one day old or a ninety year old (based on the experiences wiped out)
* **Supporting idea for abortion 4:** “sensation by the parents” – can never see or touch fetus until birth so it cannot be man (can only feel embryo after fourth month)
  + Objection 1: sight is unreliable in determining humanity (racial discrimination is proof)
  + Objection 2: touch cannot be reliable bc someone “out of touch” with others (coma or mental illness) is still considered a human
* **Supporting idea for abortion 5:** “subjectively and objectively, it is not a member of society” – it is not a social being and cannot communicate with others therefore excluded from the humanity of men
  + Objection 1: “if humanity depends on social recognition, individuals or whole groups may be dehumanized by being denied any status in their society” – Orwell’s 1984, Roman empire condemnation, Chinese Communists treated enemies of the state as nonpersons – “the failure of society to recognize the prisoner, the alien, the heterodox as human has led to the destruction of human beings”
* “to decide who is human on the basis of the sentiment of a given society has led to consequences which rational men would characterize as monstrous”
* “the earlier stages of the elements of human life possess tiny probabilities of development” – 4/5 chance that an embryo will develop – “an immense jump in potentialities” – “for about twenty days after conception the egg may split to form twins or combine with another egg to form a chimera” even though those probabilities are small
* The argument of probabilities does not establish humanity, but it tries to guide in making the morally right decision when it comes to a fetus
  + “if the chance is 200 [million] to 1 that the movement in the bushes into which you shoot is a man’s, I doubt if many persons would hold you careless in shooting; but if the chances are four out of five that the movement is a human being’s, few would acquit you of blame”
* “a being with a human genetic code is man” – genetic code determines characteristics and begins at conception
* 2 cases of conflict: “the total inability of the fetus to speak for itself and the fact that the right of the fetus regularly at stake is the right to life itself”
* Only thing greater than the fetus’s interest is the mother and her own life
  + Cancerous uterus and ectopic pregnancy (fetus has little chance of survival even if no abortion)
* “the commandment gave life to what otherwise would have been only rational calculation” – love thy neighbor as thyself
* “do not injure your fellow man without reason” – cannot kill fetus unless in self-defense, equality of human lives