



# The Facts of Life: Science and the Abortion Controversy

*Harold J. Morowitz, James Trefil*

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In *The Facts of Life*, Harold Morowitz and James Trefil, two distinguished scientists and science writers, examine what modern biology can contribute to our understanding of the abortion debate. Sensitive to the myriad ethical and religious arguments beyond the realm of science that swirl around abortion, the authors focus on one crucial question—when does a fetus acquire "humanness," that quality that sets us apart from all other living things. While humans are linked via cell structure and cell chemistry with all life on our planet—from monkeys to fruit flies to pumpkins—it is the human brain structure which makes us who we are. Reviewing the latest advances in molecular biology, evolutionary biology, embryology, neurophysiology, and neonatology—fields that all bear on this question—the authors reveal a surprising consensus of scientific opinion; that humanness begins around the twenty-fourth week of gestation when connections needed for brain function are finally made. A fascinating inquiry, moving across various scientific disciplines, *The Facts of Life* makes a valuable contribution to the continuing abortion controversy, and offers a fascinating glimpse of what makes us uniquely human.

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