Anne: “Unlike Bob and Carla, I love playing the flute, and I play it really well!”

Bob: “Anne and Carla already have lots of toys, but I have none at all!”

Carla: “I have just finished making the flute, after many weeks of hard work!”
Anne, Bob and Carla

P1 The flute is the product of Carla's labour.
P2 If the flute is the product of Carla's labour, then it is her property.
C1 The flute is Carla's property.

P3 If the flute is Carla’s property, but we give the flute to Anne or Bob, then we are stealing from Carla.
P4 Egalitarianism requires us to give the flute to Bob.
C2 Egalitarianism requires us to steal from Carla.
Is P2 true?

‘The idea of the right to the fruits of one’s labour can unite right-wing libertarians and left-wing Marxists (no matter how uncomfortable each might be in the company of the other.’


Is P4 true?

Is P1 true?
Carla’s labour is only one of the factors of production.

What if Carla made the flute out of a piece of wood she had stolen from Bob?

What if Carla made the flute out of the only piece of wood in the garden?

What if Carla made the flute out of some of the abundant wood in the garden?

What if Carla made the flute out of her own thighbone?
Anne fully owns the tree only if

(a) Anne can do what she likes to or with the tree.

(b) Other people cannot do anything to or with the tree unless Anne permits them.

(c) Anne (and only Anne) can permit people to do things to or with the tree.

(d) Anne (and only Anne) can prohibit people from doing things to or with the tree.

Anne’s tree; Anne’s rules!
(e) If the tree produces anything, e.g. fruit, then Anne owns this as well.

(f) Anne can transfer any of these rights to other people, either temporarily or permanently, either in exchange for other rights or in exchange for nothing.

(g) Anne is due compensation from other people who violate these rights.

But there are limits on these rights…
‘According to the thesis of self-ownership, each person possesses over himself, as a matter of moral right, all those rights that a slaveholder has over a complete chattel slave as a matter of legal right…’


‘The core idea of full self-ownership is that agents own themselves in just the same way that they can fully own inanimate objects.’

(Peter Vallentyne, *Left-Libertarianism: A Primer*, p.2)
Self-ownership

‘Though the Earth, and all inferior Creatures be common to all Men, yet every Man has a Property in his own Person. This no Body has any right to but himself. The Labour of his Body, and the Work of his Hands, we may say, are properly his.’

(Locke, Second Treatise of Government, § 27)
Bob is a full self-owner only if

(a) Bob can do what he likes to or with himself.

(b) Other people cannot do anything to or with Bob unless he permits them.

(c) Bob (and only Bob) can permit people to do, or prohibit people from doing, things to or with himself.

(d) Bob (and only Bob) can prohibit people from doing things to or with himself.
(e) If Bob produces anything, then he owns this as well.

(f) Bob can transfer any of these rights to other people, either temporarily or permanently, either in exchange for other rights or in exchange for nothing.

(g) Bob is due compensation from other people who violate these rights.

What exactly follows from the claim that Bob is a full self-owner?
Self-ownership

P1  If Bob is a full self-owner, then I can torture him if he permits me.
P2  I cannot torture Bob if he permits me.
C  Bob is not a full self-owner.

What does it mean to say that I can torture Bob?

I don’t violate anyone’s rights in torturing Bob.
I have no moral reason not to torture Bob.
Is everyone a full self-owner?

SO1 Everyone is a full self-owner. But what if Bob permanently transfers his rights over himself to Carla?

SO2 Everyone is *originally* a full self-owner. But what if Bob is a child?

SO3 Every grown-up is originally a full self-owner.
Is everyone a full self-owner?

P1 Anne is the product of the bodies and (reproductive) labour of Mr. and Mrs. Smith.

P2 If Mr. and Mrs. Smith are full self-owners, then they have control rights and transfer rights over the product of their bodies and labour.

C1 Mr. and Mrs. Smith have control rights and transfer rights over Anne.
Is everyone a full self-owner?

P3  If Mr. and Mrs. Smith have control rights and transfer rights over Anne, then Anne does not have control rights and transfer rights over herself.

P4  If Anne is a full self-owner, then she has control rights and transfer rights over herself.

C2  Anne is not a full self-owner.

Is P1 true?

Do the Smith’s rights over the product of their bodies and labour reach this far?
Self-ownership and deontological ethics

‘Individuals have rights, and there are things no person or group may do to them (without violating their rights).’

(Robert Nozick, *Anarchy, State and Utopia*, p.ix)
‘...the owner... can... dispose of [the owned object] as he pleases... But from this it follows that an object of this sort can be only a corporeal thing (to which one has no obligation). So someone can be his own master... but cannot be the owner of himself... (cannot dispose of himself as he pleases)... since he is accountable to the humanity in his own person.’

(Immanuel Kant, *Metaphysics of Morals*, p.421)
Self-ownership and deontological ethics

P1 I have duties to myself.

P2 I own $x$ only if I have no duty to anyone to do or not to things with $x$.

C I do not own myself.

I have a duty to myself not to kill myself.

I have a duty to myself not to ‘defile myself by lust.’

I have a duty to myself not to ‘stupefy myself by the excessive use of food or drink’.
Eye lotteries

Scenario 1

It is possible to give sight to a blind person by transplanting an eye from a sighted person. The government organizes an eye lottery. Sighted people whose tickets come up are forced to give up an eye for a blind person.
Eye lotteries

*Scenario 2*

Everyone is born with empty eye-sockets, but the government supplies artificial eyes for all newborn babies. Every now and then, these artificial eyes stop working, and the only way to restore sight to a person whose artificial eyes have stopped working is to transplant a working artificial eye from a sighted person.

The government organizes an eye lottery. Sighted people whose tickets come up are forced to give up an eye for a blind person.
**Eye lotteries**

*Scenario 3*

Everybody is born with empty eye-sockets, but working eyes randomly fall from the heavens into some people’s eye sockets. This happens to most, but not all people.

The government organizes an eye lottery. Sighted people whose tickets come up are forced to give up an eye for a blind person.