



The Ethics of Organ Transplantation

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An ever-increasing demand for organs, with over 100,000 people on waiting lists, has driven a relentless search for new sources of organs. In 1995 the American Medical Association supported taking organs from anencephalic infants, children born without brains. In 1999 the Chinese government began removing organs from members of the politically outcast religious group Falun Gong, making a lucrative profit from sales to foreigners. Recently in Belgium physicians have euthanized a patient by removing her organs.

The search for fresh organs began much earlier, in 1968, when death was redefined, so that well-preserved organs could be removed from brain dead individuals. The early 1990s saw the introduction of donation after cardiac death, in which organs are taken from individuals whose hearts could still be resuscitated. Over the last two decades various countries have attempted markets in the sale of organs.

Each of these sources of organs raises ethical concerns. Is brain death truly death, or by taking the heart of the brain-dead individual do we thereby kill him? When a person's heart stops beating is it permissible to prepare his organs for transplantation, even though we could choose to resuscitate him? Can we take organs from an infant without a brain? If a woman no longer wishes to live, can she donate her organs to others in an act of beneficent suicide? Is a market in organs acceptable?

These questions and others are thoughtfully probed in this collection of essays, which features articles from theologians, philosophers, physicians, biomedical ethicists, and an attorney.

ABOUT THE EDITOR:

Steven J. Jensen is associate professor of philosophy at the University of St. Thomas in Houston and specializes in the areas of ethics and medieval philosophy. He is the author of *Good and Evil Actions: A Journey through Saint Thomas Aquinas* (CUA Press).

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PRAISE FOR THE BOOK:

"The Ethics of Organ Transplantation summarizes important questions in the transplant debate and presents

a significant contribution to continued development of the discourse of this most important subject. This work underscores fears of the slippery slope of organ transplantation and provides up-to-date coverage of the important and related issues."--Edmund D. Pellegrino, M.D., Professor Emeritus of Medicine and Medical Ethics, Georgetown University

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