

# Are Organ Transplants

## Metaphysically Contraindicated

I once carried an organ donor card. However, after I was diagnosed with non-A, non-B hepatitis in 1984, I was informed that I was no longer a potential donor, for organs or blood, even though the doctors didn't seem to know what non-A, non-B was all about and the symptoms disappeared within a few months.

If I could go back 30 years or so with my present understanding of things metaphysical, I think I would struggle with the idea of being an organ donor. Certainly, donating one's organs to those in need of them seems like a spiritual act -- one of kindness, of all giving and no taking, of human love and service. To suggest that it is other than spiritually proper is certain to raise eyebrows and invite ridicule, scorn, and contempt. Isn't helping others what spirituality is all about?

Nevertheless, there are indications that organ transplants are metaphysically contraindicated, both for the donor and recipient. At issue is whether the consciousness actually leaves the body at the moment brain wave activity and vital functions cease or whether it lingers for hours or even days. Also, there are indications that premature removal of organs can result in the possession of the recipient by the donor, causing the donor to remain "earthbound" and the recipient to be negatively influenced.

In his 1998 book, *Light & Death*, Dr. Michael Sabom, an Atlanta cardiologist, cites an article by Dr. Linda Emanuel, who comments that life and death are viewed as non-overlapping, dichotomous states, whereas in reality there is no threshold event that defines death. "Several scientific observations support Emanuel's argument that loss of biologic life, including death of the brain, is process and does not occur at a single, definite moment," Sabom writes. He goes on to mention that 10 organ donors diagnosed as "brain dead" showed an average increase in blood pressure of 31 millimeters of mercury and in heart rate of 23 beats per minute in response to surgical removal of the organs. He also refers to a study at Loyola University Medical Center in which it was found that 20 percent of patients diagnosed as brain dead had persisting EEG activity up to seven days after the initial diagnosis.

There have been numerous accounts of people being pronounced dead and then coming back to "life." The story of Dr. George Rodonaia, a psychologist in the Soviet Union, as related in several books on near-death experiences, is a particularly chilling one. Rodonaia was said to have been murdered by the KGB as he was preparing for a trip to the United States in 1976. As medical personnel began cutting into him during an autopsy nearly two days after his "death," Rodonaia opened his eyes and returned to life. He returned with a very vivid NDE, one that transformed him from an atheist to a believer.

Reports that workers relocating cemeteries in Great Britain have found scratch marks on the inside covers of many caskets, indicating that the body was not yet "dead" when the cover was closed, add to the concern. Of course, the cemetery

victims were likely buried before embalming became commonplace, but that only indicates that embalming may now begin before bodies are actually "dead."

According to *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*, it might take up to three-and-a-half days for the consciousness to leave the body. Sogyal Rinpoche, author of *The Tibetan Book of Living and Dying*, states that it is believed that if the body is touched in a certain place, as with an injection, for example, it may draw the consciousness to that spot. The consciousness of the dead person may then leave toward the nearest opening instead of through the fontanel, at the crown of the head, and make an unfortunate rebirth. But Rinpoche questioned several "masters" on the subject of organ donation. They all agreed that it is an extremely positive action. "So, as long as it is truly the wish of the dying person, it will not harm in any way the consciousness that is leaving the body," Rinpoche summarized his interviews. "On the contrary, this final act of generosity accumulates good karma." One master added that the pain and suffering that a person goes through in the process of having the organs removed turns into good karma.

According to the mystic known as Abd-ru-Shin (1875-1941), the separation of the etheric body, or soul, from the physical body and the severing of the "silver cord" (sometimes referred to as the etheric umbilical cord), joining the two depends to a great extent on the spiritual development of the individual. Dr. Richard Steinpach, who wrote extensively on the teachings of Abd-ru-Shin, states that the more materialistic the person, the more the silver cord is tightly knit, and the more difficult it is to sever the connection. "The severance may then take many days, during which time such a person, because of the density of the connection-cord, must still feel what happens to his physical body, so that, for example, he does not necessarily remain insensitive to cremation," Steinpach offers, adding that it is with good reason that some rites, especially among primitive races, provide for minimum intervals between death and burial or cremation..

Possibly the most intriguing and original source on this subject is the spirit entity who called himself Silver Birch. Sometime during the 1930s, Maurice Barbanell, a young British journalist of Jewish heritage, was investigating spiritualism, apparently very skeptical and thinking he might have a story in which he could expose spiritualism as one giant fraud. Attending his second seance, Barbanell, who said he was an atheist at that time, fell asleep. Upon awakening, he was informed by the others present that he was not asleep but had been in a trance and that a Red Indian had spoken through him. Although Silver Birch never fully identified himself, indications were that his Indian name was a convenient persona behind a very spiritually-evolved soul. For nearly 50 years, Silver Birch spoke regularly through a home circle attended by many very educated and influential people. The wisdom of Silver Birch is now contained in at least a dozen books.

Until shortly before Barbanell's death in 1981, Silver Birch delivered lectures and answered questions about every possible subject relating to the meaning of life and the evolution of the soul. When asked about organ transplants, he replied: "I know about transplants, and am aware that the motive is often a very good one. But I must say that I am opposed to transplanting any part of the human body to other people." He went on to explain that doctors cannot judge when death takes place and that death is final only when the silver cord is severed and the spirit body leaves the

physical one. "When that severance has taken place, no medical man can make that body live again," Silver Birch said.

Silver Birch often mentioned that although he came from a realm with a considerably higher vibration than earth, he had not evolved to the point where he had knowledge of all things. He frequently prefaced his remarks, including those on transplants, by saying it was simply his opinion. "I do not think, from my point of view, and I speak only for myself, that the sustaining of the physical body must be the be-all of every endeavor," he offered at one sitting. "I maintain that man should be instructed how to live aright, spiritually, mentally and physically. If he thinks right, then he behaves right and his body will be right. The solution is not the transfer of bodily parts. The solution is for every man to order himself to live as the Great Spirit intended. Man must have compassion for other men and for all the creatures with whom he shares his planet. They were not placed here by the Great Spirit to be used as experiments, to prolong the physical life of man."

### **Earthbound Spirits**

The risks could very well extend beyond physical pain to the body of the donor. The departing soul may be left "earthbound" because of the organ removal. In *A Change of Heart*, author Claire Sylvia tells of her own heart transplant and how she took on some of the tastes and interests of the donor. "Although I couldn't yet put this idea into words, I now believe that what made me so confused and disoriented during my early days in ICU were the first stirrings of another presence inside me," Sylvia writes. "Increasingly, in the months ahead, I would have the feeling that some aspect of my donor's spirit or personality existed within me."

Sylvia reports taking on an affinity for green peppers, something she had never liked before. She also began craving beer and chicken nuggets as well as becoming more masculine in personality and taking an interest in motorcycles. She continued feeling a "presence" with her. "I noticed that I no longer felt lonely, even when I was by myself," she continues her story. "Sometimes I had the feeling that somebody else was in there with me, that in some intangible way, my sense of 'I' had become a kind of 'we.' Although I couldn't always detect this extra presence, at times it almost felt as if a second soul were sharing my body."

Sylvia investigated and found out that her heart came from an 18-year-old male, the victim of a motorcycle accident. She met his family and found out that her new tastes and interests were those of her donor. She interviewed other transplant recipients and found that they also had acquired the interests, traits, and tastes of the donor. One recipient had a great fear of water before her transplant, but after it she had a great desire for swimming and sailing. She found out that her donor had been an avid sailor who died in a boating accident. Another recipient, a born-again Christian, seemed completely out of character when he began cursing and swearing after the transplant. It was discovered that the donor frequently used such vulgar language.

Continuing her investigation, Sylvia interviewed some open-minded scientists, authors, and other experts as to what might account for such experiences. The most logical and scientific explanation seems to be that of "cellular memory." Dr. Paul

Pearsall, a neuropsychologist, discusses this theory at length in his book, *The Heart's Code*. "The donated cells remained energetically and nonlocally connected with their donor and seemed to 'remember' where they came from," Pearsall writes.

Dr. Deepak Chopra also explained it as cellular memory, while popular author Dr. Larry Dossey had several possible explanations for Sylvia, but concluded that the most likely one is that the consciousness of the donor had fundamentally united with the consciousness of the recipient enabling the recipient to gain information from the donor. He wondered if organ recipients are entering into a realm of consciousness where information about another person can be accessed through a "nonlocal mind," more commonly known as the Universal Mind.

Medium James Van Praagh was also asked for his opinion. Sylvia quotes Van Praagh: "Donated organs often come from young people who were killed in car or motorcycle accidents, and who died quickly. Because their spirits often feel they haven't completed their time on earth, they sometimes attach themselves to another person. There may be things that your donor hadn't completed in the physical world, which his spirit still wanted to experience. When this happens, the spirit is caught between two worlds, like the movie, *Ghost*. Sometimes this leads to possession, and sometimes, as in your case, to influences."

As Sylvia does not comment on Van Praagh's theory, it appears that it is the least appealing to her. While she talks about the "gift of life" for herself and other recipients, she also discusses the comfort given to the families of the donors in knowing that parts of their loved ones "live on." In other words, it is a positive situation for both the recipient and the family of the donor, assuming they do not believe the deceased "lives on" in a spirit body. Lost in the discussion, however, is the welfare of the departed soul. Van Praagh's comments can be viewed as a diplomatic way of saying that some of them may be "earthbound" spirits, possibly being held back from advancing "into the light" by the attachment to their physical bodies, including the separated parts.

Dr. Edith Fiore, a clinical psychologist, deals extensively with the subject of spirit possession in her book, *The Unquiet Dead*. From over 20,000 hypnotic regressions, Fiore concluded that various psychological disorders can be caused by spirit possession. "Possession is a relative condition," she writes. "When it is complete, which is rare, the original personality seems to be gone and is replaced by that of the earthbound entity. Usually, there is a vacillating balance between the two; at times, the spirit exerts only slight influence, while at others, he or she can be extremely dominant."

Fiore views the possessing entities as the true patients. "They are suffering greatly, perhaps without even realizing it," she continues. "Virtual prisoners, they are trapped on the earth plane feeling exactly as they did moments before their deaths, which may have occurred decades before. Moreover, they are keeping themselves from being in the spirit world which would offer them a beautiful life and afford them the opportunity to make spiritual progress."

In the majority of cases, Fiore goes on, the possession involves a blending of personalities and is only vaguely perceived, if at all. However, she adds that

possession is always negative. She also mentions that possessions often occur after surgery or during hospitalizations.

"From my clinical experience, I have found several basic explanations for why certain entities remain tied to the material plane rather than completing their transitions to the spiritual world," Fiore writes. "The most usual are ignorance, confusion, fear (especially of going to hell), obsessive attachments to living persons or places, or addictions to drugs, alcohol, smoking, food, or sex. Also, a misguided sense of unfinished business often compels spirits to stay in the physical world."

So what are we to make of all this? Is it possible that bodies are violated before the consciousness actually leaves them, even if there is no brain wave activity or heart beat? Does the donor experience pain from this? Does the spirit of the donor attach itself to the recipient and negatively influence him or her? Is the soul of the donor held earthbound because of its attachment to the recipient? Might we assume that the more spiritually evolved are not at great risk, either as donor or recipient, and that only those grounded in materialism have anything to fear? Is death so bad that we should concern ourselves with extending life a few years?

Fear seems to be a big factor. It is fear of death that prompts the transplant in the first place. It is fear of pain that might prevent an organ donation. There is also fear or concern about holding the donor "earthbound" and the fear that the recipient will be harmed by possession.

Needless to say, the evidence against organ transplants would not be admissible in a court of law, and as previously mentioned, anyone opposing organ transplants would likely be subject to ridicule, scorn, and contempt. The case for organ transplants, the "gift of life," is hard to oppose, unless, of course, we go to the very core of spirituality and view death as the great liberator, even if the person has not lived his or her allotted three score and ten or more. "I do not see that what you call death is a disaster," said Silver Birch when asked about the divine justice involved with people who die prematurely. "To me it is the great hour of freedom for the soul." Since not many people in this day and age of extreme materialism are prepared to appreciate such a philosophy, the case against organ transplants will never be widely heard. Those who are prepared to consider it are probably much more spiritually developed and perhaps would not have the problems discussed here. That is, they should quickly sever the Silver Cord and not be earthbound. Nor should they possess anyone.

Then again, if it is true that Jesus took from Friday afternoon until Sunday to achieve separation, while taking a tour of "hell" during that time, what hope is there that the rest of us can do it instantly?

I certainly don't know what the answer is. I'm glad I am not faced with having to make a decision on being an organ donor.

*This article is abridged and modified from my article that appeared in the July 2001 issue of The Journal of Religion and Psychical Research. The complete article can be found at <http://www.beyondtheveil.net/organs.html>*

