Replacement Parts: The Ethics of Procuring and Replacing Organs in Humans

edited by Arthur L. Caplan, James J. McCartney, and Daniel P. Reid

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Within the realm of modern health care, there has been a great push for patient-centered care that empowers patients to make autonomous decisions about their own medical treatment. It is a multifaceted approach that involves actions ranging from the relatively simple to the more involved. In this process, patients are free to guide their care, even if it has a negative effect on the overall result. Even when they are given such freedom, there are instances when patients, their loved ones, and health care providers cannot advance the course of care. *Replacement Parts* focuses on one such instance. Imagine for a moment, that you are building a house. You have the plans, the land on which to build, and engineers, carpenters, and plumbers ready to begin the work. Yet the house remains nothing more than a hopeful idea on paper because of a shortage of supplies. Such is the current state of organ transplantation. Even when a patient has given consent to surgical replacement, if the organ is in short supply, the treatment cannot move forward until a compatible organ is obtained. In the attempt to seek out methods of increasing the supply of viable organs, one is forced to open a Pandora's Box of sorts, which is filled with ethical and moral questions addressing the methods by which organs are obtained, to which patients they are distributed, and even the very concept of death itself.

The authors of *Replacement Parts* investigate these ethical issues surrounding organ transplantation in order to better understand why the shortage exists and to find solutions that may increase the supply while still maintaining ethical integrity.

The variety of contributors keeps the subject material fresh for the reader by offering different philosophies and opinions on organ donation and transplantation. If the issue of organ shortage were simple to address, there would not be a need for so much research and conjecture. If it were easy to remedy, every person on every transplant list in every country would receive a perfect organ. This is, of course, not the case. When many minds work together to solve a problem, especially one that carries great moral weight, it is easier to reach a general consensus or, at the very least, a better understanding of all of the factors involved in the process. Examining, comparing, and contrasting these philosophies with one another enhances the depth of the topic, helps the reader to develop a multifaceted perspective, and engages him in the authors' purpose.

The book is written in a way that is useful to both curious readers and those seeking a starting point for further research into the ethics related to organ donation and transplantation. Each part of the book concentrates on a particular topic and contains multiple chapters that focus on individual issues or perspectives. All of this makes it relatively simple to sift through the material if the reader is interested in a particular subject or author. For readers who like to do additional research, each chapter has a respectable list of sources at the end. Not only do they serve as an excellent point of reference, but they also might provide the reader with more insight into how the author formed his view on the topic at hand.

The subject matter of the book, while interesting, can sometimes be difficult. This is not necessarily because the subject of organ donation is hard to grasp, but because the topic can be rather heavy at times. In the opening paragraphs of the introduction, Arthur Caplan states, "Many people are loath to contemplate their own death, much less make plans for the dispositions of their bodies" (xiii). Plenty of statistical evidence backs this claim. One only needs to look at a study published in the *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*, which shows that only a quarter of American adults have an advance directive.[1] While obtaining an advance directive is not difficult, relatively speaking, thinking about one's personal wishes in the event of a health care crisis can be challenging. If contemplating things like illness and death are difficult for the average reader, then *Replacement Parts* may prove to be an arduous or slow read. This may not necessarily be a bad thing. On the contrary, it can help the reader put end-of-life issues in perspective and open a dialogue with his family and health care providers. The goal of the book is not to frighten readers away from a discourse on their personal health but rather to give them an opportunity to affirm their personhood and develop their own personal philosophies on organ donation and end-of-life care. Indeed, by the end of the book, I had quite a bit to think about regarding the issues involved in organ transplantation. The shortage of viable organs is by no means a one-dimensional problem. A true and in-depth dialogue requires one to ask many questions about what it means to live and what it means to die. One is forced to consider when both death and the appropriate moment to harvest organs for transplantation occur. One must consider the costs, benefits, and risks of organ transplantation as well as the recipient's long-term quality of life. *Replacement Parts* fearlessly acknowledges these thoughts through an excellent collaborative effort.

Katherine Feiler

Katherine Feiler is a nursing student at Baylor University in Waco, Texas.

1. Jaya K. Rao et al., "Completion of Advance Directives among U.S. Consumers," *American Journal of Preventive Medicine* 46.1 (January 2014): 65–70, doi: 10.1016/j.amepre.2013.09.008.

Relational Sociology: A New Paradigm for the Social Sciences

by Pierpaolo Donati

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Postmodernity versus After-Modernity

Many years ago, I took our son, aged a little over one year, on a round-the-world trip to acquaint him with his Scots–English grandmother on one side and his Jaffna Tamil grandmother on the other. We traveled by ocean liner, which in those days was not a floating hotel but a sleek ship designed to get you from one destination to another. As we neared the port of Bombay where we would disembark, I became aware of a divide among the passengers. It was not so much that some were getting off the ship while others were sailing on to Australia. There was a deeper divide between those who lived entirely in the developed world, those who had both feet in the so-called underdeveloped world, and those like myself with one foot in each. I have since come to appreciate that the contrast between developed and underdeveloped obscures a richness and variety of culture beyond the simple economic label coined by the West.

Since that time, I have often been struck by the huge transition challenging those who arrive in the Western world from ancestral villages that do not have electricity or running water. Yet the reverse is rarely true, since