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## The President's Page: The Artificial Heart

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## President's Page . . .



DR. O'LOUGHLIN

### THE ARTIFICIAL HEART

The forthcoming program of the AMA Committee on **Medicine and Religion** carries the above title as one of the main topics for discussion on **Sunday evening at 8:15** in the **Masonic Memorial Temple, 1111 California Street, San Francisco**. The **Reverend Paul McCleave** will have Professors **Vincent Collins, M.D.** of Chicago; **Howard Lewis, M.D.** of Oregon; **Francis Moore, M.D.** of Harvard; and **Jack Provonsha, PhD** of Loma Linda discuss Hearts, Machines, and Human Experimentation. It will be an excellent program and all members are urged to attend **following the Gerald Kelly Lecture** at the Drake Hotel which will be given by **Dr. J. Engelbert Dunphy, Professor of Surgery**, at U.C. San Francisco. The sincerity and genuine concern welling from the hearts of these professors may contrast sharply with the comments of other colleagues responding to public queries and to the investigations of Senator Walter Mondale (Democrat, Minnesota) and his Commission on Ethical and Social Implications of Health Science Research and Development. Some of those published seem to come from an Artificial Heart.

Moral Philosophy or Ethics should be as advanced as transplant techniques, and perhaps they are. After all, the technique *was* first successfully employed in 1905 by Alexis Carrell. But the moral climate has changed. The public, stimulated by instant medical reporting, seems ready for almost any medical maneuver. Seven Los Angeles Hospitals have united to form a "Transplant Pool" intended to facilitate the "harvesting and exchange" of organs. The terms of Commerce may be appropriate to the inevitable discussions of distributive justice. Will availability of organs be on the basis of highest bidder? First come - first served? Or will someone decide who is most worthy of life?

E. J. Younger, the district attorney of Los Angeles County, has asked assistance of a committee headed by Lee Dubridge, President of Caltech, in solving moral and legal problems raised by organ transplantation. Questions which bother the D.A. are: (1) Should the present law, which says that if a doctor removes a donor's beating heart, he "murders" the donor, be changed to permit this under certain controlled circumstances, and what should these circumstances be? (2)

Can new guidelines be made for determining the moment of death and could these guidelines be incorporated into a statute to protect the public interest and be satisfactory to both the legal and medical professions? (3) Who may, and under what circumstances, consent to give his heart or liver to another? Can a minor give this consent over the objection of parents or guardian? (4) Who shall determine priority of prospective donees and should the state participate in the decision? (5) Who should be permitted to perform vital organ transplants? Should there be a minimum requirement so far as experience and facilities are concerned?

A mother in England has proposed that her mentally defective daughter's organs be used as transplants "to enable another unfortunate child to enjoy a normal life." Regarding protection of patients, Werner Forrsmann, Nobel Laureate asks "Where is safety against ambition and wantonness, weakness of character and pursuit of fame guaranteed?" Medical opinion today is divided upon the part transplantation as a mode of therapy. The National Academy of Sciences Board of Medicine calls heart transplantation an investigation to be conducted with greatest care and with equal concern for ethical principles. What ethical principles?

It is time to rethink and restate our Christian ethic. Simply dusting off "Summa Theologica" won't answer Senator Mondale's current questions on what is life? Who shall live? What is death? Who shall die? Whose genes need altering and why? How far should we go in constructing artificial life? I think an enlightened, most conciliatory, relevant approach should be made to today's ethical problems. They won't go away. This journal would be an appropriate forum. I hope that knowledgeable people take up the challenge and the example of Father Finch (see this issue) and the editors of the recent Ciba Symposium on Medical Ethics.

B. J. O'Loughlin, M.D.

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