

THE SECOND CHANCE OF LIFE IN THE LIGHT OF PSYCHOLOGY OF RELIGION

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Abstract

As we know the hearts of people and animals are opposed to each other in terms of genetic and psychological characteristics they are demarcated to some extent. The human heart is the focal point of consciousness and an important piece when conducting psychological-religious research because the religious behavior has a special place in the heart, which is easily proven by the advanced spiritual life of humans. But today we are talking about humans with pig-hearts that had been genetically modified. In this specific article, I would like to provide some thoughts about the transplantation of a pig-heart into a human being in the light of Psychology of Religion and some bioethical consequences.

Keywords: Faith, Psychology, Religion, ethics, pig-heart, transplantation.

Introduction

As we know, in all the front pages of the newspapers and all the scientific articles in bold, they wrote about the first successful transplant on a man, David Bennett, 57 years old, that received a pig-heart that had been genetically modified, in Baltimore, Maryland U.S.A on 7 January 2022 (Wilson, 2022). He has one last will before the miracle happens, and it was “I want to live”. Probably behind those words, “Lord, give me one more chance to dedicate my life to you”. Religious behavior is influenced by the interaction between nature and nurture, which means that Genetics, like any other behavior, is studied by psychologists (Tix, 2017). We cannot deny the challenges and the good news that we are witnessing today from a secular and technological development perspective, but we must also not forget that they are closely related to other scientific, psychological, ethical, religious, and spiritual areas. Many questions flood our minds in the field of Psychology of Religion, such as: Is there an effect on the person’s psycho-spiritual behavior after a genetically modified animal heart transplant? What is the religious and psychological position of the human being with a genetically modified pig-heart? Is the heart the center of love literally, or metaphorically? What is the position of religion on the acceptance of animal organs for human use? Will the person acquire new feelings and new kinds of unconsciousness (e.g., Bad dreams) and what is the solution if yes? We will try to answer some of these questions.

Ethic and Religiousness

What is the religious and psychological position of the human being with a genetically modified pig-heart? Since Bishop Luke successfully performed the world's first kidney transplantation from an animal (calf) to the man at the hospital of Yeniseysk (Baloyannis, 2015), this concludes that there is a positive attitude from the religious perspective. About the first successful transplant on a man that received a pig-heart: The Christian Medical Fellowship (CMF) in the UK welcomed

the news about the man who receive a genetically modified first pig-heart surgery. On the other hand, The Christian Medical Fellowship of the UK said it did not imply bioethical problems (Kelly, 2022). Mark Pickering, Chief Executive Officer at the Christian Medical Fellowship (CMF), said “we are on the right side of the line” because in this case there was no modification of the human’s DNA (Pickering, 2022). Dr. Said Moshe Friedman (Chief Rabbi in London): The main concern in Jewish law is the preservation of human life, since organ transplantation provides the greatest chance of survival, the Jewish patient will be obligated to accept a transplant from an animal. In Islam, there is a similar basis, that the use of pig organs is permissible if it saves human life (Hunter, 2022). Islam has forbidden eating pork as mentioned in the Holy Quran in 4 verses, but it did not prohibit the use of the member of pig-heart to transplant to a human being.

Since the current Christian Orthodox Church’s position on organ donation, it should be a last choice for the affected person, and the goal should be to prolong and save the person's life in the foreground. Also, for the Orthodox Church, the heart has a deep theological meaning (THE HOLY SYNOD, 2006). The role of the Church that is followed is to allow and encourage open dialogue that is guided by the Holy Spirit, by the wisdom of the Bible, and the tradition of the Church because the mission of the churches is to help the faithful to assume their responsibilities individually and as a group of believers (Byk, 2007). Saint Basil the Great, as he acknowledged the necessity to use medicine in the treatment of diseases, said that this is a tool that God presents to physicians to enable them for treatment of people. But we must take great care in the use of medical technology, if necessary, not to make us fully responsible for our health condition or disease. To touch on the basic understanding of what humans should be and what our relationship with God (Cole-Turner, 2001). Also, the Orthodox Church goal is not to impose rules, regulations, and prohibitions on our lives, but to establish a standard that leads to knowledge of the truth into freedom (Hatzinikolaou, 2008).

The role of health professionals should be practiced by belief-based values because these cultural values (Potential sources of moral purpose and individual force in health care) have an impact on the patient in many aspects and diversely. Also, it is important for maintaining the patient's values without conflicting with them, whether they are based on a spiritual or atheistic view (Kørup, et al., 2020).

Heart

As we know the function of the heart is to push the blood through the blood vessels to supply the body with oxygen (Staff, 2020). Yang Luhan known as “Gene Scissors” is a true scholar who graduated from Peking University-Harvard. He tells us that there are two major risks in transplanting pig organs into humans: on the one hand, pig genes carry endogenous retroviruses (PERVs) themselves, and on the other hand, pig organs will produce rejection in humans. Yang Luhan's team successfully used CRISPR-Cas9 “gene scissors” technology to inactivate disease-causing genes in pig cells (Niu, et al., 2017).

First, we must research the concept of the heart in Psychology and religious fieldwork. The heart retains a kind of ‘memory’ (Cirillo, 2018), also known as the Chatterjee phenomenon (Ballet, Mulleman, & Vandermotte, 2021). The heart has two kinds of memories short- or long-term memory (Zoghi, 2004). So, after the heart transplant from a genetically modified animal to a human, does the person acquire new feelings and new kinds of his mentality? If yes, then the heart should be understood as the seat of our deepest feelings, by which man expresses himself to the world, his fellowmen, and God, as we can see in the prayer mentioned in Psalm 51:10 *“Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me.”* (Bible, 1975). Ultimately, is the

heart the center of love literally or metaphorically? The Bible says, “*‘you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind,’ and ‘your neighbor as yourself’*” (Bible, 1975, p. Luke 10:27). So, the Bible proves that love has a place in the memory of the human heart. And we find this in many writings of the great Saints and Ascetics of the East, such as St. Gregory Palamas and St. Nicodemus of Mount Athos. But what is the religious stance of the person with the heart from a genetically modified animal? The spontaneous heartbeat of the fetus before the formation of the brain, and the continuation of the pulse after brain death incline us to infer that from a psychological perspective, the human heart is recognized (with all its inward and outward appearance, width, depth, and height) as the focal point of consciousness (Edwards, 2015).

Belief and Faith

Referring to religiousness, I imply both religious beliefs and faiths. Beliefs are our brain’s way of understanding our complex world (Lewis, 2018). S. Freud said that religion is the unconscious mind to fulfill desires (Cherry, 2020). In the Bible (Romans 10:9-10) it is said that “*if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.*” (Bible, 1975). We conclude from it that faith has a close relationship with the heart. Yes, it’s been about the “degrees of faith” when Jesus Christ, as Bible mentions, said to the woman, in 7:50 Luke: “*Your faith has saved you. Go in peace.*” (Bible, 1975). Also, in Bible of James 5:15 said, “*And the prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven.*” (Bible, 1975), and in Epistle Paul to the Hebrews 10:35 said, “*Therefore do not cast away your confidence, which has great reward.*” (Bible, 1975). But, perhaps, some say that faith is identified with placebo or suggestion. Authentic religious faith (intrinsic religiosity) neither deceives nor blackmails directly or indirectly, but functions freely.

Some clinicians have a lot to talk about faith, spirituality, and the unspeakable issues inside of human existence especially at the time of operations. For instance, Dr. A. Newberg of Jefferson Hospital, Philadelphia says that prayer is not a cure for cancer, but it can be just as important as science in helping patients recover (Newberg, 2014). In reference to the religious participation with patients from a religious point of view firstly the private prayer should be being become by the practitioner for the well-being of their patients and an appropriate expression of sympathy. Secondly, faith should be being shared between the practitioner and the patient for a psycho-spiritual helping (Foreman, 2018). Generally, three basic techniques, there have demonstrated the advantage of having a Christian-bioethical conversation: (1) Listening from central self and relational features, (2) linking to core story themes and values, and (3) leaning into critical personality styles (Greggo, 2010).

We should also mention that psychologists evaluate people after transplants. Psychological researchers study factors that help patients live longer (Novotney, 2011). It is important to know that psychologists are not only working to reduce the death rate, but also looking in-depth at how negative psychological situations affect the blood vessels and the heart (Saucy, 2013). It is often difficult to adapt to a new lifestyle after the transplantation of a body organ, but Psychology has proven experienced in psychotherapeutic intervention. Psychologists can identify relative strengths and weaknesses that could form the basis of a therapeutic intervention (Enright, Robert, DeLeon, Sciara, & Tanney, 1990).

Finally, belief can continuously call for a holistic view of the person and society. Medicine on the other hand can offer correction by highlighting particularly the body and the emotion as well as the spiritual elements of man. Especially, Christian Belief emphasizes the fact that the salvific victory of Christ became not only on human sin, but also on human suffering, pain, and death (Mahoney, 1984).

Faith healings (Miracles)

Speaking about religious faith with regards to medical treatments, we have to turn to religious miracles. A miracle is a supernatural agent, and it is a psychological process (Paloutzian, Rogers, Swenson, & Lowe, 2008). Since heart failure is responsible for the low oxygen that causes the death of brain cells, this means that returning the heart to work after stopping is a miracle (Lembo, 2014). The miracle is closely related to the degree of faith that emanates from the heart. So, belief in miracles gives spiritual meaning to people when their lives are in danger. Even doctors believe in miracles, so it is compulsory to include the clergy as part of the treatment team. And we should not underestimate or debase the tool of hope (Sreenivasan & Weinberger, 2017). Miracles are also strongly and positively linked to life satisfaction and stress relief (Nicolette, 2013). Sometimes the miracle does not come directly from God to the humans, but the flame of healing appears through the degree of faith in the name of God. The religious traditions were listened to precisely because religion is associated with a set of ideas about human relations and destiny, and traditions can be relied upon and reinterpreted (Lammers, 1996).

Is there an effect on the person after a genetically modified animal heart transplant on his spiritual behavior?

It's too early to predict on the psycho - spiritual behavior of the person after the first genetically modified animal heart transplant, so if we are interested in achieving fruitful results, first we have to make religious-psychological research on the person who received the new heart. Dr. Bartley Griffith, the director of the cardiac transplant program at the medical center, said, "It creates the pulse, it creates the pressure, it is his heart" (Rabin, 2022), this is the first evidence that shows the new heart is united with the human body and the person becomes the owner of it. It is expected that the psychological symptoms of the sick person after the transplantation will become like other psychological problems. Therefore, psychological and religious faculties must develop methods to make people with a genetically modified heart not feel psychologically weak accept reality, and feel that they are human like the rest without any discrimination.

Conclusions

Undoubtedly, there is a close connection between the heart and faith. Religion has a major role in influencing the human heart in terms of psychological, spiritual, and therapeutic aspects. This means that we must not neglect the effective role of religion in medicine, especially from the perspective of the heart (see *Cardiopsychology, Cardiotheology*), because the heart has a deep spiritual meaning and is the one that nourishes anyhow the body. The use of a genetically modified pig's heart, from the perspective of religious-psychological Psychology does not conflict with religion because it does not modify the DNA of a human being. It is necessary to benefit from any of the medical developments that help the person to live for a longer period.

Summary

Using the religious-psychological research and studies field, besides the developed medical skills, can make a fundamental change in the rules to extend the lives of thousands of people. The human body carries a "spirit magnetic field", and human organs carry a "spiritual awareness" After a successful transplant on a man that receives a pig-heart, there is likely to be an impact on a person's spirit and safety. The heart is not just an organ that supplies the body with food (blood), but it is part of our memory, actions, and awareness.

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