

# Book Reviews

**Twice Dead: Organ Transplants and the Reinvention of Death**, by Margaret Lock, 441 pp, paperback, \$25.95, ISBN 0-520-22814-6, University of California Press, Berkeley, Calif., 2001.

If you think the only certain things in life are death and taxes, this book will have you rethink the certainty of the former, particularly with regard to the diagnosis of brain death.

What is the definition of death? Is it a moment or a process? Can death be defined as “death of the person,” “neocortical death,” or irreversible brain damage? Is brain death really death?

These questions permeate this comprehensive, multifaceted discussion of brain death and organ transplantation. The author is a cultural anthropologist who has researched this subject extensively in Japan, Canada, and the United States. She contrasts the intense public debate in Japan, and its reluctance to accept brain death, with the relative ease of acceptance in North America and Europe. The concept of a dead person in a living body is a radical departure from traditional thought, and difficult for the average person to understand, yet it has been adopted in the U.S. without much public resistance.

The author presents the historical, legal and medical background of this “new death” as a consequence of the medical technology of artificial ventilation, but brain death was primarily a medical-legal construct to facilitate organ transplantation, which requires that vital organs be perfused in a living body just before harvesting.

How did this new form of death and the harvesting of human organs become simply a utilitarian medical exchange of body parts? Lock writes of the “commodification” of human organs. They are transformed into objects of value desired by those in dire need of them; however, there is no monetary exchange except for those organs that might be obtained from countries where the process of procurement may be questionable.

Brain death does not necessarily mean the brain is biologically dead. Total necrosis of brain cells is not observed at post-mortem. A neuropathologist cannot confirm the diagnosis of brain death.<sup>1</sup> The clinical criteria of brain death, if assessed correctly, can predict irreversible loss of

consciousness and eventual cardiovascular collapse. Making the diagnosis of brain death requires specialized medical criteria that may be variably established with varying degrees of clinical expertise, and it is quite outside the verification process of the average person. In contrast, the average person can certainly recognize a non-breathing, cold, lifeless dead body. Therefore, this new death had to be accepted on faith and trust in medical professionals. The lack of such trust, owing to highly publicized medical scandals, is one of the main reasons for Japanese reluctance to accept brain death as death.

The absence of objection from legal and religious institutions in the West helped pave the way for routine organ procurement from those diagnosed as brain dead. In Japan, the legal profession had opposed this practice. The historical evolution of Western medicine, with its foundation in anatomy and vivisection, differs from the traditional Eastern philosophy of medicine, which adopted Western medicine secondarily. Additionally, Lock explains that the “seductive metaphor” of the “gift of life,” which may work in the West, is lost in translation in Japan, which doesn’t have a tradition of giving anything of value to strangers.

There are ambiguities in recognizing and accepting brain death as legal human death. How should we regard the interim status of a human body between brain death and organ harvest? As a “living cadaver,” a “neomort,” a “machine-human hybrid,” or a “heart-beating cadaver”? The very title of the book illustrates the difficulty: there is the first death, the confirmation of the diagnosis of brain death, and then the more obvious second death, when the heart stops (even though it can be resuscitated when transplanted). Thus, a brain dead person dies twice.

Lock concludes that the term “brain death” should be dropped, and that a state of irreversible consciousness with permanent loss of breathing should be regarded as the “death of the person,” recognizing that biological death is inevitable. It’s not clear to me, however, that changing “brain death” to “death of the person” would ease the angst of organ procurement, which results in cardiac death as a result of harvesting organs. Japan has in some ways come to grips with this ambiguity by

documenting the times of *both* deaths of an individual who is an organ donor.

This book is written in a scholarly, academic style and is not exactly leisurely reading. It’s an excellent textbook for a bioethics course. It should be read by anyone involved in organ procurement or transplantation, those who serve on hospital ethics committees, physicians who have to diagnose “brain death,” or any medical professional who has to explain brain death and organ procurement to a patient’s family.

Considering all of the complexities and controversies involved, and the fact that there has been no real education or general public debate concerning brain death and the reality of the process of organ procurement in this country, one could raise the question of whether the average person who signs an organ donor card, or family members who give permission at a time of an extreme emotional tragedy of loss of a loved one, are making decisions based on sufficient informed consent.

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<sup>1</sup> Widjicks EFM, Pfeifer EA. Neuropathology of brain death in the modern transplant era. *Neurology* 2008;70:1234-1237.

**Unhinged: Exposing Liberals Gone Wild**, by Michelle Malkin, 256 pages, hardcover, \$18.45, ISBN-13: 978-0895260307, Regnery Publishing, Washington, D.C., 2005.

The opening volley of *Unhinged* asserts that “The American Left is unwell,” and the following 231 pages leave the reader wondering whether the object term isn’t oxymoronic.

The proposition depicts its target, the poisonous vituperative ultra-Left, as the monster in *Alien*, a parasite bursting and clawing its way from the heretofore respectable belly of the Democratic Party. Malkin isn’t any more shy with her metaphorical paintballs than she is with the faithful reproduction of the violent and pornographic splatter of sentiments hurled her way by her purportedly tolerant critics.

The title captures the core mission of the work, to document the rise of rhetorical and physical violence against mainstream conservatism as an expression of a very

dangerous psychosis. This derangement begins in the Introduction with a description of the aptly named PEST Syndrome (Post-Election Selection Trauma). It is hilarious to learn that many liberals, both celebrity and common, sought the services of mental health professionals for the emotional and physical aches they suffered following the 2004 reelection of George W. Bush, and that these problems were themselves defined by a new ailment that afflicts only the Left.

Chapter titles range from assertive (“the Party of Paranoia”), to the humorous (“Campus Moonbats on Parade”), to the downright heartbreaking (“You Are One Sick Gook”; “Assassination Fascination”). Undecided, nonpartisan readers venturing into this book will be left wondering whether the examples offered and trends suggested within are, well, real, so brutal is the anti-intellectual primitivism documented in 37 pages of footnotes covering all imaginable media sources.

Though author Malkin illustrates the mind of the unbalanced liberal convincingly, the reader is left to discern for himself the “why” that would drive citizens into such frothiness. The book shows a graphic photograph of the wreck, with little or no explanation as to its cause. The cases presented argue the existence of a resurgent counter-culture that is, if still a minority, disturbingly pervasive. I was a kid in the days of the Woodstock wooly-heads, whose cool tunes and brightly colored mod aesthetic still seem to airbrush the jagged edges of their excesses like the Berkeley Free Speech lunacy and the Weather Underground terrorists.

And maybe it is just that—that today’s crazies have lousy music and more bland fashion sense, but there is still a 1968 feel to the whole phenomenon. Somewhere between learning of paid Democrat staffers arrested for slashing the tires of 20 GOP vans in a vote-suppression attempt (two of them the adult children of a Wisconsin Democrat congresswoman and mayor, respectively), and Cameron Diaz’s assertion that a George W. Bush reelection would legalize rape, the reader starts to feel awash in the surreal.

Are we still in America? Did Walter Cronkite really claim that Karl Rove was working with Osama bin Laden to help the Republicans? A feeling of being caught in a science fiction movie, one of those grand post-apocalyptic gems, is pervasive.

The reader opens the space capsule hatch somewhere between “When Angry Democrats Attack” and “The Hollywood Walk of Hate” to find that the rules have flipped in the hostile world to which he has been transported. The violence threatened to campus military recruiters, insults bombarding the grieving families of dead servicemen, the hoots to drown out David

Horowitz, the pies thrown onstage at Ann Coulter, and the attempted vehicular homicide of GOP congresswoman Katherine Harris by activist Democrat Barry Seltzer all warn the reader and would-be conservative that any—any—means justify the ends.

Apparently, behavior in line with the media template does not trigger outrage. Where was the press coverage of Air America’s radio hostess Randi Rhodes for advocating the assassination i.e. murder of a U.S. president? It is not news, of course, if it is the proper target according to the media.

Several years ago conservative talk-radio host Laura Ingraham made public her diagnosis of breast cancer, to the delight and celebration of wacko liberal bloggers, who themselves were upbraided publicly by none other than Elizabeth Edwards, wife of former Senator John Edwards. Mrs. Edwards is herself now dying of breast cancer. It was to her great credit that she chastised the politicization of an individual human crisis, and to Malkin’s credit that she recorded this act of decency.

What would be the media response if, horribly, right-wing wackos who disagreed with her husband used Mrs. Edwards’s suffering as their own bonfire around which to prance? It would of course become iconic of an evil Republican Party.

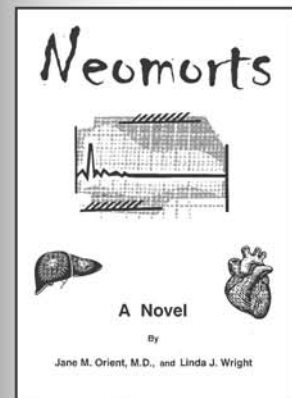
Malkin’s book is very obviously the product of a well-known right-wing commentator, but she does not push policy or politics. There are no calls to invade Iran, reduce the capital gains tax, or ban Rosie O’Donnell from public life. The argument is that the idea of free American discourse available to all citizens, regardless of point of view, is under very real assault far beyond complaining about Fox News.

Is *Unhinged* reliable, indeed authentic? Two points argue so. There has been no mainstream Democrat or media, if you will pardon the redundancy, refutation or denunciation. If Malkin is wrong in her premises, supporting arguments, and evidence, then this book screams challenges for anyone to step forward and say so. And while there are plenty of books from the Left attacking every conservative point and action, there have been no convincing works showing widespread, right-wing-sponsored speech suppression or threats of violence. If there were, they would be well known, garnering widespread free press “advertising,” which *Unhinged* shall never see.

While Malkin’s work is informative for anyone of any persuasion, it may not reach far beyond the choir. She shows how tolerance is running a little short in Democrat circles for anything that contradicts their self-described compassionate worldview. Moderates or others with views loosely held will likely not have the stomach for the awful realities

## Neomorts: A Medical Thriller

“For those who enjoy a medical thriller with freedom at its heart, you don’t want to miss this one.”  
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In the early part of the twenty-first century, the Federal Transplant Registry has made great strides in making organ transplants available to all who need them...

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demonstrated by the grotesque blogger language faithfully reproduced here. This is good evidence, very good, and likely to be ignored by those who most need to acknowledge it.

Malkin's summary is that the "Left Wing Loons" and "Campus Moonbats" must first admit that they have a problem, which is good advice. Left unsaid is what to do if they don't admit it.

The Leftists' awful actions are laid out so repetitively that the book is better read in short bursts. Malkin is long on anecdote and implication, and a little skimpy on underlying philosophy and solutions.

Emerging from the space capsule of (presumed) reasoned debate and polite elections, the reader enters the world of *Unhinged* to find a weird, desolate landscape defying all presumptions. We find a post-apocalypse of the mind where our kind are hunted merely for being, rounded up as a threat to the growing dominant class.

If the villains in *Unhinged* are not forcefully, if not forcibly confronted, the reader may soon fear the loss of his voice. And like Charlton Heston in the 1968 film *Planet of the Apes*, he may find his opinions bound behind him by acceptable convention, looking up at the encircling primitives, and yelling, "Take your hands off me you damned dirty apes!" By then however the news won't get out. Dr. Zaius will have replaced Katy Couric as news anchor if he missed the Supreme Court, and Cornelius and Zira will have lost their posts over protests against their insensitivity toward the gorillas.

Read *Unhinged* and enjoy it. Laugh at the stupidity of the unwell Left, but think on what you would do if they decided to cast their baleful gaze your way.

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**Power to the People**, by Laura Ingraham, 372 pp, hardback, \$27.95, ISBN-10:159698516x, ISBN-13:978-1596985162, Washington D.C., Regnery Publishing, 2007.

When I first observed the title of this book, *Power to the People*, I found it to be somewhat alarming. I wondered whether the author, Laura Ingraham, had joined the other side.

I knew that she was an outstanding conservative radio talk-show host, but to me the title sounded like one of those same tired Leftist slogans that our country has been laboring under for the past 30 years or so, and with horrible consequences. Any concerns on my part were quickly dispelled when I read her introduction. She has given

this slogan a positive rather than a negative connotation. She wants to return "real power" to the people. She writes, "Real power is not power over others as is the case with liberal elitists—it's the power to live our lives and raise our families in the manner we believe is best."

*Power to the People* is a powerful and well-documented book that contains many excellent substantiating quotations. Ingraham has not only captured the problems that this country faces, but she suggests reasonable solutions. She addresses with extreme clarity our big government, our elitist liberal media, our vanishing patriotism, our complacency, our border debacle, our "pornified culture," our activist judges, our ineffective schools, our "science trumps all world view," and our inappropriate position on separation of church and state. She calls the reader's attention to the importance of the traditional family.

She is a true patriot and unapologetically points out that she is a Christian. She feels that our country is losing its soul, and that "if we lose faith in God, it will be very difficult to keep faith with our duty to defend America, from without and within." If this book is any example, she is obviously not going to idly watch this country continue to be destroyed by the actions of the Left or liberal elitists. She states that this is no time for relativism.

Ingraham calls on dedicated Americans to regain through self-sacrifice what this country has lost. She extols the value of talk radio and the Internet in this quest.

Her witty and clear writing style makes reading this book very enjoyable. I particularly appreciated the last two sentences where she states, "God has given me a second chance. I hope I am worthy of it." Her recent battle with breast cancer has obviously had a profound influence on her life, and she plans to make a difference.

It is my hope that the vast majority of Americans will read this book, and that they will appreciate its message. It appears that this country is drowning in a sea of ineptitude and depravity, and that the author has tossed us a lifeline. The only question is whether or not America will grab it. This book is excellent and very timely.

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**Mises: the Last Knight of Liberalism**, by Gorg Guido Hulsmann, 1,143 pp, hardcover, \$43, ISBN 978-1-933550-18-3, Auburn, Ala., Ludwig von Mises Institute, 2007.

*Do not give in to evil, but proceed ever more boldly against it.*

—Virgil

*Whoever wishes peace among peoples must fight statism.*

—Mises

This is the definitive biography of Ludwig Heinrich Edler von Mises, who was born in Vienna in 1881 and died in New York City in 1973. He was one of the great minds of Western Civilization and a creative genius, who transformed the science of economics by offering a new way of looking at social processes and relationships.

This is also the story of the important conflict of our age—the conflict between liberty and the state, between economic freedom as represented by the market economy and totalitarian government omnipotence as represented by socialism—the conflict between good and evil.

The development and practical application of the new discipline of economic science was, according to Mises, the most spectacular event of modern history. "The great ideological movement that started with the Renaissance, continued in the Enlightenment, and in the nineteenth century culminated in Liberalism produced both capitalism...and its political corollary...representative government."

Economics had been advanced by classical figures such as Hume, Smith, Ricardo, Say, and Bastiat. It was transformed by Carl Menger with his new subjective theory of value and prices. This new Austrian economics was to become the scientific cornerstone of an entire worldview in which peace, cooperation, and tolerance were supreme.

Carl Menger, founder of the Austrian school, changed economic science from just the study of visible economic phenomena such as prices, money, and production, to the study of how these phenomena were caused by the interaction between human ideas and an environment of limited resources, in order to satisfy human needs.

The prevailing classical economists' idea that prices are determined by "objective" characteristics of goods, such as their costs of production, was wrong, Menger said. He introduced the concept of marginal analysis. Prices result from buyers and sellers choosing goods and services guided by their own subjective evaluations (marginal utility). In other words, he explained the real-world actions of real people. Eugen von Bohm-Bawerk, Mises, and Friedrich Hayek would further develop these ideas.

Before 1904, Mises and everyone he knew shared the fundamental conviction that government intervention is inherently beneficial, while the free market is only accidentally so at best. Then Mises read

Menger's *Principles of Economics*, which fundamentally changed his outlook on the analysis of social problems, and gave him the insight that free enterprise and the voluntary association of individuals is superior to the coercive schemes of the state. The market is inherently beneficial, not accidentally so, and individual consumer values, via spending decisions, steer the entire market system; capitalist-entrepreneurs merely carry out their wishes. Any government intervention will disrupt the order of the market. It has been compared to fighting disease by torturing the patient.

Mises showed that all economic systems can be categorized into three classes: capitalism, socialism, and interventionism. The primary distinction is between a social order based on private property, which works, and those social orders that depend on infringements of private property rights, which do not work.

Capitalism is a system of division of labor based on private ownership of the means of production, which allows the cooperation of many different individuals based on respect for existing property rights. It is the only rational, productive economic order, since all others squander resources and destroy wealth. Whether you like it or hate it, nothing else can possibly take its place.

Socialism, on the other hand, according to Mises, "is not the pioneer of a better and finer world, but the spoiler of what thousands of years of civilization have created. It does not build; it destroys. For destruction is the essence of it. It produces nothing, it only consumes what the social order based on private ownership in the means of production has created...."

Mises dethroned socialism as a policy ideal in 1920, when he showed that economic calculation is impossible in the socialist commonwealth. Only in the market economy, where private property rights are protected, is there an arithmetic unit—price—that allows for the calculated use of factors of production. Socialist regimes lack such a unit: this is their fatal flaw. Mises's ideas, published in *Socialism* in 1921, transformed Germany's intellectual landscape through the 1920s, but soon Adolph Hitler rose to power. Mises narrowly escaped to the West, arriving in New York City in 1940.

In the land of the free, "the very cradle of radical *laissez-faire* policies," the philosophy of the Founding Fathers of the American republic was all but dead in 1940. Everyone believed that capitalism and private enterprise must be replaced with more government intervention, and that American capitalism was now doomed.

But by the late 1940s Mises was well integrated into an emerging network of American libertarians. The publication of

*Human Action* in 1949 was a success without precedent. It increased his prominence and impact overnight. This was paralleled during the next decade only by Ayn Rand's *Atlas Shrugged*. It was Mises's *Human Action* that inspired Rand's politically incorrect defense of individualism and capitalism, with her books such as *Capitalism—The Unknown Ideal* and *The Virtue of Selfishness*.

Economic knowledge, Mises thought, necessarily leads to liberalism. The truths of economics, like those of medical ethics, are universal and do not depend on circumstances of time and place. As Mises warns, if men "disregard its teachings and warnings, they will not annul economics; they will stamp out society and the human race."

The single most important factor that has the power to rob people's freedom is tyrannical public opinion. This is the basis for today's disastrously destructive popular culture. It is why Mises insisted that to learn economics is every citizen's "primary civic duty." Economics is "the philosophy of human life and action and concerns everybody and everything."

So, learning economics is our order of the day. Read *Mises: The Last Knight of Liberalism*. Hulsmann makes it interesting and easy, and you will learn about praxeology (or catalactics), the science of human action. It will enhance your pursuit of wealth, freedom, and happiness.

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**The Criminalization of Medicine: America's War on Doctors**, by Ronald T. Libby, 209 pp, hardback, \$49.95, ISBN: 978-0-313-34546-3, Westport, Conn., Praeger, 2008.

It is only fair to warn you that reading this book is a very painful experience. Any illusions you have about America as a land of liberty and justice for all will be shattered. If you feel safe because of your outstanding medical skills, years of selfless service, financial resources, esteemed position in the community, unblemished record, or ability to supply an urgent community need, you are deceiving yourself.

AAPS members will have read about many of the shocking cases, of excellent physicians whose careers and lives were ruined by unfounded criminal prosecutions, in *AAPS News*: Patsy Vargo, Jeffrey Rutgard, James Graves, William Hurwitz, Charles Thomas Sell, Benjamin Moore, Frank Fisher, Luke Belden, George Krizek, and others. Dr. Libby interviewed many of them and reviewed the records in great depth.

Libby, a professor of political science at the University of North Florida, heard from

physician friends about arrests and prosecutions for billing fraud and prescribing pain medications. At first, he was skeptical: even if the reported cases were true, "perhaps they were isolated instances of corrupt doctors." Law enforcement officers assured him that very few doctors were investigated. He was very surprised at the number of reports that inundated him when he announced his interest. The cases he was able to document for the record constitute only a small fraction of the total number of doctors indicted by the government.

He noted that "physicians were extremely fearful of the government and wanted promises of anonymity." Also, 95 percent of all doctors indicted for felonies plead guilty, and are obliged to promise to keep their cases private as part of their plea agreement.

Libby documents egregious abuse of power: suborned perjury, intimidation, deprivation of due process, malicious misinterpretation of the regulations, character assassination, vicious mistreatment of inmates in a psychiatric prison/hospital.

The war on doctors is not actually new. Between passage of the Harrison Act in 1914 and the repeal of Prohibition, some 25,000 doctors were arrested for giving narcotic prescriptions to addicts. Most lost their reputations, careers, and life savings. Libby tracks the history of the War on Drugs up to the present. He also outlines the history of the anti-"fraud" front, another self-funding, self-perpetuating operation.

All should heed Libby's conclusion: there is a national political campaign against doctors, who are being scapegoated for the financial crisis in medicine and the failed War on Drugs. Individuals may see themselves as "victims of local vendettas by ambitious prosecutors, competitors, and troubled or greedy whistleblowers," and tend, like other scapegoats, to believe that their cases are unique. Failure to see the broader picture is one reason why physicians usually turn their backs on targeted colleagues, Libby writes.

Scapegoats will continue to be abused until they recognize the situation and manage to transform their public image. The AMA managed to call a halt to the government's destruction of doctors' careers in the 1920s. "It will be necessary for medical associations to launch a national campaign to demand an end to the unjust prosecution of doctors," Libby concludes.

Libby's book could be a powerful tool in persuading the medical profession to take needed action. Buy several copies. Give it to influential colleagues, and make sure that they read it.

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