

**STUDY QUESTIONS ON OBEYESEKERE,  
OSHERSON AND AMARASINGHAM, AND LOCK (organs)**

1. Obeyesekere criticizes Murphy for claiming that the Yoruba really suffer from depression though they do not see it as such. What is your opinion on this? To what degree can a culture determine what is and is not a disease?
2. What are suffering and despair? How do the Buddhist meaning and significance given these concepts change them, according to Obeyesekere?
3. What correlates of clinical depression in the West are found in the Sinhala (the culture of Sri Lanka) examples provided by Obeyesekere?
4. What, according to Obeyesekere, is the concept of *work* in psychoanalytic theory?
5. What, then, is “the work of culture”? What does Obeyesekere criticize about Western notions and explanations of depression?
6. Obeyesekere talks about Sinhalese in hospitals with major depression. How does he account for these cases?
- 7.. What is “the machine metaphor” in medicine?
8. What are remnants of the Greek signs of humoral residues in our own theory of medicine?
9. What was vitalism?
10. What is Osherson and AmaraSingham’s overall thesis?
11. What consequences derive from thinking of the body as a machine?
12. What specific examples can you offer where the body-as-machine metaphor is not useful?
13. Osherson and AmaraSingham say that childbirth has been integrated into American medicine in a way that is unique among Western nations. How are other Western nations different? How does childbirth differ in your own country, if you are not from the United States?
14. If you can, list the characteristics of chloroform and scopolamine (“twilight sleep”). How were anesthetics developed subsequently superior? Why were people originally resistant to anesthetics for childbirth? What were later criticisms?
15. What were the costs of American obstetrical practice up to the 1960s? How did the “natural childbirth” movement change this practice? How did it remain the same?

16. Osherson and AmaraSingham mention the predominance of institutional values influencing the process of dying in a hospital. What are some of these?
17. Osherson and AmaraSingham speak of an “acceptable” style of dying in a modern hospital. What are the characteristics of this style?
18. Is your model of the body based on a machine metaphor? Choose another metaphor for the body and argue in favor of its usefulness.
19. Why, do you think, does Lock put so many words and phrases into quotes? (“Accidental,” “success rate,” “brain dead donor,” “partial success.”) Are all of these used because she is quoting someone else?
20. Lock says that many people believe that “the altruistic act of organ donation permits meaning to be created out of sudden death” (p. 234). What does she mean, exactly, by “meaning? Do you agree?
21. In what ways are brain dead patients like corpses? In what ways not?
22. Lock says that death has become increasingly visible in recent years as a subject for media attention. Speculate about the technological reasons for this increase. Speculate about the socio-cultural-political reasons.
23. How does the “body as machine” not work in organ transplants? Haraway is quoted as saying that brain dead patients/cadavers clearly represent a “coupling between organism and machine, each conceived of as coded devices” (as cited in Lock, p. 236). What do such “cyborgs” mean, according to Haraway?
24. What *metaphors* do the intensivists use to describe the brain dead patient?
25. Describe the most memorable metaphor you read about in the readings for today. If you were required to write a paper on metaphor in medicine, which topic would you choose?