

PERSONHOOD

PERSONHOOD IN TODAY'S SOCIETIES

This brings us to intuitive conceptualizations of personhood, which derive in large part from our symbolic structuring of the relationship of the loci of agency to the body. I was born and raised in, and I live and work (most of the time) in, societies in North America that descend intellectually from the scientific and philosophical frameworks of the Renaissance, Reformation, and Enlightenment. As a result, personhood in my cognition and discourse is heavily influenced by structures descended from classical Greek and Christian literature and praxis (Elkaisy-Friemuth and Dillon 2009; King 2012; Long 2015). When discussing personhood *reflectively*, people in such societies will generally stress “a persistent personal identity ... over relational identities” (Fowler 2004, 7), and will often prioritize ontological dimensions like the biological or the cognitive. However, in everyday discourse, more *intuitive* conceptualizations move within a variety of dimensions of personhood that are more relational and more closely linked with the conceptualizations of personhood that we can reconstruct from the material remains of ancient Southwest Asia.

For example, I have lived my whole life associating my brain with my intellect, my heart with my desires, and my gut with fear and anxiety. These associations are not just an arbitrary metaphor—they obtain reliably across time and space. Cognitive linguistic research examining the most socially common loci of faculties of feeling, thinking, and knowing in languages from around the world found that results consistently fell into one of three different models: abdominocentric, cardiocentric, or dual cephalocentric/cardiocentric (Sharifian et al. 2008; Yu 2009; Slingerland and Chudek 2011). In Eurocentric societies, the autonomy of these regions and their compartmentalized faculties are commonly reflected through references to conflict between the emotional heart and the analytical head. The fact that these independent parts can reify the presence of the person as a whole in certain circumstances is reflected in stories like Frankenstein's monster (and its many variations), or stories of the loved ones of deceased organ donors feeling reunited with the deceased by meeting with the recipients of the organs (almost always the heart). The easy ability to feel or even recognize another's heartbeat provides a sensory reinforcement of the identification of the organ as a primary locus of agency, and thus presence.

As an example, when twenty-year-old organ donor Abbey Connor died, her heart was given to twenty-one-year-old Loumonth Jack Jr. When Abbey's father, Bill, met Loumonth, he listened to his heartbeat with a stethoscope and later commented, “Abbey is alive inside of him—it's her heart having him stand up straight. I was happy for him and his family, and at the same time, I got to reunite with my daughter” (Earl 2015). Herein lies an issue with Sommer's fluidity model, which is concerned primarily with the ability of deities to “exist