

# What's in a heart?

## Culture-specific concepts of emotionality and rationality

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## General aim (1):

To explore the bi-directionality of

- (a) Applied Cognitive Linguistics (i.e., the search for the impact of metaphorical thought)
- (b) Cultural Studies (i.e., the search for the cultural models that may have channelled the metaphorical conceptualizations)

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## General aim (2):

To explore

- (a) the ways in which internal body organs are employed in different languages to conceptualize human experiences such as emotions and/or workings of the mind
- (b) the cultural models that account for the observed similarities and differences of the various conceptualizations
- (c) the *head/heart* dichotomy in modern English

Research in progress!

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## Structure:

0. Introduction
1. Locating cultural models of emotions and mind on the world map
2. The heart in the English language
3. Analysis of *heart* expressions
4. Analysis of *head* expressions
5. Conclusion

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## Introduction

Central question:

How are feeling, thinking and knowing related to internal body organs in different cultures (as they are reflected in different languages)?

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## Introduction

- different role of the HEART in different cultures
- synchronic variation and diachronic development
- focus on present-day English
  - in English: seat of emotion, not of reason
  - contradictory to scientific theory
  - nearly complete dichotomy between *head* and *heart*

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## Introduction

- the topic of the cognitive search for the conceptualisation of the mind and of body organs is not new (cf. Jahoda 1992, Palmer, Goddard & Lee 2003, Shweder 1991, Shweder & Levine 1984, Wierzbicka 1989)
- what is new: the search for the impact of metaphorical thought (if present) and of cultural models that may have channelled these conceptualisations

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## Introduction

Definition of „cultural model“:  
 (Cultural models are) presupposed, taken-for-granted models of the world that are widely shared (although not necessarily to the exclusion of other, alternative models) by the members of a society and that play an enormous role in their understanding of the world and their behavior in it  
 (Holland/Quinn 1987:4)

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## Introduction

### Cultural models (1):

- are complex conceptual systems that act as building blocks of a cultural group's cultural cognition
- lend themselves as „templates“ for understanding certain aspects related to human inner and outer experiences
- metaphors can be seen as rooted in cultural models instead of either constituting them (cf. Lakoff & Kövecses 1987) or reflecting them (cf. Quinn 1991)

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## Introduction

### Cultural models (2):

- metaphors are very often grounded in immediate bodily experience but expand them so as to include the mediating role of cultural models (embodiment plays a lesser role in many Aboriginal cultures which tend to use nonbodily models that are rooted in the Aboriginal world view)
- physiological motivation does not seem to play a major role in conceptualisations of internal body organs, as otherwise we would find many more similarities across languages and cultures

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## Locating cultural models of emotions and mind on the world map

3 general types of conceptualization of the mind/emotions, referring to those body organs that play a **central** role in conceptualization – independent of language families:

- **abdominocentrism**: the mind is located in the abdomen region
- **cardiocentrism**: the mind is located in the heart region
- **cerebrocentrism**: the mind is located in the head (more precisely: the brain) region

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## Locating cultural models of emotions and mind on the world map

### Abdominocentrism:

- the predominant approach in Southern Asia, Polynesia and other disparate cultures, including the Basque culture
- feelings are located in the belly, in the liver, in the kidney
- rationality is located in the liver, the ear, the „gogo“
- cultural models of „animistic spirituality“

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## Locating cultural models of emotions and mind on the world map

### Abdominocentrism (2): examples

#### Malay/Indonesian:

- the liver („hati“) is seen as the seat of emotional and mental activities (cf. Goddard 2008, Siahaan 2008)
- cf. the role of the liver in Greek philosophy as hosting one part of the three-part soul, i.e. „the natural soul“ controlling nutrition (Erickson 1997:4)
- Indonesian: liver divination rituals
- liver as the central organ by which spiritual beings communicate with human beings

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## Locating cultural models of emotions and mind on the world map

### Abdominocentrism (3): examples

#### Kuuk Thaayorre (an aboriginal Australian language), cf. Gaby 2008:

- the belly is associated with emotions
- Aboriginal worldview in which food has a significant role in determining spiritual and physical health
- the place for food (the belly) is also connected to spiritual and physical health
- the ear is associated with reasoning (oral language)

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## Locating cultural models of emotions and mind on the world map

### Abdominocentrism (4): examples

#### Vietnamese:

- emotions are located in the belly
- the belly is also the place where all illness symptoms occur, with the kidney as the „grandmaster organ“

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## Locating cultural models of emotions and mind on the world map

### Abdominocentrism (5): examples

#### Basque

- border-line case
- connects emotions to inner organs (heart, liver, stomach, intestines)
- relies on various cultural models for various emotions:
  - the heart is connected with positive emotions (→ Cartesianism)
  - the liver is connected with negative feelings (→ theory of the four humours)
  - the stomach and the intestines are only marginal concepts
- but: Basque has a „gogo“, i.e. an inner entity for intellectual reasoning processes based on intuition and emotion → an (animistic-) spiritual cosmivision, cf. Ibarretxe Antuñano 2008

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## Locating cultural models of emotions and mind on the world map

### Cardiocentrism:

- the traditional view of China, Korea, Japan
- philosophical and medical cultural models
- holistic, heart-centring conceptualizations with remarkable similarity

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## Locating cultural models of emotions and mind on the world map

### Cardiocentrism (2): examples

#### China:

- the heart as the ruler of the body, cf. Yu 2008
  - it is the central faculty of cognition
  - it is the physiological centre of the person
  - it is connected to emotions
  - it is (in a cosmic view) the „mirror of the universe“
- cultural models:
  - traditional Chinese medicine
  - yin-yang
  - the five elements (wood, fire, earth, metal, water) in ancient Chinese philosophy

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## Locating cultural models of emotions and mind on the world map

### Cardiocentrism (3): examples

#### Korea:

- intellectual and emotional activities are localized in and around the heart, cf. Yoon 2008
- 3 different expressions for *heart*
  - referring to the body organ
  - referring to the body part as well as to the psychological faculties of a person (highly polysemous concept)
  - referring to psychological and mental faculties (can be used as a metonymy and/or metaphor for a person)

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## Locating cultural models of emotions and mind on the world map

### Cardiocentrism (4): examples

#### Japan:

- 3 words for *heart* (similar to Korean)
  - a Chinese loan word for the organ itself
  - a highly polysemous native word for the workings of the heart (referring to reason and emotions)
  - an English loan word (*haato*) for emotions connected with the heart, e.g. romantic love
- the increasing use of *haato* is an obvious case of the influence of English in Japan, cf. Occhi 2008 → not present in ancient Japanese
- the brain plays a (minor) role in thought processing, cf. Ikegami 2008

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## Locating cultural models of emotions and mind on the world map

### Cerebrocentrism (1):

- Greek-based West Asian, European and North African cultures
- prototypical examples: major Indo-European languages
- philosophical, medical, and/or religious models
- dualism between mind and body and thus between head/brain as the seat of intellect and the heart as the seat of emotions
- the head-heart dualism grew out of the earlier interaction between cardiocentrism and cerebrocentrism (ancient Greek philosophy and medicine, cf. Foolen 2008)
- nearly complete dichotomy between head/heart expressions in Modern English, Modern Dutch and Modern German (and other languages)

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## Locating cultural models of emotions and mind on the world map

### Cerebrocentrism (2):

#### Controversial question in ancient Greece:

- is the heart or the brain the seat of the soul and the central organ of thought and sensation?
  - Hippocratic writers (5<sup>th</sup> cent. BC): „heart is a strong muscle with a large hot chamber housing the intelligent ruling principle of the soul“
  - also Aristotle (4<sup>th</sup> cent. BC): „heart is the chief organ of the body and the center for thought and the appreciation of sensation“
  - Plato: the soul is made up of three parts and the most important part – the rational part – is assigned to the head/brain → minority opinion; also supported by Galen, a medical doctor and anatomist (1<sup>st</sup> cent. AD)
- (quotations from Erickson 1997; Jager 2001; Clarke & O'Malley 1968)

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## Locating cultural models of emotions and mind on the world map

### Cerebrocentrism (3):

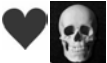
#### medieval period:

- cardiocentrism regained primacy (mainly due to Avicenna, a Persian physician and philosopher, 10<sup>th</sup>-11<sup>th</sup> cent. AD, cf. Stevens 1997)
- Bible: pre-eminent authority representing the heart-centered orientation of Christianity

#### after the Middle Ages (16<sup>th</sup>/17<sup>th</sup> cent.):

- religious and scientific views began to diverge increasingly
- Catholic Church stuck to cardiocentrism („Sacred Heart“ cult)
- medical scientists (Andreas Vesalius, William Harvey) discovered the heart's function as a blood pump

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## Locating cultural models of emotions and mind on the world map

### Cerebrocentrism (4):

- influence of René Descartes in all of Western Europe and beyond (1596-1650): birth of the fully outspoken dualism
- shift from monocentrism/cardiocentrism to dualism linked to the developments in medicine and philosophy (16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> cent.)
- Cartesian dualism: „disembodied rational mind“ (Stevens 1997, Damasio 1994), i.e. mind/brain split and mind/body split (→ emotions located in the heart, reason located in the head)

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## Locating cultural models of emotions and mind on the world map

### Cerebrocentrism (5):

- replacement of *heart* expressions by *head* expressions in Persian, Neo-Aramaic, English and Dutch – and presumably other languages
- the Cartesian model persists until today, although seriously questioned in the 20<sup>th</sup> century in philosophy by phenomenology and in linguistics by experientialism or embodied realism (Geeraerts 1985 & 1987, Johnson 1987, Lakoff 1987, Lakoff & Johnson 1999)

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## Locating cultural models of emotions and mind on the world map

### Cerebrocentrism (6):

beyond western Europe: influence of competing cultural models

- Neo-Aramaic: ancient Syriac thought on ethnomedicine and Early Christian mythical thought (cf. Wolk 2008)
- Tunisian Arabic: Koran (cf. Maalej 2008)
- Persian: Sufism (cf. Sharifian 2008)

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## Locating cultural models of emotions and mind on the world map

### Cerebrocentrism (7): examples

#### Neo-Aramaic:

- many correspondences with English
- no complete similarity: *heart* expression (*libbā*) also encompasses the stomach
- traces of the Galenic model (humour theory): liver and spleen largely absent, but differentiation between wet/dry and hot/cold properties has survived
- also: cultural model of morality

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## Locating cultural models of emotions and mind on the world map

### Cerebrocentrism (7): examples

#### Tunisian Arabic:

- shows Cartesian split, but at the same time influenced by a cultural model based on religious traditions (Koran)
- the Koran teaches a conflated model of body and mind, but this view has progressively yielded to the split between the two concepts (mainly owing to the translations of Greek philosophy into Arabic)

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## Locating cultural models of emotions and mind on the world map

### Cerebrocentrism (8): examples

#### Persian:

- correspondence between conceptualisations of *del* („heart“)
  - in spiritual accounts of Sufism
  - Avicenna's version of the theory of the four humours
  - the metaphorical expressions that refer to this internal body organ
- *del* describes more than the heart, it describes the area of the upper chest down to the stomach and also accounts for inner drives (somewhat similar to the Basque *gogo*)
- reason is located in the head/brain

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## The heart in the English language

Old English still saw the heart (rather: mood) as connected to mental life, emotions, volition, according to the humoral doctrine (Geeraerts & Gevaert 2008) → cardiocentrism

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## The heart in the English language

### Old English compounds with mood *and* heart (selection)

<i>bl̥aemod</i>	happy mood/mind	happiness
<i>bl̥a:heart</i>	happy-hearted	happiness, kindness, merciful
<i>eferheart</i>	even/equal-hearted	peace, tranquility, concord, harmony
<i>efermodlice</i>	even-mood/mind	gentleness, meekness, composure
<i>gramheart</i>	fierce/hostile-hearted	hostility
<i>grammod</i>	fierce-mood/mind	hardheartedness, cruelty, severity
<i>heahheart</i>	high-hearted	pride
<i>heahmod</i>	high-mood/mind	pride, exultation, joy; magnanimity
<i>heardheart</i>	hard-hearted	obstinacy, wrath, sternness, displeasure
<i>heardmod</i>	hard-mood/mind	strength, fortitude, obstinacy

→ the same feelings may be expressed by heart and mood compounds, but there is an asymmetry: 78 *mood* compounds vs. 23 *heart* compounds

→ many *mood* compounds without a *heart* compound counterpart refer to reason (cognition and volition)

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## The heart in the English language

### Old English *mood* compounds (selection):

Cognition:		
madness, insanity	<i>Δmod</i>	'without mood'
sagacity	<i>gleawmod</i>	'wise/skillful-mood/mind'
sincerity	<i>pancōlmod</i>	'wise-mood/mind'
insincerity, wantonness	<i>meagolmod(nes)</i>	'earnest-mood/mind'
	<i>leasmodnes</i>	'not truthful-mood/mind'
	<i>leahmod(nes)</i>	'light-mood/mind'
Volition:		
obstinacy	<i>heardmod</i>	'hard-mood/mind'
determination, resolution	<i>stearmod</i>	'strong-mood/mind'
	<i>stīpmōd</i>	'strong/fierce-mood/mind'
	<i>styrmod</i>	'stern-mood/mind'
	<i>swiþmod(nes)</i>	'very much-mood/mind'
disinclination to act, listlessness	<i>sleacmodnes</i>	'slack-mood/mind'
	<i>sw:Δmod</i>	'heavy-mood/mind'

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## The heart in the English language

- Old English still saw the heart (rather: mood) as connected to mental life, emotions, volition, according to the humoral doctrine (Geeraerts & Gevaert 2008) → cardiocentrism
- today: nearly complete dichotomy in the English conceptualization of *head* and *heart* → cerebrocentrism
- modern scientific knowledge not yet represented by the language
- main cultural models (with a set of submodels): THE HEART AS THE SEAT OF EMOTION vs. THE HEAD AS THE SEAT OF REASON

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## Analysis of *heart* expressions

4 categories of *heart* expressions (increasing degree of generality):

1. *Heart* as a metonymy for A PERSON'S FEELINGS
2. *Heart* as a metonymy for a PERSON AS A WHOLE
3. *Heart* as an OBJECT OF VALUE
4. *Heart* as a CONTAINER

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## Analysis of *heart* expressions

1. *Heart* as a metonymy for A PERSON'S FEELINGS
  - „feelings“: emotions, courage, attitudes etc.
  - the heart is the most salient body part in the traditional cultural model of emotions
  - prototypical emotion: romantic love → easily symbolizable, but we also find more negative emotions (*heart of stone* – emotionless attitude; *half-hearted* – lack of courage)
  - the heart is seen as part of a person → metonymy
  - different submodels

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## Analysis of *heart* expressions

1. *Heart* as a metonymy for A PERSON'S FEELINGS: submodels
  - A MOVEABLE OBJECT: *set one's heart on sth*
  - CHANGEABLE IN SIZE: *have a big heart*
  - HEART AS A SOLID: *soft heart*, *hardness of heart*
  - HEART AS AN INDICATOR OF TEMPERATURE: *warm-heartedness*, *cold-heartedness*
  - HEART AS AN ANTHROPOMORPHIZED ENTITY: *being one's heart's desire*

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## Analysis of *heart* expressions

2. *Heart* as a metonymy for a PERSON AS A WHOLE:
- the heart is seen as referring to the complete person, i.e. not only to their feelings
  - the heart acts as a focalized centre of a larger entity, e.g. in the reference to a person as *sweetheart* or cf. the expressions: *two hearts that beat as one*, *all hearts throb for her*

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## Analysis of *heart* expressions

2. *Heart* as a metonymy for a PERSON AS A WHOLE:
- mostly refers to failed love: negative emotions within oneself are described as causing damage to the heart
  - different submodels:
    - the instrument that did the damage: *heart-burning* (NEGATIVE EMOTIONS ARE FIRE)
    - the wounds suffered: *my heart is bleeding*
    - results of the damage: *broken heart*, *aching heart*

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## Analysis of *heart* expressions

2. *Heart* as a metonymy for a PERSON AS A WHOLE:
- the perspective has widened
  - metonymies are less basic
  - often double metonymizations (may appear as metaphors)

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## Analysis of *heart* expressions

3. *Heart* as an OBJECT OF VALUE:
- the heart in its totality is seen as a treasure chest
  - emotions are involved but not named (CONTAINER FOR CONTENT metonymy)
  - culture-specificity (as „value“ is culture-specific)
  - different submodels

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## Analysis of *heart* expressions

3. *Heart* as an OBJECT OF VALUE:  
submodels:
- HEART AS A GIFT: *I give you my heart*
  - HEART AS A POSSESSION: *my heart belongs to you*
  - HEART AS A PRIZE: *he won my heart, to lose one's heart*
  - HEART AS BOOTY: *to steal every heart*
  - HEART AS A MANIPULABLE/FRAGILE OBJECT:
    - *broken-hearted*
    - *to put heart into sth, to lose heart, to dishearten sb* (→ courage)
    - *to take sth to heart* (→ resentment)
      - „thinking about sth very deeply“ → reminiscence of Old English cultural model

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## Analysis of *heart* expressions

3. *Heart* as an OBJECT OF VALUE:
- an even more generalized level of conceptualization
  - the location for romantic love has to be shared with other feelings (courage, anger, discontent)
  - possibly more awareness (i.e. more approaching the metaphoric pole of the metonymy-metaphor continuum)

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## Analysis of *heart* expressions

### 4. *Heart* as a CONTAINER:

- most general category
- different submodels focusing on various aspects from the outer qualities of the container including its handability via its inner qualities to its internal structure

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## Analysis of *heart* expressions

### 4. *Heart* as a CONTAINER:

submodels:

HEART AS A LID CONTAINER: *to open/close one's heart to sb; sth locked up in one's heart* (→ static view)

HEART AS A MANIPULABLE CONTAINER: *to pour out one's heart to sb* (→ dynamic view)

HEART AS AN OPEN CONTAINER FOR LIQUIDS: *a heart overflowing (with love, joy, gratitude etc.); this filled my heart with joy (etc.)*

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## Analysis of *heart* expressions

### 4. *Heart* as a CONTAINER:

submodels ctd.:

HEART AS A CONTAINER WITH GREAT DEPTH: *from the bottom of one's heart, in one's heart of hearts* (Shakespearian coinage, referring to a container within the container)

HEART AS A STOREHOUSE CONTAINER: *I could not find it in my heart; by heart* (cf. the Old English cultural model → reference to memory)

HEART AS A COMPARTMENTALIZED CONTAINER: *She has a place in every heart*

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## Analysis of *heart* expressions

### 4. *Heart* as a CONTAINER:

- a more universal type of schema, focusing on the contents rather than on the container
- container submodel not unique to the cultural model of the heart (cf. head, chest, womb etc.)
- this category is dependent on the existence of the other categories which provide its metonymic basis, is more „metaphonymically structured“ (cf. Goossens 1995)

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## The *head* in the English language

- the head is primarily seen as the locus of rational thought → (culturally shared model)
- basic reference: body part
- frequently: reference to the head's presumed content, i.e. the brain, the mind, human ratio, intelligence
- location of abilities such as perception, spatial imagination, creativity, logic

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## The *head* in the English language

- analysis will focus on expressions referring to the mind, to rationality and to intelligence
- although Damasio (1984) argues that mere intellectual reasoning is an impossibility and that human thinking is always supported and strengthened by emotions („I am therefore I think“ → body pre-exists thought), this does not (yet) show in the English language

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## Analysis of *head* expressions

3 categories of *head* expressions:

1. *Head* as a LOCUS OF REASONING
2. *Head* as a CONTROL CENTRE
3. *Head* as a CONTAINER

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## Analysis of *head* expressions

1. *Head* as LOCUS OF REASONING
  - most specific level of meaning
  - clear metonymic basis:
    - head stands for the brain → first whole-for-part metonymy
    - brain stands for the process of rational thinking that is taking place in it → second whole-for-part metonymy

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## Analysis of *head* expressions

### 1. *Head* as LOCUS OF REASONING

examples:

*We need some good heads to solve the problem!*

*Use your head!*

*head-hunter* (relating to business)

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## Analysis of *head* expressions

### 2. *Head* as CONTROL CENTRE

- more general than the previous category
  - the head is seen as the main site for decision making
  - focus is not on mental processes, but rather on the general processes which we assume to take place in the head and on the necessity of balance in our heads/minds (as a precondition for reasoning)
- cf. Geeraerts (2002): THE HEAD IS THE LOCUS OF ONE'S SELF-CONTROL
- examples are mostly negative (lack/loss of balance) → markedness

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## Analysis of *head* expressions

### 2. *Head* as CONTROL CENTRE

examples:

*to have one's head in the clouds/in the sand* (→ clear perception becomes impossible)

*the success went right to his head* (→ off-balance)

*my head is spinning* (→ unable to think straight)

*to keep a clear/cool head* (→ necessity to be emotionless and thus keep the balance)

*to lose one's head/to be off one's head/headless* (→ rational control is completely absent)

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## Analysis of *head* expressions

### 3. *Head* as a CONTAINER

- most general category, more (metonymy-based) metaphors than pure metonymies
- in the other categories, containment is implied as well, but only tacitly assumed
- in this category, it is mentioned explicitly
- expressions focus either on the fullness/emptiness of the head (static) or on the dynamic process of filling/emptying it (more salient)

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## Analysis of head expressions

### 3. Head as a CONTAINER

examples:

*my head is exploding* (pressure due to cognitive overload)

*empty-headed* (stupid, no contents in the head)

*he has a head like a sieve* (state of the container)

*Put these weird thoughts out of your head* (ego as active party)

*Who's put such bizarre ideas into your head?* (third party active)

*It never entered my head that he might be lying* (no agent)

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## Analysis of head expressions

only two (possible) exceptions in the corpus:

- *heady* (extremely exciting)
- *headstrong* (obstinate)
- both are no prototypical emotions:
  - in *heady*, something is weakening/eliminating the control center
  - in *headstrong*, the person thinks that their arguments are good enough not to give in – in that way, (distorted) ratio is involved
- thus, in both cases, the notion of „rationality“ is at least marginally present

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## Conclusion

- nearly complete division of labour between the *head* and the *heart* in English
- the English language is still governed by a Cartesian cultural model, although science does not agree with it
- language change is very slow

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## Conclusion

- whereas the conceptualization of the *heart* has in no meaningful way evolved from that of a mental faculty (emotions) to a mere organ (blood pump), the conceptualization of *head* as „ratio/mind“ has fully found its way into the language
- this may be due to the enormous symbolicity of the heart (deeply rooted in Western tradition) which is absent for the head

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## Thank you very much for your attention!



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