

## THE HUMAN HEART IN TRADITIONAL AND POP CULTURE, ART, LITERATURE AND SPEECH

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**Abstract:** We perceive the heart as the most important part and as the centre of the body, the centre of emotions, such as love, passion, compassion, courage, openness, honesty, firmness, and devotion. Sometimes the heart is also the centre of wisdom. Such central position of the heart in our consciousness shapes its rich metaphorical topography and produces abundance of material products. In the Western iconography, hearts and cardioid shapes surround us as devotional objects, pictures, and relics, related to religious worship. In the folk culture, the heart is also a frequent figure on clothing, furniture, in literature, art, ritual, belief, and in contemporary heart myths. The fashion, music and film industry are copying, using and abusing heart imagery and ideas, mostly because they are profitable. In the consumer world, the heart is an object and commodity that makes money. We create the intangible “heartlands folklore” to express specific beliefs regarding human hearts, to challenge our mutual connections, manage problematic situations, create, and maintain hope.

**Key words:** human heart, traditional culture, popular culture, metaphors, religion, heart symbolism, embodiment, body parts beliefs, history of medicine

### Why the human heart?

#### *Introductory auto ethnographic confession*

When I was in my mid-thirties, I had a heart attack. It was a warm, quiet day in September, and in the morning of that day, I did not know yet that it could be almost my last. My cardiac disease knocked before it entered. During the day, I experienced several classic heart attack symptoms, such as chest

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pain, and pain in my upper left arm, but I did not recognise them. Perhaps I was afraid to recognise them. During the night time, I experienced one painfully paralyzing, chest tightening and almost fatal attack that took my breath away. I took an aspirin, the only medicine I had at home. I did not go to the emergency to get help – though I phoned as quickly as I was able to, not either visit the physician to measure and fix my heart later. Nevertheless, I survived. Only a few people know what hit me then. I consciously did not seek for compassion or any other ways of understanding from anybody.

Today I recognise that not seeking for medical help was among other reasons also a gender-biased decision. I felt terribly guilty although I was aware that the cardiac diseases are usually not attached to social stigmas, shame or taboos and that we do not consider them as morally inappropriate because the heart mostly has a status of an emotional organ. The morning after the attack, I had a serious dialogue with myself. I immediately re-set my life priorities without any hesitation or regretting anything. They have stayed unaltered since then. I decreased most of the demands on my heart. I connect the circumstances of my heart failure with the tremendous existential stress and my utter lack of inner and outer sources to handle it. It is not difficult to imagine that even after fourteen years from this almost fatal event I still avoid the place, institution and especially the people who systematically obstructed my work and me and pushed me into this miserable state. After being so close to the death, I also take better care of my cardiac and general health.

This transformative experience of cardiovascular malfunction arising from mental factors or whatever it was pathologically, also determines my sincere interest in all heart matters – that is the anatomic heart, measured and treated, and the heart of emotions with deeply interwoven culturally specific beliefs. Later, my own heart attack, that fortunately did not end tragically, became an inspiration and an important plot element of my ethno-medical and anthropological research. Since then, I listen carefully to what people say about the heart, what kind of gestures they use when they speak from the heart, what kind of heart messages they communicate, and how the heart and cardiac disease appear in fiction, music, art and culture. Now, the event is distant enough in time that I can think critically about the multiple perspectives and understand the personal patterns and biases in the other people's stories about the heart. Irrespective of how we depict it, the heart never loses its central position in our conceptual systems.

### *From the self-reflection on heart to more formal introduction*

The rich cultural history of the human heart as a symbol fascinates me. Therefore, following the abundance from intangible heart imagery and the tangible material world, the essence of this reflection demonstrates where we

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place the heart in Slovene somatic phraseology; what sort of heartfelt languages we use; how we use the heart in religion; and follow the historical development of some premeditatedly chosen notions and imagery of the heart symbolism.

Epistemologically, the nature of the text is rather explanatory than proving. Since there is no inference or explanation without facts – we can (usually) think about something only if we know it; the text combines anthropological historical, linguistic and medicinal evidence from the diachronic and synchronic perspectives to make the heart symbolism obvious. Further, it illustrates and exposes the details with a few examples from literature, history, religion, music, film pop and folk culture to explain the abstractions or concrete phenomena. I present the illustrative details in the boxes and explain them in the accompanying text. The examples were not selected randomly but are balanced with the purpose of this scientific essay. Since an essay is a literary form that animates the reader about cultural phenomena also with its structure and since it allows a certain degree of subjectivity, someone else might emphasize other examples. I chose the following evidence to follow the red thread of the omnipresent heart symbolism and to support my topic point about the centrality of the organ in our mind.

One way to find about the human heart is through language because it partly reflects the structure of our experience. This particular structure helps us to understand on what way we perceive, how we get around in the world and how we relate to others. Therefore, methodologically, the systematic analysis of the human heart starts with the linguistic examples, evidenced in general dictionaries, glossaries and thesauri indexed by the *OneLook* search engine (<https://www.onelook.com>) for English language, by *Fran* ([www.fran.si](http://www.fran.si)) for Slovene language and from other lexicographical works. I also searched out the Internet to find other usages of the heart idioms. The emphasized phrases in the text refer to the above-mentioned databases (18,955,870 words in 1061 dictionaries for English and 591,807 words in 31 dictionaries for Slovene). Besides that, the examples of the usage also come from my long continued, more than a decennial lasting observation of everyday communication. Most of the evidence on the heart is from the reference works and from the actual daily use. This large corpus of heart expressions, connected to an embodiment, and different cultural and historical studies on the human heart have no intention to become the mere heart eclecticism or present the trivial curiosities.

The purpose of a collected set of expressions and its uses is in explaining our conceptual systems. I elaborated the presented classification of the heart idioms with other historical and theoretical sources. I mostly followed Lakoff and Johnson's (1999) examples of types of metaphors. Their classification of mental schemes is helpful and methodologically precise in sorting the collected corpus of heart idioms that govern our everyday functioning. With a few adaptations of Lakoff and Johnson models (Lakoff & Johnson, 1999; Lakoff,

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2014) I created the basic structure of our perception of the human heart. It consists of:

a) *The orientational metaphor antagonisms*, such as:

– More/good/happy/success is up # less/bad/sad/fail is down.

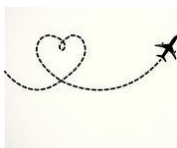
UP ↑ # DOWN ↓

– Warm/soft/whole/bright/light is affection # cold/hard/broken/dark/heavy is disaffection.

AFFECTION ☺ # DISAFFECTION ☹

b) And of the *spatial metaphors*, such as the *destination* or container sets of metaphors:

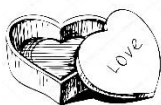
– Purpose (love) is destination [and journey],



– Achieving the purpose (or desire) is reaching the destination/acquiring the desired object (love = heart).

I ♥ YOU

– Object (heart) is the container (of emotions, mental states), etc. (Lakoff, Johnson, 1999; Lakoff, 2014<sup>1</sup>).



In addition to this, the heart is metaphorically an important *source domain* that describes other abstract things, communication, or technology. Sometimes its meaning is the centre (for illustration, “the heart of the city”, “the heart of the country”, and “the heart of the matter”) or bodily sensation (“the heart is aching”). Furthermore, the heart is also a *target domain* that describes bodily functions and actions (“the heart is ticking/pumping”, “the heart is a sublime

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<sup>1</sup> The symbols, illustrations and square brackets are added by the author.

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engine”). Alternatively, the heart metaphors that describe emotions are sometimes the *source and the target domain at the same time* because it is not clear what we map on what (such as the exaggerations, “the melting heart” or “the heart of stone” that are not bodily possible).

Subsequently, mentioning the epistemological source domains, we can say, that the embodiment is what makes such concepts meaningful, linking what is going on in our brains to our understanding of the real world. We learn the heart metaphors in early childhood, even before we can speak and then we use them with ease, without noticing. Grammar allows us to combine metaphors to produce an unlimited range of new metaphorical ideas – a range that draws on primary metaphors and basic complexes of primary metaphors, but which goes way beyond those (Lakoff, 2014, p. 9, 10).

Beyond the metaphorical understanding, the paper also emphasizes the cultural and historical background of the heart idioms. I combined the above-mentioned sources to construct the broader picture of our ideas of the human heart. My main assumption is twofold: the heart expressions are conventionalized and stable in Slovene and English language and, therefore, safe for making the deductions about the ways we create the notions of the human heart and its importance for our mutual understanding. Secondly, the heart is more than an organ in the human body and even more than a metaphor. It is an example of the persistence of body parts beliefs across time, space and cultures. This example of the “embodied mind”, as Lakoff and Johnson stated (1999, p. 4), is shaped crucially by the peculiarities of our human bodies, by the remarkable details of the neural structure of our brains and the specifics of our everyday functioning in the world.

#### c) A brief cultural-historic overview of the notion

The history of metaphorical thought of the human body incorporates imagery from art, technology and architecture. In this respect, one of the most frequently mentioned body parts is a heart. It is in a core of everything we consider as important. It weights the significance of our decisions, judges the deeds, expresses the grief, and ache over the injustice in the world.

The word “heart” comes from the Latin *cor*, *cordis*. Spanish (corazón), French (coeur) and Italian (cuore) take the Latin root, while German (Herz) and English (heart) take the Greek one (kardia). The Indo-European root \*kr- has the original sense of “vibrating”. The Spanish term is the only one, which differentiates itself partially from the others, since it is an augmentative, because of the medieval conception of the heart as the seat of courage. This word alluded primitively to the big heart of the man and of the woman-lover (Gutiérrez Pérez, 2008, p. 30–31). In Slavic languages the word “heart”, srce is the same in Croatian, Slovene and Serbian. In the Russian language, the heart is sérdce, in Check and Slovak srdce. All these expressions come from the same Indo-European root \*k'érd, meaning “heart”, “core” (Snoj, 1997).

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So far, many cardiologists, pathologists, medical, art and cultural historians, curators and linguists (Boyadjian, 1980; Dietz, 1998; Young, 2002; Loe & Edwards, 2004; Peto, 2007; Høystad, 2007; Gutiérrez Pérez, 2008; Morgan, 2008; Gonzalez-Crussi, 2009; Alberti, 2010; Amidon & Amidon, 2011; Wells, 2013; Oldfield & Jones, 2014; Elliott, 2017) studied the history and the conceptualizations of the heart from antiquity to present. They were mostly inspired by art collections, historical and physical descriptions of the heart, literature, lexicographical works, ethnology, anthropology, cultural studies, philosophy and history of medicine. Though relevant, we cannot review all their ideas just for the purpose of this article. However, we can mention some historical and cultural facts to refer to the main thesis here, namely, the importance of embodiment and the prevailing centrality of the heart in our minds.

To begin with a short historical overview and looking in the past diachronically, the comprehension of the anatomical function of the heart intertwines with social and cultural ideas, and above all with the medical discoveries. For illustration, Greek physician Galen (129 A.D. – c. A.D. 216) concluded that the heart pumps blood throughout the body, though he did not recognize yet that there is blood in the vessels. Avicenna, an Arab physician and philosopher (A.D. 980 – A.D. 1037) considered the heart as the supreme organ. Among the artists, an Italian painter, sculptor and inventor Leonardo da Vinci (1452–1519) made detailed drawings of the *heart* and circulation with descriptions of how the arterial valves close and open, and the explanation that the heart is a muscle that does not warm the blood. Again, among the medical doctors, William Harvey, a British physician and anatomist (1578 – 1657), demonstrated the circulation of blood within the cardiovascular system in 1628<sup>2</sup> and solved the enigma of biological function of the heart. He compared the heart to a pump and transformed the way in which we think about the human body. René Théophile Hyacinthe Laënnec, a French physician (1781 – 1826), invented the stethoscope in 1816 and performed auscultations. James Blundell, an English obstetrician (1790 – 1878), performed the first successful transfusion of human blood to a patient, and, finally, the most known heart surgeon of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Christiaan Barnard (1922 – 2001) performed the world's first human-to-human heart transplant in 1967. Of course, many others contributed to the cardiovascular discoveries.<sup>3</sup> Let us close this list with a remark that every new anatomical and surgical knowledge and developments in cardiology also influenced the figurative language of the heart and our reception of the body parts.

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<sup>2</sup> In his work *An Anatomical Study of the Motion of the Heart and of the Blood in Animals* [*Exercitatio anatomica de motu cordis et sanguinis in animalibus*].

<sup>3</sup> For a more detailed list of the history of cardiovascular discoveries see in Loe, Edwards, 2004, who compiled and organised the information for easy access.

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Secondly, the changing imagery of the organ began with the first known medical illustrations of the heart that had a shape like pine cones or pyramids. The descriptions of the organ by the Hippocratic School, by Galen and later by Arabian physicians probably influenced the medical illustrations. Later, from the 13<sup>th</sup> to the 16<sup>th</sup> Centuries, they depicted the organ in the form that derived from the ivy leaf; however, the prehistoric potters in Afghanistan and the Greek vase painters did not associate the ivy leaf decoration with the heart of ancient times. The knowledge of anatomy, which Hellenic physicians had gained through autopsies, had sunk into oblivion during the Middle Ages. The artists and book illustrators inspired anatomists who portrayed the heart as an inverted leaf, with the tip bent to the left and the stem symbolizing the arterial tree (Dietz, 1998). The cardioid shape is common in nature. It appears as the leaves and flowers of various plants. The strawberries, cherries and beetroots have the heart in the section, the swans form it when they touch beaks, the doves when they unfold their wings, and we can find it the human anatomy (Gately, 2010). Even Leonardo da Vinci used the analogy between the leaf symbol and the realistic shape in his early anatomic sketches (Dietz, 1998). In 1498, he produced the first accurate drawing of a human heart, instead of following prior convention and depicting it as a pinecone. He also made a glass model of the organ (Gately, 2010).

Today, the symbol with the two curves united in a tip is a pictogram for a whole range of feelings and has become cardiology's emblem across the world. The vegetal symbol absorbed much meaning in the course of European cultural history. It turned into a general, exclusive and optically unique symbol of the heart, and in human consciousness, a hint of the ancient idea of the seat of the soul, of love and thought (Dietz, 1998).

Since 1977 when a graphic designer Milton Glaser designed the iconic slogan "I heart (♥)" whatever object or place or person the heart became a powerful, globally recognised commercial totem.

The tendency began with mass-produced Victorian era valentines and culminated in 1977 with Glaser's I ♥ NY. The entire weight of the cardiac metaphor – devotion, passion, faith turned into a campaign to promote New York's tourism and to spend more money in hotels, restaurants and Broadway theatres. The heart symbol less and less triggered the sublime thoughts. It also became a principal logo for good health, low-fat diet, weight loss, etc. (Amidon & Amidon, 2011, p. 192-193).

Given these points, complex metaphorical thought shows up in language, in gesture, imagery (paintings, movies, dance, etc.), in mathematics, science, and in moral and political ideology (Lakoff, 2014, p. 5). We express the richness of our conceptual system related to the heart also with objects that surround us. The imagery of the heart appears on all kinds of things in the contemporary material culture. They are part of folk art and pop culture. They appear on:

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playing cards, greeting cards, candies, cakes, gingerbread as tokens of love (in Slovene *lect*), honey-bread products as precious souvenirs, festive braided heart bread (*pleteno srce*), kitchen utilities (such as plates, dishes, waffle-iron grids, fried egg models, cappuccino art, napkins), textiles (embroidery, cross-stitch patterns, lace, fashion clothes, bedding), furniture, folk painting, home decoration, religious collectibles and gifts, urns, body decorations (such as jewellery and tattoos), anti-racist ads, etc.

Culturally, the representations of the heart carry a sort of duality and ambiguity. The heart covers body and soul, physical and emotional, hard and soft, suction and expulsion, red and blue, left and right, hot and cold, flesh and blood. Even its sound is double – *lub-dub*. Because of this extraordinary versatility, we portrait the heart in an astounding variety of ways. It appears in stories, poems, religious writings, song lyrics, paintings and sculpture. It sinks, it grows, it faints, it bleeds, it flutters, it burns, and it sings, it rejoices, it breaks, it fibrillates, it stops, and it fails. It is attacked, transplanted, sacrificed, wounded, broken, given away, written on, occupied, stolen, hidden, swept, eaten, filled (Young, 2007, p. 2-3). Such versatility is possible because the words for the same body parts have different meanings for different people who live in different eras, places and social environments. The same phrases do not have the same level of arbitrariness for all. They can trigger strong mental images for somebody or leave only a weak association of the same idea for another. Yet, there are some universal traces of our reception of the heart that help us place it in the embodiment scheme.

When we talk about the heart, we do not always know if we are talking about the heart as something substantial, or something else with symbolic values, attitudes and personal qualities of various kinds for which the heart is a metaphorical expression. Since the heart, despite all its differences, seems to be central in many cultures, it perhaps represents something that is common to all humankind. Perhaps there is a common language of the heart of all cultures. Perhaps it enables people to understand each other instinctively across all language boundaries and all religious disparities and cultural differences (Høystad, 2007, p. 12-14). Emotional events cause a rapid change in the rate and force of myocardial contractility. Without understanding the underlying physiology, nearly every culture (and nearly every person) has recognized a link between the heart and the emotions. In love and in fear, our hearts may skip a beat or pound in our chests (Loe & Edwards, 2004, p. 286).

The somatic phraseology of the human body translates the concerns and fears of the society. Society reflects in the body tropes that illustrate our concepts of the social order, morality, problems of society, abstract conceptual domains, or unknown and unseen domains in the physical world. Body tropes as thought patterns of reasoning, feeling, and emotion, describe how we build



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relations, commitments, responsibilities; and what the mission of human existence is.



**Image 1**

*The decorated coffee with milk hearts has become a standard form of service in Europe.*

*Photo: Zvone Podvinski, Gothenburg, Sweden, September 15<sup>th</sup>, 2017.*

## **Topography (placing) of the heart**

### *Substantial versus symbolic heart*

The cardiovascular system of the human body, responsible for pumping and circulating the blood in the body, includes the heart, which is the most important organ in the cardiovascular system, the blood and the blood vessels (arteries, veins and capillaries). The organ runs the other elements of the system. Heartbeats send blood throughout the body carrying the oxygen and the nutrients to the cells of the body (Al-Harrasi, 2012, p. 194).

Medical explanations rely on biochemical and anatomical compounds, but people map the body on the spatial location of the organs. The body is the system in space, where parts relate to their mutual physical positions. We comprehend the heart as the CENTRE of the body. From the location of the heart, the brain is up, and the rest of the body is out, on the periphery. (Mabeck & Olesen, 1997, p. 273-274). As a consequence of such reception, we figuratively express the diverse embodiments of the heart and place the emotions in or near it.

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The heart does not have the similarly uniform cultural definition that would grasp all connotations through history and from the multicultural perspective. Therefore, let us have a look at some of the notions and their meanings.

One of the most important ideas in our mind is that heart is in the right place, in a position that is in accordance with the normality we consent. Literally, by saying HAVING A HEART IN THE RIGHT PLACE (*imeti srce na pravem mestu*) we acknowledge that someone is compassionate, kind-hearted, loving character who has the sense of rightness and justice, and such conduct (Keber, 2011) and whose intention is to do good things.

Many of the heart tropes say something of personal qualities and in daily life reveal what sort of a person we are dealing with – and what kind of personal and moral qualities our fellow human beings have. Therefore, according to the orientational metaphor antagonisms, we talk about GOOD-HEARTED<sup>4</sup> and HEARTLESS, of being HARD-HEARTED and SOFT-HEARTED, of having a WARM or a COLD HEART. Our kindness of heart and ability to feel compassion, tell who we are. For that reason, it is necessary to search one's heart, even though it can be both painful and embarrassing when we reveal its qualities.

The Slovene somatic phraseology expresses several semantic components: from anatomy (structure and form), function (usage), topography (placing), symbols (emotions), and combined (Kržišnik, 2009, p. 163-166).

In the Slovene language, we use at least 29 phrases with the word heart (Keber, 2011), which are beyond the medical interpretation. In English, 221 nonmedical expressions involve the word heart but they do not describe the cardiovascular system (Low & Edwards, 2004, p. 286, 290-291).

### *Love, passion, kindness*

Emotions are the most basic thing of the human being and the heart stands out as the place where they are located. Therefore, we can establish the orientational metaphor the HEART IS A CONTAINER OF EMOTIONS. Among them, love is the outstanding one. Emotions are not metaphorically located in the heart in all languages and cultures – Turkish locates them in the liver<sup>5</sup>. The heart, being the place where feelings are located figuratively, opposes the head, where we conventionally place the reason. Someone who is LED BY HIS HEART (*vodi ga srce*) refers to a person who pushes that main capacity of the intellect into the background in order to give free rein to his feelings (Gutiérrez Pérez, 2008, p. 31).

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<sup>4</sup> The capital letters are the author's emphasis.

<sup>5</sup> In the Slovene language, there is an idiom for unpleasant, irritating persons “get on (someone's) liver” (*iti nekomu na jetra*). This idiom has the same meaning as “get on (someone's) nerves” (*iti nekomu na živce*).

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Such references to the heart are everywhere in literature, regardless of the period, the language or the genre. In most music, popular, classical or traditional, in many films and in television, the metaphoric use of hearts is the rule and no exception. It shapes many media contents and appears in advertising. The metaphoric hearts stand in for cognition even in the computer-saturated era. They hide in our language, and we fold them into common beliefs and expressions, they spread automatically throughout our culture, and this unconscious process guarantees its continuity. Constant exposure to the metaphor of the heart reinforces its message but also renders it invisible. We do not think about it, or we do not think what it might mean (Blechmann, 2005).

Likewise, the main globally spread idea of the book *The Little Prince* (Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, 1943) based on the same idea. THE HEART SEES better than the brains. We can see and understand the true nature of the things only if we perceive them with the feelings. The perception (what one sees) is deceptive – things that we cannot see are also important. One needs to feel to understand and value the spiritual world rather than the corporeal world (*The Little Prince*, 2018). To the protagonist of Antoine de Saint-Exupéry's classic, *The Little Prince*, the heart was the perceiving and not the biological organ. "One sees clearly only with the heart. Anything essential is invisible to the eyes." (*Kdor hoče videti, mora gledati s srcem. Bistvo je očem nevidno.*) (Blechmann, 2005)

In the Slovene language, there are other phrases about the heart that base on the notion that the heart is the locus of feelings, the centre of emotions, love and erotic passions. Being close to this centre also means that someone is loved or desired, or, affected by something. Such phrases, for instance, are NEAR/CLOSE TO (ONE'S) HEART (*biti komu pri srcu*); or, TAKE TO HEART (*gnati si k srcu*), that is to be deeply moved, affected, sad or upset about something.

The phrase to HAVE A HEART FOR WHOM/WHAT (*imeti srce za koga/kaj*) also bases on a well-known notion that the heart is the centre of various emotions, among them especially love and courage. Both of them appear in the phrase DO NOT HAVE THE HEART [for whom/what] (*ne imeti srca za koga/kaj*), which means to be ruthless, heartless, or, to not have the courage.

### *Firmness of the heart*

Many of the "heartfelt" languages and images of the heart and the blood, such as COLD HEART, WARM HEART, HOT BLOOD and COLD BLOOD, derive from the Galenic principles. Today these concepts are figurative, but once they

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were medical facts. For example, the heart warmed the blood in order to generate and maintain a particular emotional state; or, it ran in response to the sensations of anger, passion and fear (Alberti, 2010). Since Hippocrates (c. 460 B.C. – c. 375 B.C.), we have understood heartfelt emotions as products of the heart's attraction or repulsion of an object or individual. The heart worked in conjunction with the soul – it had an intelligence that was straight from the divine. Emotions influence cardiac health; the heating of the tenderness in love, or, the chilling of the heart of grief could be lethal (Alberti, 2009, p. 519). Even the rise of cardiology in the 19<sup>th</sup> century did not affect our perception of the heart. At the level of personal experience, emotions remained heartfelt. People continue to express emotions as belonging to the heart. We experience emotions in our breasts. We rely on a linguistic communication with an emotional expression that is about the heart: we are HEARTBROKEN, our HEARTS HURT, BLEED, and GROW COLD (Alberti, 2009, p. 520). Love, symbolized in the heart, is a valuable object. As such, it is delicate and fragile and, consequently, it is breakable. The heart is a breakable object (Gutiérrez Pérez, 2008, p. 33).

In our culture, we figuratively measure the firmness of the heart and associate it to several materials, which we find in the physical world or manufactured. Figuratively, the human heart is of stone, metal, wood and glass.

Someone who has a heart of stone, iron, steel, marble, etc., refers to someone who is not easily moved and does not harbour feelings of sensitivity, compassion, sympathy or interest for others. The hardness of the material corresponds to the hardness or coldness in attitude (Gutiérrez Pérez, 2008, p. 38).

To have a HEART OF STONE (*kamnito srce*, *trdo srce*) figuratively has a negative connotation and it means to be cold, cruel, unfriendly, unkind, with no sympathy for people, and with unfeeling, obdurate and stern nature. This idea derives from one of the characteristics of the stone, which is its hardness; therefore, we say that the STONEHEARTED people do not (cannot) express kindness and affection.

The notion of the heart of stone dates back to ancient times, and, it came out in the Bible (Job 41:24): “*Its [Biblical sea monster, a powerful enemy, mostly depicted as a crocodile or a whale] heart is as firm as a stone, yes, firm as the lower millstone.*” There the heart represents the beast's nature, its disposition to be bold, courageous, and unmerciful.

A WOODEN HEART is a close relative of the rocky brother. The characteristics and the meaning of wooden hearts and stone hearts are similar. A person with wooden heart is emotionally flat and lacks empathy or someone that holds

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the emotions, who is quite cold and is not saddened easily. On the contrary, in the language of love, a phrase I do not have a HEART OF WOOD means that someone is sensitive and expects from others fairness without any kind of manipulation.

The most known film and music wooden heart is Elvis Presley's song *Wooden Heart* (Muss i denn lit. Must I then) from his film *G. I. Blues* (1960). Later he recorded it on the single *Wooden Heart* in 1961. It bases on a German folk song written in 1827 about a soldier who has to leave the woman he loves. The song was popular among German military and it became a patriotic song. The actress and singer Marlene Dietrich (1901 – 1992) interpreted and recorded one version of the song in 1959 on the single *Lili Marlene* (*Wooden Heart*, 2017; *Muss I den*, 2018).



**Image 4**

*The scar on a beech tree – carved heart and an initial of a lover (above).*

*Toško čelo near Ljubljana, Slovenia.*

*Photo: Izidor Ramšak, March 13<sup>th</sup>, 2018.*

In the contrary, the modern wooden heart objects express affection, passion, fondness and liking. Carved wooden heart with a name of a loving sweetheart in tree bark is an obvious symbol of love. The wooden heart objects are popular with modern timber craft as gifts, wedding decoration, home ornaments (hand carved spoons, bowls, boxes, knobs, etc.), wooden jewellery and even wood heart-shaped cremation urns.

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Today, the heart-shaped urns are in many sizes, colours and materials. The cremated remains are often a tangible memory of loved ones. Holding a small amount of the ashes is a small token of remembrance.

The idea of the heart-shaped urns resembles the 400 years old heart-shaped lead urns with an inscription identifying the contents as the heart of Toussaint Perrien, Knight of Breffellac, excavated from the basement of the Convent of the Jacobins in Rennes, France. Upon his death in 1649, they removed and embalmed his heart. Later they buried it with his wife in 1656. Hearts were spiritual symbols and were embalmed and buried at a place of importance or with a partner. It is a romantic aspect to the burials. Embalming of royalty and nobles was a practice across Europe as early as the Late Middle Ages; the Ancient Egyptians techniques influenced the procedure, physicians and surgeons carried it out. The aim was to delay the process of decay. They buried the hearts separately to the bodies they came from (Imaging, 2015, Griffiths, 2015).

One of the metal reliquaries, the silver urn from the collections of National Museum in Ljubljana, Slovenia, contains the remains (preserved heart) of Brother Gabriel Giraud (1836 – 1899), the founder of Rajhenburg monastery. The X-rays showed no presence of organic material, which would be the preserved heart of the late Trappist monk. However, the radiography did prove that the urn contained liquid, which could indicate that the urn indeed contains human remains (Knez, 2014, p. 70). Due to reservations of the Slovene museum professionals concerning the exhibition of human remains, the brother Gabriel's urn is not displayed (Knez, 2017: 66).

We compare abstract concepts, such as emotion or love, to fragile objects that can be broken. Fragile, breakable objects are also human hearts which are described as broken if they are no longer intact or do not function properly. Once a heart is broken, one must make an effort to fix it. We compare the emotional fragility with easy breakable materials, such as glass. The person that has the HEART OF GLASS (*stekleno srce*) is emotionally fragile, easily upset, or affected emotionally and who can cry easily.

A debate about the division between scientific and popular conceptions of the heart is vivid in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. At the most basic level, the division represents a comparison of the image found in a medical textbook and that used on a greeting card. However, that division is not as broad as it was in the 19<sup>th</sup> century when scientific demarcations were first established. Some 21<sup>st</sup>-century cardiologists trace the physical effect of extreme emotions (most notably grief) on the heart. Anger has an impact on the hearts of modern patients.

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Research about arterial calcification and its links with irritability and anger are reminiscent of the 18<sup>th</sup>-century discussions of anger and heart disease (Alberti, 2009, p. 520). The pain of a heartbreak can cause bodily damage – the symptoms mimic those of a heart attack, but unlike the heart attack, there is no evidence of blocked heart arteries (Is, 2016). In neurology, too, some researchers are interested in the interaction between emotions, the heart, and the brain in cognitive processes, perhaps marking a transition away from the isolated brain and back to the body as a way of understanding how we experience or remember the emotions (Alberti, 2009, p. 520).

A BROKEN HEART (or HEARTBREAK) is a common phrase used to depict the intense emotional pain, crushing, overwhelming grief or suffering after the death of a love affair or close relationship. Feelings of great sadness or disappointment occur after losing a loved one, through death, divorce, breakup, moving, rejection, betrayal or another way. We use the phrase of the broken heart to explain that a relationship has ended and that persons who formed it are no a longer single entity. The heartbreak is the opposite of the whole heart. HEART-WHOLE and HEART-FREE, among others, means to be unbroken and affections free, not in love. The broken heart is not only folklore or a phrase, as love went wrong many times in the history. Similarly, the phrase TEAR THE HEART APART (*raztrgati srce*) or tear it to pieces means to tear it with force. Similar meaning of a violent action has the phrase to RIP OUT THE HEART (*iztrgati srce*). When one cannot forget or stop loving somebody and is hurting or sacrificing for another, the violence is permitted: the person must be ripped out, removed from the heart and the memory very quickly. The other therapies include either getting rid of love memorabilia, like in the museums of heart-break or, retaining the memories and reflecting the past relationships in the art and through the life itself. Then, ultimately, one is able to move along. Figuratively, we suppose that a broken heart or a broken person reassembles when the pieces are put back and mended. Then one becomes a whole entity again, which is not divided or broken. At last, he/she can reach out to others, because the heart is figuratively supposed to be a patchable organ. The PAIN THAT PECKS IN THE HEART (*bolečina, ki kljuje v srcu*) eventually fades. Unfortunately, there is no single and unique recipe for mending the aching hearts, not even figuratively.

The HEARTBROKEN people that are suffering, experiencing loss and sorrow, can be driven to bad habits or even to suicide and murder. We find them in literature, poems, and songs. Broken hearts also changed the path of history. The HEARTBREAKERS (*lomilci src*), on the other side, are described as love fakers that are playing with fire, as tear snatchers and quarrel patchers, as smooth talkers and cool walkers, as eye-catchers, but and above all, not trustworthy persons (like in the Elvis Presley's song *You're a Heartbreaker* from 1959).

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For illustration, some artists are excellent examples of embodiment. Elvis Presley (1935 – 1977) **POURED HIS HEART** into music and **SANG FROM HIS HEART** about not so cheerful, **HEART-TEARING** emotions, such as heartbreak, heartache, loneliness, jealousy and betrayal in many other songs: *That's When Your Heartaches Begin* (1953), *Heartbreak Hotel* (1956), *Wooden Heart* (*Muss I Denn*) (1960), *One Broken Heart For Sale* (1963), *Big Love, Big Heartache* (1964), *One Track Heart* (1964), *Cross My Heart And Hope To Die* (1965), *Your Cheatin' Heart* (1965), *I'll Hold You In My Heart* (1969), *Home Is Where The Heart Is* (1971), *For The Heart* (1976). At the end, his songs and lyrics became his destiny that totally **ECLIPSED HIS HEART**. He tragically died of a “broken heart syndrome” in 1977 after the divorce and after the betrayal of his friends.

Another example of the effects of emotions on the body is a Slovene leading actor Polde Bibič (1933 – 2012). He played many theatre and film roles of people dying with heart disease or heart attack or a man seducing a farmer's daughter who dies of a heart attack after he asks her to marry him. Finally, in his old age, the actor fell sick with heart disease. When a director of a theatre visited him in a hospital, he asked him “Do you think that it is not possible that your acting people with heart disease somehow lead to your illness?” (Štefančič, 2012)

Metallic hearts express coldness and firmness. The exception is precious, valuable and expensive metal, such as gold. People with the **HEART OF GOLD** (*zlato srce*) have an inner rich heart, full of love, faith and kindness. **GOLDEN HEARTS** are figuratively shining and illuminating others; they are wise, genuinely kind and caring persons who deserve respect and loyalty.

In the ancient Egypt, the golden heart amulets were the depiction of the mind of the individual but certainly not the ordinary mind. The heart of gold as an immortal and solarized mind symbolized the wisdom (Sousa, 2007, p. 70).

Although iron is very strong metal, it can become weak if it is unpainted, unprotected or exposed to water and air for a long time. The metal can oxidize or rust and lose its strength. Thus, an old piece of metal can become rusty.

Therefore, we figuratively say that a **RUSTY HEART** (*zarjavelo srce*) is somebody who is out of practice at performing a certain task because he became less flexible, sensitive and he stiffened.



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A well-known metallic heart is a Tin Man, the character of a TIN HEART (*pločevina srce*), who appeared in the children's book *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* by L. Frank Baum (1900) and the musical fantasy film *The Wizard of Oz* (1939). Earlier notions of the Tin Man appeared in cartoons and political advertising in the 1880s and 1890s. The Tin Man from the *Wizard of Oz* is made of metal and does not have a heart. He needs oil on the way to the Wizard of Oz to ask him to give him a heart. Although tin does not rust when it is exposed to moisture, only iron does, the Tin Man worries about rusting. His wish is to become a normal human with a heart because he is a human turned into a machine. With a heart, the Tin Man could be a human-like, tender, gentle, and sentimental; he would hear his heartbeat, and he would have emotions. In his searches of acquiring feelings or a heart, he sings: "If I only had a heart." In political interpretations of the Tin Man in the 1890s, he is supposedly a worker, dehumanised by industrialisation, who lost his natural body and his heart. He has a strong sense of cooperation and love, but he needs the help of the farmers (in the story represented by a Scarecrow) to get self-confidence (Harold & Harburg, 1939; Tin Woodman, 2017).

The film industry produced plenty of variations of Tin-Man, the characters who are metaphors for the human body as a machine. Their invention coincides with the rise of technology that also became a dominant cultural factor. For instance, in the science fiction film *Iron Man* (2008) the superstar protagonist in form-fitting powered armour, Tony Stark has the machine elements in his body that are poisoning his heart, his humanity. Similarly, the android Data, that is one of the protagonists in American science-fiction television series *Star Trek, The Next Generation* (1987 – 1994), searches with his outsider's perspective on humanity for his creator's "emotion chip" in order to become more like humans.

In these films having or not having the heart means being humane and sympathetic toward other living beings. The films on the potential future scenarios of the predominant technology trends with human exoskeletons and wearable technology are projecting our fears of the society without humanity, morality and social order that is outside of our control.

## *Courage*

The phrases on the heart and the courage project an orientational metaphor, where sad is down and happy is up. The lack of courage and spirit or placing the courage in the lower parts of the body is a downward projection.

The phrase the HEART SANK INTO THE SHOES, or with another word I GOT COLD FEET; MY HEART FAILED ME (*srce je padlo v hlače*) again comes from the idea of the heart as the centre of various emotions. One of them is courage.

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By using the metaphor of sinking heart, we are saying that someone suddenly feels very worried, upset, sad, or, disappointed. The sinking of the heart means that someone has lost the courage because of a great fear. When we are discouraged, we LOSE THE HEART (*izgubiti pogum*).

We use the animal-like characteristics to describe the bravery and boldness. To HAVE A HEART OF A LION (*biti levjesrčen*) is to be very courageous or brave. If the LION-HEARTED (*levjesrčen, pogumen*) people are associated with courage, then the CHICKEN HEARTED (*boječ, plašen, strahopeten*) are associated with cowardice and fearfulness. There is a historical evidence for this.

A great military leader and warrior King Richard the Lionheart of England or Richard Cœur de Lion (1157 – 1199) got his name the Lion or the Lionheart during the two-month siege of Castillon-sur-Agen due to his noble, brave and fierce leadership. He was referred to as “this our lion” (*hic leo noster*) as early as 1187 while the byname “LIONHEART” (*le quor de lion*) was first recorded in 1191 (Richard, 2017).

The poet Andreas Capallenus in 1184 defined the adoration the heart represented as “the pure love which binds together the hearts of two lovers with every feeling of delight”. The gentry accepted his notion that the heart was the seat of affection. This led to the practice amongst various royal families in Europe of commanding that they buried hearts in different places to the rest of their remains. Whereas their bodies were entombed in family crypts, their hearts were interred in a spot, which had personal associations of happiness (Gately, 2010). The same was with King Richard the Lionheart of England. He wanted to bury his body at Fontevrault Abbey in Anjou, his leonine heart at Rouen and his brain and blood at Charroux. However, this fashion provoked the ire of the Church, which issued a decree in 1311 stating that the soul did not reside in the heart alone, but was evenly distributed throughout the body (Gately, 2010; Griffiths, 2015).

In ballads, songs, legends, plays, novels and in popular culture (in movies, animations, television series) Robin Hood is a supporter of the King Richard the Lionheart. He is also a heroic character; a highly skilled archer and swordsman who had stood up against tyranny in the interests of the common people and who had robbed from the rich and give to the poor. Robin became an outlaw during the misrule of Richard's brother John while Richard was away at the Third Crusade (Robin, 2017). Robin Hood's life inspired many authors to write books and plays (such as Sir Walter Scott, *Ivanhoe*, 1820; David Farr, *The Heart of Robin Hood*, 2011). In the film *Robin Hood: Prince of Thieves* (1991) the notorious Sheriff of Nottingham (Alan Rickman) who wanted to lock up Robin Hood (Kevin Costner) threatened him: “I'm gonna CUT YOUR HEART OUT with a spoon!” He would use

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a dull tool because that hurts more. The modern conception of Robin Hood as decent, patriotic rebel owes much to literature and films. In popular culture, a proverb “FAINT HEART NEVER WON FAIR LADY” is often associated with Robin Hood. It means if you do not take a risk and if you are without boldness or courage, you will never find a romance. It also means, “None but the brave deserves the fair.” Timidity and awkwardness will prevent you from achieving your objective and not necessarily only in love. The general meaning is that to succeed in life one must have the courage to pursue what he wants.

### *Openness, honesty*

The OPEN-HEARTEDNESS (*odkritosrčnost, iskrenost*) is the quality that is figuratively oriented from the inside out, from the body to the outer world. The person who has this quality supposes that the world is trustworthy and safe; therefore, he can easily POUR OUT THE HEART (*izliti srce*) and speaks out. The phrase to pour out whatever emotions from the heart supposes that the heart is a full container and that it works as a fountain that fills up.

When we obviously show and express our intimate emotions in gestures or verbally in an honest and open manner, we use the phrase to WEAR THE HEART ON ONE’S SLEEVE (*nositi srce na dlani*), which is based on a notion that the heart is the centre of the feelings. The idiomatic expression is not equal to all languages. In Slovene, we express emotional honesty with the phrase to WEAR THE HEART ON THE PALM. The same or similar is in Polish (*mieć serce na dłoni*), Spanish (*hablar con el corazón en la mano*) and Italian (*parlare col cuore in mano; [essere] col cuore in mano*). In Czech the expression is to WEAR THE HEART ON THE PLATE (*nosit srdce na talíři*), and in German to HAVE A HEART ON THE TONGUE (*das Herz auf der Zunge haben*) (Keber, 2011; Gutiérrez Pérez, 2008, p. 34), where the emotions travel from the spoken words into the heart. Such an image could be attributed to the fact that the person, in order to clearly show his feelings, figuratively takes the heart out of his breast and shows it on his hand, where it is more easily seen. The same happens in English with the expression to wear one's heart on one's sleeve, which finds its explanation in the chivalry tradition of the Middle Ages (Gutiérrez Pérez, 2008, p. 34).

Merriam-Webster (2017) explains why the sleeve in the English language. In the Middle Ages, a sleeve not only referred to a part of a garment covering the arm but to a piece of armour for covering and protecting the arm. In a joust, knights would often dedicate their performance to a lady of the court and wear something that

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belonged to her. It could be a token, such as a scarf or a ribbon, worn around their sleeve of armour. It indicated to the tournament's spectators who were the ladies the Knights favoured. This chivalrous and affectionate gesture may be the source of the saying "to wear your heart on your sleeve." However, this is mere conjecture since evidence is lacking that shows the use of a phrase in reference to a knight outwardly displaying who his object of affection was. The only certainty is that by the 17<sup>th</sup> century, a figurative meaning of the phrase existed, as attested by Shakespeare's use, to express emotional honesty and openness.

We use the metaphor of a journey when we talk about openness or reserve of someone's character. It is expressed as a place that is opened or locked and can be figuratively opened with a tool or with a KEY TO THE HEART (*ključ do srca*). To FIND THE WAY TO SOMEONE'S HEART (*najti pot do srca*) is an act of OPENING, OR UNLOCKING THE HEART (*odkleniti srce*). It means to make an unapproachable person as approachable, to find the way to make someone love you and to enter in the inner core of his/her being.

The material oxymoron of eternal love is a HEART LOCK or a padlock, usually with engraved names of couples in love. The heart locks appear on many bridges, fences or trees all over the world. The padlock on steel wires of bridges and with the key thrown in the river is surprisingly symbolizing love although being locked without the possibility of unlocking rather associates of an eternal jail. The love padlocks are not symbols of romantic, healthy or loving commitments but rather carry an idea of patriarchal unions which should stay unbreakable regardless of what happens and even if love turns to the unfortunate suffering of both partners. Usually, lovelocks have the support of the municipal authorities because they are tourist attractions that bring money.

*Unchain My Heart* (1961) is a song written by Bobby Sharp (1924 – 2013) and recorded by Ray Charles and later by many others. It is a plea to the beloved woman to unlock the relationship and a request for freedom from a careless, miserable and dried emotion.



*Image 2*



*Image 3*

*Lovelocks on the Butchers' Bridge (Mesarski most) in Ljubljana, Slovenia. Soon after the opening in 2010, people started to hang locks on the steel wires. Photo: Izidor Ramšak, March 9<sup>th</sup>, 2018.*

*Similarly, but less known is the Studenci Footbridge (Studenška brv) in Maribor, where the municipality removed the lovelocks in 2015 because of their weight and difficulties of maintenance. In both cases, lovers throw the keys in the river Ljubljanica or Drava below the bridges. The act is symbolizing the unbreakable bond of eternal love.*

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From 2018, some shopping malls in Slovenia also host Valentine's Day Games "Lock the love" (*Zakleni ljubezen*) for couples. They receive a free heart-shaped lock with engraved names or initials if they hang the lock on a particular outer wall of the store, take pictures and publish the photos on Facebook. A couple or a family with the best-published photos gets a prize, e.g. swimming in thermal spas. In this way, couples in the name of love increase the visibility of the companies and market in their account. Without being aware of it, they also promote the ideology of locked love and CHAINED HEARTS. They invite and encourage themselves publicly and discuss the event in virtual space, on Facebook, usually with plenty of emoticons and HEART SMILEYS that help to transmit love messages and its subtexts of mostly intensive but indecisive teenagers love. It is also evident that girls attach more to such expressions of emotion, although they try to conceal them by apparent playful teasing.

Other gestures and bodily actions such as PUTTING RIGHT HAND OVER THE HEART, or near the place where the heart is, make us appear and behave more honestly and morally. The unconscious gestures signify dignity, honour, honesty, credibility, truthfulness, sincerity and thankfulness. In the army of the United States of America, in the politics, or when saluting the flag, and in the sports all over the world, it is common to use the intentional gesture hand over the heart in the swearing. We also see it at the informal promising or singing the national hymn when awarding the medals. The gesture triggers us to act more virtuously, more morally.

We use the expression FROM THE BOTTOM/DEPTHS OF ONE'S HEART (*iz dna/globin srca*) for emphasizing that someone is very sincere about something and has a sincere, deep, genuine feeling. It also expresses the deepest, sincere appreciation and devotion. When someone SPEAKS FROM THE HEART (*govoriti iz srca*), it also means that he shows honest, sincere feelings and does not pretend or simulates. Similarly, HEART-TO-HEART (*odkrit, iskren, topel, prisrčen*) expresses sincere and hearty action. A heart-to-heart talk, for instance, is a declaration of frankness and very often a confession of love.

Finally, we associate a home to the heart, therefore we say: HOME IS WHERE THE HEART IS (*dom je tam, kjer je srce*). This phrase expresses that when things or people we love are surrounding us we feel at home; one prefers one's home to all other places, and home is where one is most emotionally attached. Home has much more to do with the quality (loved ones, places with memories, etc.) and less with the quantity (big, luxurious mansions). The proverb is attributed to Pliny the Elder, a Roman writer (A.D. 23 – 79) (Titelman, 1996).

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## Heartfelt languages

### *Sensations of the heart*

If a HEART BEATS LIKE A HAMMER (*srce tolče kot kladivo*), it audibly, strikingly strikes – most likely because of sudden excitement, fear, expectation or because of other conditions of agitation. Whenever we are overwhelmed, psychologically and in stress, the functioning of the heart accelerates, as it has to be prepared for greater efforts, for greater circulation. The heart rhythm disturbances or other more dangerous heart diseases are causing the sensation of quick striking of the heart when the HEART BEATS LIKE CRAZY (*srce tolče kot noro*). A physiologically stronger heartbeat can be a consequence of seeing a HEART-THROB. It is a physically very attractive man, especially a young, famous handsome celebrity, movie actor, pop singer or another idol. His good looks excite immature romantic feelings in women so that they fall in love with him and their hearts begin to melt whenever they see him.

By a MELTING HEART (*mehko, blago srce*), we figuratively label a person that is easily emotionally affected and softhearted; or someone who cannot control the feeling. When someone's heart melts, the person begins to feel love, affection, or sympathy for someone or something. The melting hearts change the opinion, attitudes or behaviour; they become kinder and more sympathetic.

On the contrary, figuratively and anatomically speaking, the black hearts always have a negative connotation. Talking about hearts, we often use metaphors referring to light and darkness. They relate to our eyesight, which we highly trust, and with the symbolism of light and darkness, that is, the opposition between pure, joyful on the one hand, or, sad, and bad on the other. Light is a symbol of life, and dark is a symbol of death (Ramšak, 2007, p. 24).

Therefore, the BLACK-HEARTED (*črnosrčen*) persons are very bad, cruel, mean-spirited, manipulative, unfeeling, malevolent in their dealings with others, filled with hate, animosity, jealousy, and with no moral limits. The other names for them are sociopaths or psychopaths. In medical terms, we consider a BLACK HEART as diseased, left without blood so that it would look darker and death like. Figuratively, a black heart is a deviation and against any normal, kind and loving human behaviour. It is a dangerous, cunning and spiteful person. The LIGHT-HEARTED (*brezskrben, vesel*) people, on the other hand, are calm, safe and without worries pushing them to the ground.

The synonym for black-hearted is also COLD-HEARTED (*brezsrčen brezčuten, neusmiljen*). Its intensification in coldness, a FROZEN HEART (*ledeno srce*), on the other side, is a heart turned into, covered with ice, obstructed, or blocked by ice. We comprehend a person with the frozen heart as incapable of giving love and cold towards others what make him ruthless and cruel. The

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concept of thawing or melting is important to this aspect. Frozen heart is thawed/melted when it finally falls in love and starts trusting people. Only an act of true love can thaw/melt a frozen heart.



**Image 5**

*Traditional handmade gingerbread hearts (lectovo srce) with a mirror and love inscription or verse for the dearest made by family business Perger 1757 in Slovenj Gradec, Slovenia. Today, so called little bread (mali kruhek) is used in protocol or as a souvenir.*

*Photo: <http://perger1757.si>*

In the English language in the late 13<sup>th</sup> century, the word SWEETHEART became a form of address and in the 1570s it became a synonym for a loved one. The notion comes from an adjective sweet and a noun heart. Today, sweetheart in English means a well-liked individual, kind, helpful and generous person, a person loved by another person, a very attractive or seductive looking woman. In English, we use it for talking to a person that we love or have a romantic relationship with (boyfriend, girlfriend). In Slovene such use does not exist, we use the word darling or love instead of sweetheart. Some men in English speaking countries use it for talking to women they do not know and many women find this use offensive.

As an adjective, SWEETHEART DEAL or SWEETHEART AGREEMENT also comes with reference to labour contracts. The notion was first attested in 1959 and it means a deal, a privileged treatment of a favoured person or corporation, often with illegal or unethical practices between friends so that both may profit well or that gives one side unusually favourable terms, often in return for some other benefit.



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As sugar became increasingly common in Europe during the 18<sup>th</sup> century, so the creation of sweets, pastries and cakes with this costly substance became widespread. In cultural centres such as Vienna and Paris the Rococo style, which emphasised the flamboyant and whimsical, was applied to sweetmeats for sweethearts (Gately, 2010). In Slovene, a SWEET HEART (not sweetheart) is associated with gingerbread (*lect*), the decorated pastry that is made from honey dough and shaped either with a wooden or a tin mould or by hand. During the late Middle Ages, *lect* was popular with the social elite. The gingerbread making craft is one of the oldest that was practised in cities and on squares, while in the countryside *lect* workshops appeared in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. In those times, these products were highly regarded as meaningful tokens of love. Today, honey-bread products are souvenirs, promotional items or business gifts. The red colour of a *lect* heart symbolizes love and passion. The yellow ribbon stands for infinity, while the green ribbon with flowers represents growth and progress. The small mirror inside the heart is there for young women, so they can admire themselves in it (*Live Gingerbread Museum*, 2017).



**Image 6**

*The festive, figural white bread – braided heart with four birds and decorated with the stems of *Asparagus aethiopicus* made by Tonica Jankovič from Leskovec at Krško, Slovenia. In the past, till the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, this form of ritual bread was usually baked for wedding feasts.*

*Roundtable of The Slovene Ethnological Society,*

*Ljubljana, September 14<sup>th</sup>, 2017.*

*Photo: Alenka Černelič Krošelj.*

Although people now know that their hearts are not like heart-shaped cardioids, they still prefer to associate the muscle beneath their ribs with sweet

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sensations. The food industry and confectioners exploit the sentimental overtones that the heart acquired during centuries and they produce tons of heart-shaped sweets that match every festive or everyday occasion.

A popular ingredient and decoration of both bonbons and tarts are cherries, whose paired fruits had long been a symbol for lovers, and whose cross-section is cardioid, as too are strawberries. As a food and medicine, the strawberry had been used in Europe for the days of the Romans. It was expensive and temperamental plant, which might produce lush and glorious fruit one year. However, as the English colonies in Virginia began to flourish, and Europe learned of the perfection and constancy of the new world strawberry, samples were imported. One arrived in Paris in 1636 when a botanist described it as *Fragaria americana magno fructo* – the American Strawberry with the big fruit. They crossbred the import with a female plant from Chile; the result is the modern commercial strain. This was widely cultivated, and strawberry slices on tarts and heartshaped strawberry cakes placed the heart symbol, with fresh associations (Gately, 2010).

## **Heart in religion and philosophy**

Our most distant ancestors painted the heart on the walls of caves, but what it meant to them is unknown (Gately, 2010). The earliest written references to the heart appear in the *Sumerian* epic of the goddess of love Ishtar (c. 2,500 B.C.), which speaks of hearts filled with clemency and hearts broken by grief (Boyadjian, 1980). In India, the heart was tied to emotions, intelligence, life, and being, and in ancient China, the heart was considered the centre of the intellect (Loe & Edwards, 2004, p. 286).

The *early Chinese philosophers* privileged the heart for its role in cognition. To some extent, the heart works the same way as the (other) sense organs. One of the most sophisticated and influential philosophers, Xunzi (or Hsün-tze, Hsün-tzu, Xun Kuang, Xun Qing, c. 300 – c. 230 B.C.), says that the heart draws distinctions among reasons, explanations, emotions, and desires; by implication, it does so in much the same way that the eye draws distinctions among colours. Xunzi privileged the heart in at least three ways. First, the heart controls the activity of the sense organs and of the body more generally; it is the decision-making organ. Second, the heart can acquire new knowledge, whereas the knowledge of the (other) sense organs of how to draw distinctions among their objects is innate. Third, the heart, unlike the other organs, is able to acquire knowledge of the Way. Xunzi sets out that the heart can come to know the Way through being empty (emptiness is a state in which one temporarily sets aside one's prior learning so that one can learn something new), unified, and still (Robins, 2017).

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The *ancient Egyptians* held the heart in high regard: it was the only internal organ left intact in the mummy. *The Egyptian Book of the Dead*, a collection of usually illustrated mortuary texts compiled about 1,600 B.C., contains the first physical description of the heart (Bowman, 1987, p. 337). The ancient Egyptians were the first civilization which left us a theory of its purpose. The heart was the part of the body where the soul and the intellect of its owner resided (Gately, 2010), it was the source of human intelligence, emotion, and the conscience (Amulet, 2008). Unlike the other internal organs that were extracted during the process of mummification and stored in special jars in the tomb (Amulet, 2008; Gately, 2010), the heart was left inside the corpse after death. Even the brain, which today represent the source of human thought, was removed from the body through the nose. However, the Egyptians kept the heart in the body so that the deceased would have it at the judgment in the afterlife. The Goddess Ma'at would weigh it against the feather of truth in the afterlife and punish the HEAVY-HEARTED. They placed the HEART AMULETS within the mummy's wrappings near the chest of the deceased so that if his/her real heart was damaged or destroyed the amulet could take its place. The Egyptian visual art portrayed the heart itself as a scarab or dung beetle (Amulet, 2008; Gately, 2010). There are three types of specifically funerary scarabs: heart scarabs, pectoral scarabs and naturalistic scarabs. The HEART SCARABS became popular in the early New Kingdom (between the 16<sup>th</sup> century B.C. and the 11<sup>th</sup> century B.C.) and remained in use until the Third Intermediate Period (c. 1069 B.C. – c. 664 B.C.) (Scarab, 2018).

The HEART SCARABS are large scarabs (4 – 12 cm long) often made from dark green or dark coloured stones and are not pierced for suspension. The base of the heart scarab was usually carved, either directly or on a gold plate fixed to the base, with hieroglyphs, which name the deceased and repeat some or all of spell 30B from *The Egyptian Book of the Dead*. The spell commands the deceased's heart not to give evidence against the deceased when the gods of the underworld are judging the deceased. They hung the heart scarabs around the mummy's neck with a gold wire, and the scarab itself was held in a gold frame (Scarab, 2018).

Symbolic contexts in the use of heart amulets were illuminated conscience, wisdom, justification and divine birth. The Egyptians connected the contexts of the use of the amulet with the idea of purity. While they used the amulets as a royal decoration, they were also a symbol of purification in the presence of the Pharaoh. The same idea of purity is in the amulet of justification, since it was a symbol of the purity measured by the weighting of the heart (Sousa, 2007, p. 62-67).

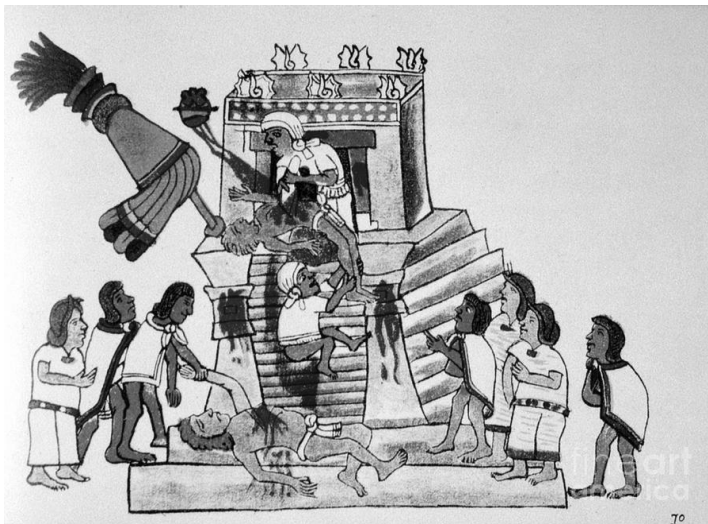
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Among the *ancient Maya* (c. A.D. 250 – 900) right through to the final stages of the Spanish conquest in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, HUMAN HEART SACRIFICE was a supreme religious expression. A number of Maya and Spanish colonial texts describe this human sacrifice (*Madrid Codex*, *Popul Vuh*, *Annals of the Kaqchikels*, *Songs of Dzitbalche*, Landa's *La Relación de las cosas de Yucatán*). The amputation of the still-beating heart and the offering of this vital organ considered the essence of life and nourishment for the divine forces. The Maya accomplished heart sacrifice with predetermined acts regulated by a set of rules. The ritual heart removal, a violent vivisection of a struggling victim, was probably completed in less than eight minutes. Religious motivations were the removal of a vital organ and the ritual destruction of the victim's life (Tiesler & Cucina, 2006, p. 505, 506; Human, 2017). The heart extraction with the flint knife was the most common form of human sacrifice besides the decapitation, disembowelment, entombing and the arrow sacrifice. It was influenced by the method used by the Aztecs in the Valley of Mexico. The heart removal usually took place in the courtyard of a temple, or upon the summit of the pyramid-temple (c. 900 – 1524). When they removed the heart, they gave it to the priest who smeared blood upon the image of the temple's deity. Sometimes they would throw the corpse down the pyramid steps to the courtyard below. The assistant priests skinned the corpse, except for the hands and feet. The priest would then remove his ritual attire and dress himself in the skin of the sacrificial victim before performing a ritual dance that symbolised the rebirth of life. If it was a notably courageous warrior who had been sacrificed then the corpse would be cut into portions, and parts would be eaten by attending warriors and other bystanders. They gave the hands and feet to the priest who, if they had belonged to a war captive, wore the bones as a trophy. Later the angry Maya sacrificed the Spanish captives, friars and missionaries, during the Spanish conquest of Yucatan between 1511 and 1697 (Human, 2017).

An American film *Apocalypto* (2006), played by the actors with indigenous backgrounds, shows a peaceful Maya tribe from the early 16<sup>th</sup> century in the Central America that is brutally attacked by warriors who are seeking slaves and human beings for sacrifice for their gods. The film, as much as it was financially successful, was criticised because of the historical inaccuracies.

The most controversial part in the film is the bloody SACRIFICE OF THE HEART that together with a hidden scream and shock of victims lasts only ten seconds. The ritual acts of placing the victim on the altar, ripping his heart out of the chest, showing it to the masses beneath the pyramid, the agony of still alive man, his decapitation and throwing first the head and then the rest of the corpse from the top of the pyramid, lasts less than a minute and a half (*Apocalypto*, 2006). In the film,

they sacrificed hundreds of people. However, there are no archaeological evidences that Mayan people sacrificed on such a large scale. The director of the film, the actor Mel Gibson, copied that from the Aztecs, who sacrificed 25,000 people a year. Unfortunately, the film just cannot decide which civilisation it wants to present the Mayan or the Aztec. In addition, the film is on the collapse of Mayan civilisation and the conquistador arriving at the same time, although the Mayan civilisation ended 600 years before their arrival. The numerous historical misrepresentations of the Indians and exaggerations in the film only show the use of an alternate history for the sake of entertainment.



**Image 7**

*The depiction of Aztec human sacrifice with extracting the heart in a religious document Codex Magliabechiano, Folio 70, from the mid-16th century (Complete colour facsimiles of the hand-painted manuscript is stored in the National Central Library in Florence, Italy.*

*Codex Magliabechiano bases on an earlier unknown codex).*

*The function of the extracted heart is the transformation into a god.*

Among the *ancient Greeks*, there was a disagreement about the role of the heart. In the earliest written mentions of the heart, they already linked it with love, grief, pride, courage, life, death and music (Bowman, 1987, p. 337; Young, 2007, p. 3). For Aristotle, the heart (or its analogue in bloodless animals) is crucial. It is the first part created by the heat derived from the semen of the male parent, and henceforth it is the primary internal source of that heat and

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thus of further development (Singer, 2016). Aristotle considered the physical heart as the seat of intellect, and this view prevailed until the days of the Roman physician Galen, who decided instead that it was responsible for the emotions, with the exception of love, which resided in the liver (Gately, 2010).

The Platonic tripartition – rational, spirited, and desiderative that correspond to and are located in the brain, the heart and the liver – is central for Galen’s physiology of the whole body. Galen relies on proofs from plausibility and analogy: for example, that the heart is the seat of the spirited part of the soul (related to responses of anger and indignation) gains plausibility from the fact that one observes perturbations of the heart in certain particular excited states of mind. He demonstrates the fact that the spirited – a range of emotional reactions related to anger, indignation, shame, pride, anxiety, fear – is located in the heart by a number of examples, both from everyday experience and from traditional thought (Singer, 2016).

The Greeks also used the pictogram ♥ to depict ivy or vine-leaves, respectively the symbols of constancy and regeneration. They depicted carnal love as a naked boy armed with a bow and arrows, with the image of the god Eros. When Eros wished to curse or bless people with the emotion that he ruled, he aimed his darts at their eyes rather than their breasts and they felt its effects throughout their entire bodies (Gately, 2010).

The arrival of *Christianity* compounded the confusion over the meaning of heart, the purpose of love, and the function of the heart. The Christians followed *Judaic* lore vis-à-vis the heart, which held that it was home to all our feelings. In Judaism, the sacred texts were full of references to the glad-, the kind-, the heavy-, and the hard-hearted; they decided that love was a metaphysical concept, which had nothing to do with the world of the flesh or any part thereof. They adopted the heart as an icon of the vine, the Classical symbol of rebirth, and used it on their tombs to symbolize the hope of resurrection. However, the pagan tribes of Europe who converted to Christianity had different thoughts about the purpose of the heart, which they generally associated with courage, and alternative meanings for the cardioid shape. In the eastern parts of the continent, they used the cardioid shape in horse amulets and depicted the path of the sun through the heavens over the seasons. The *triquerta* carvings of the *Celts*, meanwhile, which also resemble the heart, represent eternity, and the similar *Viking valknut* design symbolized the power of the god Odin to induce battle-madness in warriors. When these disparate cultures united under the cross, they also developed a common secular iconography, and in the medieval era established the first link between affection and the cardioid shape, with the arrival of the concept of Courtly, or Romantic, love (Gately, 2010).

The Church fought for possession of the cardioid symbol, the definition of love, and the purpose of the heart for much of the middle ages. Its attempts

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at dominance were spearheaded by a doctrinal innovation – devotion to the SACRED HEART, which manifested the love and suffering of Jesus Christ. Female devotees were especially prone to visions of the divine organ. They were led by Saint Gertrude who had a hallucination in the late 13<sup>th</sup> century during which she rested her head on the chest of Jesus and heard his heart beat. She asked St. John, also present in her vision, if he too had enjoyed those “delightful pulsations” when he embraced Christ at the Last Supper. The apostle confirmed he had, but had kept quiet about the sensation. He saved its revelation for a time when the world had grown weary and cold and needed such surprises to rekindle its love. Saints Mechtilde & Marguerite continued Gertrude’s good work and established the beating heart of Jesus as symbolic of the love he had for humankind (Gately, 2010).

With the rise of Christianity, the heart took on a new symbolic importance. The heart of Jesus, representing the love he had for humankind, became a medium, if not an object, of worship. Although the cult of the Sacred Heart had its origin in early Christianity and was revived by St. Francis of Assisi (1182 – 1226) and St. Catherine of Siena (1347 – 1380), it did not grow into a widespread movement until the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Indeed, most medieval monks were inclined to associate the heart with original sin. Gradually the image of the Sacred Heart of Jesus acquired the visual characteristics that it has today: flames, a cross, a crown of thorns, a ray of light, or a wound, usually caused by an arrow (any of these features singly or in combination). The wound reference to Augustine's Confessions (“You will pierce our hearts with the arrow of your love.”) and the attribute of the wounded heart refers to the famous vision of St. Teresa of Avila (1515 – 1582), who reported that a winged angel had pierced her heart through repeatedly with a golden divine arrow until she moaned in ecstasy. Her heart, preserved in alcohol since 1582, enables the diagnosis of her death: Theresa d’Avila could perhaps have died from a coronary thrombosis with rupture of the heart: the arrow, which pierced her heart during her illness, was probably the manifestation of an attack of angina. Following Teresa's vision, the heart pierced by an arrow – symbolizing revelation through emotion – came into greater prominence. It was not until the 19<sup>th</sup> century that the cult of the Sacred Heart reached its climax in Catholic countries, giving rise to images in a variety of media: Velvet banners, porcelain water stoups, oil lamps, embroidered wall hangings, and postcards adorned homes or churches, all featuring the wounded heart of Jesus (Bowman, 1987, p. 337-340).

The visual iconography of the Sacred Heart developed during the Counter-Reformation, which emphasised those parts of Christianity that required faith to imagine. Paintings appeared showing Christ opening his robe to reveal a heart shaped heart, or the same, solo, encircled with a crown of thorns, and topped with a halo and another crown of gold. The church also developed a reciprocal doctrine: The Immaculate Heart of Mary, which symbolised the love of human-

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kind for their Saviour and encouraged the production of images in which Mary too displayed a radiant organ (Gately, 2010).

In Roman Catholic Church, the Sacred Heart is the heart of Jesus Christ, which is a symbol of his love and sacrifice. The representation of this is usually bleeding, as an aid to devotion. Jesus Christ's physical heart is the representation of the divine love for humanity. The Sacred Heart is a flaming heart with divine light, pierced by the lance-wound, encircled by the crown of thorns, surmounted by a cross, and bleeding. Sometimes the image is shown shining within the bosom of Christ with his wounded hands pointing at the heart. The wounds and crown of thorns allude to the manner of Jesus' death, while the fire represents the power of divine love (Sacred, 2017).



**Image 8**

*Ex voto picture of Immaculate Heart of Mary behind the church altar in Ruše, Slovenia. It has written thanks of a grateful convalescent, the cottager's daughter. The message below the picture, says "In the thank for the repeated help in a 25 years old illness after begging the mother of God of Ruše on August 15, 1903." Photo: Mojca Ramšak, Ruše, May 26<sup>th</sup>, 2017.*

The IMMACULATE HEART OF MARY is a devotional name used to refer to the interior life of the Blessed Virgin Mary, her joys and sorrows, her virtues and hidden perfections, her virginal love for God the Father, her maternal love for her son Jesus, and her compassionate love for all people. Traditionally, seven wounds or swords pierce the heart, in homage to the seven dolours of Mary, and the roses or another type of flowers wrap around the heart. The veneration of



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the Heart of Mary is analogous to the worship of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. There are differences in this analogy. The devotion to the heart of Jesus is directed to the “divine heart” as overflowing with love for humanity. In the devotion to Mary, the attraction is the love of her heart for Jesus and for God (Immaculate, 2017).

Devotional objects, pictures, writings and relics, related to religious worship of Sacred Heart of Jesus and Immaculate Heart of Mary are part of our life.

Relics (Latin: *reliquiae* = mortal remains) are mortal remains or personal belongings of saints. A Major relic might be the complete body of a saint, or else individual body parts such as a head, arm, leg, bone (*humerus*, *ulna* or *femur*) or other body part that was affected during the saint’s martyrdom (a heart or a tongue if they have been miraculously preserved). A reliquary can be only a part of a saint or a blessed, approved by the Church. Sometimes a relic is an object a saint touched, such as a garment. The Church worships them as exceptionally holy. Larger relics are usually enshrined and kept in churches but also in a public or semi-public oratory, in a private oratory or in a private house only. Some devout individuals can even have the honour of keeping smaller relics at home and can carry them on their persons (Knez, 2014, p. 10-11).

The breverls (that is folded sheets of holy cards, also a small pendant in the form of a tiny cushion worn around the neck, on either rosaries or an amulet cord or else stitched onto clothes) were supposed to bring happiness and to protect from illness. The amulets or talismans’ power depends significantly on the strength of people’s will and faith. A breverl functioned as both a talisman and as medicine. It protected the wearer from evil, demons, witches, possession, plague, fire or inclement weather. Some breverls had a shape like hearts; they made them for cribs or little children’s beds. Such objects soon became merchandise. At first, one could obtain them from local healers or so-called “witches”, but later it was possible to buy them at blessings or village fairs. In some shops even today, it is possible to buy these objects for good luck and as protection against illness (Knez, 2014, p. 48).

However, the Church did not achieve its desired monopoly over the heart symbol. The appearance of a new use for the symbol, which put it in front of more people’s eyes than ever before happened in 1480, shortly after the appearance of the printing press, when the commercial manufacture of playing cards commenced in France. Printed cards used hearts as their second suite instead of the cups, representing the Holy Grail, which hitherto had appeared on hand-painted decks. Whilst the HEARTS ON CARDS maintained a sacred connection – the four suites were analogous to the Medieval feudal estates: spades, which

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had been swords, symbolised the gentry; hearts, which once were grails, the clergy; diamonds spoke for the merchants; and clubs were linked with agriculture and hence the peasantry – they were employed in a profoundly secular context. People associated the heart symbol with gambling instead of love, whether for God or vice versa (Gately, 2010).

Another controversial phenomenon regarding the Sacred Heart is FASHIONING RELIGION. When a religion becomes fashion, specific religious symbols echo important religious events and church equipment (Battista, 2013).

The religion and fashion are not mutually exclusive. The motifs used in modern fashion, such as catholic cross, sacred heart, paintings, images of saints, drawings, altarpieces, statues, photographs of popes, Byzantine religious mosaics, roman temples, cathedrals, ornaments from baroque churches, Jewish symbols, Muslim hijabs, or even Satanist attires, are sometimes fused and mixed together. The technology improved so much to allow the reproduction of any image of the fabrics. Each important religious event, from religious processions to the death of a Pope, can become extremely fashionable and can be used and misused by the textile and fashion industry. If sex sells, why not using the same principle for religion? In fashion industry, you can sell sex and religion together. Richly embroidered or printed dresses for both sexes in the same colours as icons or other religious objects, reproduction of the attire of certain statuses, nuns, cardinals, and popes, lace looking like sacramental linens, accessorised with jewellery, scarves like stoles, shoes and bags that resemble the richness of church or prayer equipment, are no longer blasphemous in high-fashion collections.

Many designers find the pomp of the Church, the artisanship behind the rich vestments, and the beauty of some icons and statues incredibly inspiring. There is one main reason why fashion designers love using religion as inspiration. They are not trying to be extremely controversial, but copying religious paintings and imagery is copyright free. The sad truth is we use these symbols not to provoke or to find holiness in a wardrobe; we essentially use them to save money in fashion industry (Battista, 2013).

In some cases, the Vatican even approves the creation of new design, such as the little black priestly dress (in Italian *l'abito pretino*, *l'abito talare*), created by the Fontana sisters for Ava Gardner in 1955 and a version of it worn by actress Anita Ekberg in the film *La dolce vita* in 1960. In the 1980', pop stars like Madonna used religious imagery in her music video spots (*Like a Prayer*, 1989), wearing rosary beads and crosses as necklaces. In time, we got accustomed to seeing religion entering fashion and pop culture. Not that many people criticised models wearing luxurious bags covered in Miraculous Medals or gold and silver heart-shaped ex-votos pinned

at the waist (Battista 2013). In the Catholic churches you may see the walls or behind the altar sacristies covered with *ex-voto* pictures and objects, among them silver hearts, that represent tokens showing how a believer's vow (*voto*) was fulfilled. Ex-votos influenced the world of fashion and buying second-hand ex-votos in street markets for covering garments is a cheaper version of high fashioned religion (Battista, 2010).



*Image 9*

*Fashion, music and film industry are trivialising the religious symbols.*

*Dolce Gabbana Sacred Heart Fashion, Spring 2015.*

<http://www.dolcegabbana.com/>

The worldwide circulation of the heart symbol through art, playing cards and above all, however, through religious worship, has made the heart the probably most popular non-geometric symbol (Dietz, 1998). Over the centuries, the red playing-card heart has become familiar to us through art, architecture, advertising and kitsch. Vegetal decorations, such as fig leaves and later ivy leaves appeared in the third millennium B.C. and they anticipated the modern heart shape. The transformation of the ivy leaf into the red playing-card heart of spiritual and physical love took place parallel to the secularization of the religious heart metaphor into the heart found in the literature of the middle

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ages. The monastic illustrators, inspired by the art and ornamentation of the latter years of antiquity and Roman times, painted Trees of Life with heart-shaped leaves. In paintings of the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> centuries, ivy leaves appeared in love scenes, before long in red – the colour of warm blood, which had signified good luck, health and love since prehistoric times (Dietz, 1998).

From then on, the red heart spread quickly across Europe, especially in the area of the Catholic Church. Various facts are responsible for this:

- The profanation of the heart-shaped leaf to a symbol of physical love, but also a symbol of compassion and devotion in secular and religious art.
- The acceptance of the heart image in the Sacred Heart cult of the Catholic Church.
- The use of the symbol in heraldry, as a watermark in paper production, and as a company stamp in art printing, which was at the same time an anticipation of modern commercial art.
- The inclusion of the heart in the deck of cards: at the end of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, cards began to be standardized, especially the symbols. The red heart replaced the goblets found on Italian tarot cards (Dietz, 1998).

## **Final crystallization**

In the end, we can finally crystallize some relevant findings that help us understand our reception of this vital organ. First, from a plethora of seemingly scattered and changing human heart phenomena we can conclude that the heart with its multiple historical, cultural and linguistic meanings goes far beyond the human anatomy. In fact, social and cultural notions overlap with and influence the attempts to understand the anatomical functions of the heart. Beyond the medical knowledge, we find the figures of the heart that influence our beliefs in somatic phraseology, culture, religion and arts.

Secondly, the philosophical insight into the bodily schema as something with structure places the heart in the centre of the body. Culturally motivated ideas of where to map feeling, thinking or knowing in the human body places the heart in the concept of cardiocentrism and leaves the other two conceptual strategies (cerebrocentrism, abdominocentrism) empty. The heart only rarely metaphorically “travels” in other body parts and leaves the heart region. When it happens, it usually goes “down” what indicates troubles. Conceptually the heart is also a container for emotions. If it is full, it brings us to the emotional states, described as up, if it is empty, we are down. It gives us other orientations towards upper and bottom states, and, it is the purpose of the destination. In addition, as a vessel of emotions, it strongly affects our health and wellbeing. The mind concepts pour over and in the real physical body.

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Third, the language we speak shape the way we think. The supposition that the world languages are biased and narrowed by culture and therefore the uses of the word heart would be in accordance with social or cultural differences was not confirmed. On the contrary, when we compare linguistic evidence across cultures and through time, regardless of how languages differ in their descriptions of numbers, colours, events, space and time, nouns, etc., we find almost universal attention to the heart across cultures. The heart idioms as subjects of linguistic examination show the same or similar attributes. This means that different languages require paying attention to some universal attributes of the physical heart and create equally universal concepts of the heart.

Fourth, the heart's symbolic meaning turned from the conception of love into widely abused and the commercialized idea that everything is for sale. Yet, the intuitive link between the heart and love that was expressed through history is very much still alive in cross-cultural perspective.

The evidence presented in this paper shows that we intuitively use these culturally embedded notions of the heart that had changed only slightly through history. In comparison to that, it would be equally instructive to have a cultural analysis of the reception of human brains because we also put them on a body map as a central organ. However, if we are asked to show on the body the location of the mind, we would likely point at our heads. But when we have to point our feelings, we would probably touch and point at our hearts. The heart remains an emotional centre, and not just in words. It is not surprising mental hygiene recommends, "Listening to the heart." It beats for you so listen close.

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