



# The American Journal of Bioethics

ISSN: (Print) (Online) Journal homepage: <https://www.tandfonline.com/loi/uajb20>

## The End of Personhood

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To cite this article: Jennifer Blumenthal-Barby (12 Jan 2023): The End of Personhood, The American Journal of Bioethics, DOI: [10.1080/15265161.2022.2160515](https://doi.org/10.1080/15265161.2022.2160515)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/15265161.2022.2160515>



Published online: 12 Jan 2023.



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### ABSTRACT

The concept of personhood has been central to bioethics debates about abortion, the treatment of patients in a vegetative or minimally conscious states, as well as patients with advanced dementia. More recently, the concept has been employed to think about new questions related to human-brain organoids, artificial intelligence, uploaded minds, human-animal chimeras, and human embryos, to name a few. A common move has been to ask what these entities have in common with persons (in the normative sense), and then draw conclusions about what we do (or do not) owe them. This paper argues that at best the concept of “personhood” is unhelpful to much of bioethics today and at worst it is harmful and pernicious. I suggest that we (bioethicists) stop using the concept of personhood and instead ask normative questions more directly (e.g., how ought we to treat this being and why?) and use other philosophical concepts (e.g., interests, sentience, recognition respect) to help us answer them. It is time for bioethics to end talk about personhood.

### KEYWORDS

Neuroethics; moral theory; Philosophy; animal experimentation/research; disability; chronic conditions; and rehabilitation