

Donation of organs and tissues: the centrality of the heart and the emergence of the brain expressed in an art projectⁱ

Zenilda Cardozo Sartori^I; Luís Henrique Sacchi dos Santos^{II}

^IPrograma de Pós-Graduação em Educação em Ciências: Química da Vida e Saúde (PPGQVS) – UFRGS. **Address:** Avenida Osvaldo Aranha, 824/32, Bom Fim, Porto Alegre, RS. 90035-191 < z.cardozo@ibest.com.br >.

^{II}Programa de Pós-Graduação em Educação em Ciências: Química da Vida e Saúde - PPGQVS/PPGEdu – UFRGS.

Abstract

The centrality of the heart and the emergence of the brain in texts written by participants in the artistic action ‘Donations of the Body’ are analyzed in this paper. The participants produced these texts in order to apply for receiving one organ in the form of an artistic object. The texts are discussed based on the contributions of authors who theorize about the body. The action was developed with the aim of provoking tension in the intersection between arts and sciences. This process put the participant in the place of a patient who needs transplant and, at the same time, in the place of an artist, seeking space to exhibit his works. A significant point evidenced during the research is also analyzed: that which we can call symbology and phantasms, present in the discourses about transplants. Finally, the centrality attributed to the heart - as the seat of emotions - in competition with the brain – an organ that represents rationality, the place of the ‘government of the self’ - is discussed.

Keywords: donation of organs and tissues, heart, brain, arts system.

INTRODUCTION

In this transition period in which we live, a period of liquid concepts and endless cultures (Canevacci, 2005) that question the linearity of our worldview, the arts system – not immune to this instability – reflects the problematization of its own concepts and the possible relations to other fields of knowledge. In the contemporary artistic production, this is expressed, for example, in the coexistence of different trends occupying the same spaces, provoking important tensions both in the art field and in others. One of them – the object of discussion of this text – regards science, more specifically, the increasing medicalization of society – a society that has been increasingly narrating itself and thinking of itself based on

technobiomedical knowledge¹.

Different contemporary Brazilian authors (Sibilia, 2009, 2002; Ortega, 2008a; Couto, Goellner, 2007; Sant'Anna, 2004) have analyzed the forms through which individuals have been constantly interpellated by discourses that favor care and interventions on the body based on a technobiomedical matrix. These discourses, which problematize the body, are also one of the trends to approach contemporary art, characterized by simultaneity and plurality of proposals, themes, techniques, styles and reflections. We perceive the increasing number of such approaches through videos, photographs, installations and presentations with different emphases on the living body, which is organic, fragmented, visceral and, in addition, the fleshless and digitalized body of the new technologies. All the approaches are part of the same system of relations responsible for the formation of the body – a body that is culturally constructed in the scope of technobioscience.

In view of the great number of discourses about the body that have emerged nowadays in different areas of knowledge, one might have the impression that such discussion would be emptied, that the body would finally have been trivialized. On the contrary, what has been observed is an increasing centrality of the body, which produces even more questionings and uncertainties about it (Ortega, 2008a; Sant'Anna, 2000) and, as a result, the constitution of a fertile field for artistic creation. The plurality and diversity of propositions about the body as an art object, which go beyond the ones related to digital performance and interactions (widely disseminated today when one talks about body interventions), may produce, also, important developments to be explored, not only by art, but in all fields of knowledge. The present study is included in the current trend of art that tensions the body as a metaphor. It attempted to place itself in the intersection between the field of the technobiosciences and that of the arts, exploring the potentiality of an art project as a form of favoring the involvement of the body in an action, encompassing not only the body of the artist (who is the main author of this text), but also, the body of the spectator. To achieve this, an artistic action project was developed that is fundamentally political (because it articulated, in a tensed way, the circulation of two systems that are instituted and official: the system of organs transplant and the system of exhibition of works of art). This project implied the constitution of a metaphor of the fragmented body, and proposed a reflection on the theme of the body in current times, concerning body health, bioethics, transformation and optimization, especially regarding the system of donation of organs and tissues. This proposition became a form of art that, as Bourriaud (2009) points out, happens in the sphere of human relations and of their social context. Thus, we think that articulating the issues related to the theme of donation of organs and tissues to the circuit of the arts allows us to tension

¹ We use, here, the provocative understanding of technoscience proposed by Donna Haraway (1997). We think it is possible to include the word “bio” between technology and science to, together with Haraway, understand the mutations that are occurring in the way in which biology has narrated our present and our futures based on a “history of truths”, many of which have started in the past and continue in the present.

the political dimension related to this theme, considering the biopolitical register of the health imperative, of the need to take care of life and the body and, therefore, of *making one live more*² (Foucault, 1999).

The trajectory of this artist has been marked by different approaches to the body. However, in this study, the presentation of the organs (as if they were her own organs) in the form of artist objects for donation constituted the central element. Each organ was built by means of the artistic creation processes (drawing, painting and object), and they were presented to the public through the action entitled *Donations of the Body* and, subsequently, donated to the participants selected by means of the application proposed in a public notice similar to those in which artists compete for a place in an exhibition. The political action is manifested here in the attempt to position the spectators at the center of the question about transplants (as patients) and, at the same time, as artists (through a public notice that imitated some of the selective processes adopted by the arts system). This action was carried out initially via web³ and, afterwards, it was presented in an exhibition space⁴. The webpage (blog) contained an explanatory post about the proposal; the text of the public notice with instructions; links to the online enrolment form, to additional information about the artist (curriculum and video produced in the atelier), to access the images of the organs/works of art available for donation, as well as links to pages of institutions connected with health and the transplant system.

During the period of development of the action, it is possible to say that the public was invited to reflect, question and position themselves about the theme. Those who wanted to participate in the action (as patients) filled in an enrolment form, whose last item asked them to produce a text justifying the wish and/or the need to receive the chosen organ/work of art. With this text, it was expected that the understandings that circulate in the culture about transplants of organs (their importance, the solidarity dimension, the knowledge apprehended in the media, among others) would be manifested. The texts produced by the participants constituted the research's main material for analysis. The research aimed to discuss the way in which the discourses about the body that circulate in our culture, especially on the donation of organs and tissues, produce ways of thinking and acting over the body and health. Furthermore, there was also an attempt to understand in what way such discourses were presented under certain representations and how they were articulated in the participants' productions. The writing process of these justifications involved, in a certain way, the 'donation' of the person who applied to receive an organ: a donation of his time, of his knowledge about the organ in question, of the search for the necessary information and of the creation itself.

The Cultural Studies, inspired in post-structuralism, especially those that are

² All the quotations have been translated into English for the purposes of this paper.

³ Blog <<http://doacoesdocorpo.blogspot.com>> with enrolments of the public who were interested during the period from August 27 to September 15, 2009.

⁴ This exhibition was held in the Fahrion room of the Rectory of Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul, and was opened for visitation from November 24 to December 18, 2009.

based on a Foucaultian approach (Costa, 2005), constituted both the theoretical framework that supported the research and the field from which the participants' textual productions were analyzed. In this direction, we considered the discourses and representations that were articulated in the formulation of the justifications for the reception of the organ/work of art, not as a way of revealing "truths" that are hidden in their interior, but with the intention of encompassing the relations that the discourses put to function: that is, "of historical relations, of very concrete practices, which are 'alive' within the discourses" (Fischer, 2001, p.199).

Some of the texts presented justifications based on art, on the artistic object and on the desire to have the work of art. Other texts mentioned the motto of the project, referring to the potentiality of art to provoke and produce meaning and, also, to the selection criteria adopted by the two systems – that of the arts and that of transplants. Concerning the act of donating and receiving, some texts highlighted the need to take care of the organ and its preciousness (something that is precious, valuable), considering, furthermore, that receiving a donation would represent a "divine favor", as the person would have one more chance to be happy, to rethink the way he conducted his life, not only in relation to physical aspects, but also regarding human relations. In some of the justifications, terms like generosity, solidarity and positiveness were used to refer to the choice of this theme for the research. Besides, some of the participants seemed to have consulted biology compendiums and books about health, as they highlighted the organs' biological characteristics/properties, thus reproducing some of the discourses about the body in current times. Examples of this emerged in the reference to discourses about the risk and responsibility for the maintenance of a long and healthy life; the obsolescence of the body and the need for body perfection through the replacement of organs that do not function "correctly". They also highlighted the symbolical aspect of the organs.

The initial reading of a total of forty-two (42) received texts, considering the number of people who enrolled for each organ and the organs that did not receive enrolments (pancreas, trachea and gall bladder), revealed a significant element: the participants' preference for the heart⁵, represented by a total of eight enrolments, of which seven evidenced what we called symbolical aspects related to it.

Observing the popularity of this organ, we were surprised to verify that what we can call "the centrality of the heart" (when compared to the other organs) emerged not only in the participants' choices, but also in the artist's creative process (which started through its anatomic and physiological investigation). This affected, in an unintentional way, the construction of the organs/works of art, the design of the webpage's layout (<http://doacoesdocorpo.blogspot.com>), as well as the entire material used in

⁵ Forty-two enrolments were received. The heart was the most requested organ/work of art (8 enrolments), followed by the stomach (5); neuroglial cells (4); lung (4); eye (3); liver (2); hypophysis (2); kidney (2); uterus (2); bone (1); skin (1); ovary (1); cochlea (1). The organs/works of art trachea, pancreas and gall bladder did not receive enrolments. Six participants applied to organs that were not available for donation; among them, the brain.

the dissemination of the research – invitations (virtual and printed), posters, folders – and, finally, the assembly of the exhibition *Donations of the Body* (fig. 1 and 2). Particularly in the latter, the organ/work of art ‘heart’ was the central element (presented ‘in suspension’ inside an acrylic cube) which determined the disposition of the other works in the exhibition space.

Heart-feeling and Heart-pump

Consulting the dictionary (Ferreira, 2004) about the meaning of the word ‘heart’ would suffice for us to predict what would be the relationship of the majority of the participants in the artistic action with the organ, because, besides the meanings about the heart’s anatomy and physiology, there are definitions related to its symbology, like “the human heart, considered the seat of feelings, emotions, conscience; the individual’s nature or emotional part; love, affection”.

The heart was the most requested organ by the participants. The majority of the justifications referred to it as the place of emotion, desires, love and friendship – a list that, besides the definitions found in the dictionary, has been broadly explored by poets and other arts professionals throughout the history of mankind. Based on this, it is possible to ask if such preference would evidence its greater popularity when compared to other organs, such as the pancreas, for example, which did not receive any enrolment, even though it is also a vital organ. Thus, one might wonder if there is a hierarchy of the organs and how this greater importance given to some in relation to others might have influenced the choice of the participants in the artistic action. Or else, due to the greater facility of articulation provided by what has been instituted throughout time.

The participant L.B. (artist and researcher, 40 years old)⁶, for example, decided not to choose any of the organs: “any organ to me, and I’ll certainly take care of it very well, because all of them are very important”. This fragment draws attention to the existence of a hierarchy among the organs – frequently found in different manifestations -, thus highlighting the relevance given to certain organs to the detriment of others. This can be understood based on Ortega’s ideas (2008a), when he mentions that “the body’s presence has a paradoxical nature, emerging at the same time as an inescapable presence and a fundamental absence” (p.76). In other words, to this author, the body is an organized field in which certain organs and activities stand out while others retreat. He mentions differences of perception in relation to some organs, especially those connected with the

⁶ From now on we present some fragments taken from the texts of the participants in the action (not only of those who were selected to receive the works of art/organs), using them as “real text”, that is, as manifestations of a discourse that circulates in the culture about the importance of certain organs to the detriment of others. This means that we did not focus, in the scope of the analysis presented here, on discussing the possible interrelations between gender, age, profession, generation, among others. However, we present the participants’ age and profession so as to mark to the readers “the places” from which the participants spoke even when positioned in a given discourse about the donation of organs (that we assume is that of technobioscience and its developments in the scope of the different media).

senses that are projected to the exterior, as opposed to the body's interior, to viscerality. Organs that are crucial to the maintenance of life, but cannot be perceived, unless through pain⁷, or 'seen' through medical images; therefore, there is the need of the mediation of specialized professionals (Monteiro, 2008). According to Sant'Anna (2005), in our time, these technological resources have enabled to disturb the "silence of the organs", invading the intimacy of organs that, beneath the skin, remain in obscurity. Through their popularization (and trivialization), such images have helped in the constitution of 'truths' about the body, about health and illness at each period of time.

The majority of the texts requesting the donation of organs/works of art presented traces of these elements, recognizable through daily knowledge (in a symbolic and phantasmatic⁸ way). We selected some fragments about the heart and stomach:

I need this organ because it is the one that means LOVE, so that, in view of a world with so many wars and so much starvation, I remember it still exists... the heart reminds me of MOTOR so that I extract from it energy and willingness to fight for the right things...

R. V. S. Dentist, 32 years old.

I need a new stomach, as mine is saturated with swallowing my pride so many times. With having to swallow injustices, with swallowing and not being able to digest so much falseness, so much corruption.

T. M. Quality Manager, 37 years old.

In her article *Coração estrangeiro em corpo de acolhimento*, Vaysse (2005) points to the strength of the phantasmatic ideas around the heart (and other transplanted organs), which are capable of endangering a transplant surgery that was technically successful, as the patient brings with him an affective experience in relation to the organ. According to this author, the transplanted subject undergoes a re-elaboration of the body's image:

mourning your own lost heart to admit this other heart experienced as a stranger – which it really is, despite the search for maximum compatibility -, raises readjustments in which the psychic and somatic spheres are mixed (Vaysse, 2005, p.41).

Vaysse mentions that a high number of transplanted patients feel "penetrated" by the donor's story, even if it is unknown (as his/her anonymity is protected by law). The writer Maurice Renard explores these phantasmatic ideas about transplanted organs in the novel *Le mains d'Orlac* (dated 1920), in which a pianist (Orlac) has his hands replaced with those of

⁷ In this case, the perception, through pain, occurs in the region where the organ is. It does not mean exactly the perception of the organ.

⁸ Term commonly used by artists to refer to their works. Definition of the Aurélio dictionary: phantasmagoric. Related to phantom.

a murderer who was sentenced to death. Due to this, his personality is disturbed and he becomes the main suspect of a series of murders committed after the transplant. To Le Breton (2005),

the novelist is able to play skillfully with the phantom of fate inherent in certain organs that are symbolically significant (here the hands, there the heart, the brain, etc), and which are suspect of transmitting the virtues or faults of the man from whom they were extracted (Le Breton, 2005, p.55).

Stories like this are part of the subject's formation and inhabit the metaphors of popular culture about the fragmented body of the donation of organs, as if they had a memory and power over the receptor's body. This becomes especially relevant to the heart, viewed as the organ that governs human relations, as suggested by the fragments analyzed here. According to Vaysse (2005), a certain number of patients believe in the "hierarchized organization of the body's functioning orchestrated by the heart" (p.44).

Looking at me in the mirror and knowing that there is "another person" inside me, materially speaking, would be a constant challenge. Thinking about how she used to be, what her wishes were, her expectations for life and knowing that I would be alive due to her detachment from the body, or to her relatives' detachment, would make me become, I think, a less impertinent person, less radical in relation to some behaviors. [...]

I think this "rebirth" would modify not only me, but it would trigger a series of questions in the people who are close to me.

M. I. M. Nurse, 40 years old.

In this fragment the participant refers to some "other" that would inhabit his body through the transplant. Based on this, it is possible to say that

organs transplants enhance the contrast between the biomedicine's discourse of the objectivated body and the subjective and phenomenological experience of the patients, who must integrate into their corporality alien body parts, alterity in the lived body (Ortega, 2008a, p.219).

The participant states that he would have an alien organ, "materially speaking", which reminds us of the idea of heart used and disseminated by the medical area: a "muscular pump" – just a fragment of the body of someone else. Moreover, the candidate expresses that knowing this would be a constant challenge: curiosity to know how the donor was, his/her desires and expectations. A challenge to which the transplanted patient submits and, according to Vaysse (2005), to appropriate psychologically of the organ, it is necessary to "erase the phantasmatic affectivity around the donor" (p. 45). This author, referring to the existence of this "imaginary

heart”, highlights the utilization, nowadays, of the representations of “heart-feeling” and “heart-pump”, the latter related to the functional mechanism, which is more rational, of “an idealized machine that is expected to be repairable and interchangeable in all the situations of failure, as it is not immortal” (p. 43).

In addition, the participant mentions that the reflection (triggered by the action and) enabled by the fact of being in the waiting line to receive an organ (work of art), or just imagining himself in this situation, might produce a reevaluation of his own way of life and, also, regarding the people who are close to him. In short, he would imagine how this “rebirth” might contribute to make him become a “better” person.

The fragment presented below also follows this perspective of reevaluation of one’s own actions as a possibility of transformation into a “better” human being, and the heart seems to be the organ associated with a “better” direction given to the human actions.

[It] symbolizes the human being’s emotion and desires, which I consider to be indispensable to a truly human character. But these characteristics should be compatible with his brain – an organ that cannot be transplanted yet – to regulate these emotions and desires.

When man, through his feelings and personal desires, understands and directs his actions towards the wellbeing of all, banishing selfishness, there will be the possibility of a worthy life to the entire mankind. Without this, social justice is not possible, and we will always have hate overcoming love. We must act with the heart and examine things with the brain.

L. G. M. Retired, 67 years old.

Based on the symbolic aspects that compose these justifications, it is possible to state that the heart seems to occupy a privileged space, together with the brain, in relation to what characterizes us as “humans”. The last sentence of the justification presented above separates the ‘things of the heart’ from the ‘things of the brain’, like in the fragment of the justification below, which suggests the belief in a certain hierarchy in relation to the feelings. The heart is, once more, presented as the place of emotion.

The actions we can feel are not in the mind, but in the heart.

S. C. S. Laboratory Auxiliary, 39 years old.

The idea of “heart-pump” emerges in the justifications below in relation to the rhythm and acceleration imposed by the contemporary world, where the speed and simultaneousness of the events would require an ever-growing effort of the body. Thus, the heart emerges as a pump that determines and governs the rhythm of our life, even in a context in which the brain – as the big machine that conducts and organizes everything – has been acquiring more and more centrality (Ortega, Vidal, 2007; Ehrenberg, 2009).

From here I observe this world of people who devour a cup of coffee and accelerate life as if everything would happen in only one day. Whenever I

see myself there, in the interval of each hasted minute, before the hugeness of the whole, I end up wondering: what rhythm is this that conducts me to this imposed speed? I breathe deeply 3 times. The first thing I feel is my heart beating more slowly... beat after beat, injecting the hope that everything will be calmer from now onwards. The heart marks the rhythm of the feeling. It is the injecting pump of the machine of life... it is the metaphor of ourselves. That is why I want one more...

J. L. Visual artist, illustrator and graphic designer, 32 years old.

Isn't it the heart that moves the rhythmic pulse of our villages? Would it be a perfect target that, sometimes, lacks a breast to accommodate?

M. Z. C. A. Social scientist, 36 years old.

Heart x brain?

In one of the fragments presented above, the participant mentions that “we must act with the heart and examine things with the brain”. This statement serves as the motto for us to discuss once more the alleged existence of a hierarchy between the organs, with the consequent division of competences between them. The separation (opposition) between such competences is so known in the daily scope that it is already in the dictionary, in one of the acceptations for heart: “the emotional part of the individual (as opposed to the nature, or the intellectual part, the head)” (Ferreira, 2004). The heart, whose beats can be felt and even influenced by emotion is, thus, frequently viewed in opposition to the brain – an organ that can neither be seen nor felt -, related to reason.

The heart has acquired centrality not only in the dissemination materials and in the physical center of the exhibition *Donations of the Body*, as mentioned above, but also in the author/artist's creative process, as it was one of the first to be made as an organ/work of art. The brain, or more precisely the neuroglial cell, on the other hand, was one of the last to be produced, as it seemed that, due to its complexity, it would demand more time and dedication in terms of research. Besides, there was a theoretical-conceptual question: the donation of the brain would be surrounded by questionings about the subject's identity being or not associated with the organ. Therefore, it was not a trivial issue, since such problem permeates precisely the discussions about the possibility of performing brain transplants. In fact, in the scope of the action *Donations of the Body*, even though it was not presented for donation as an organ/work of art, some participants (n=2) did not take this absence into account and ended up, to some extent in opposition to the heart, requesting the donation of a brain.

Before the advances of neuroimaging, the brain could be considered the most silent, protected and mysterious of the organs, as we knew very little about it. The silence of the organ, discussed by Sant'Anna (2005), started to be broken by the images produced by PET-scanners and functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI), which enable to visualize different regions of the brain at the exact moment in which it performs its functions.

The use of such images has not only expanded the scientific knowledge (concerning the relations between brain and mind, for example), but it has also produced different types of information in the scope of the mass communication media and, due to this, it has occupied a privileged place in the daily knowledge (Ehrenberg, 2009). The fragment below presents some of these characteristics.

I love my own brain, but with two brains I'd be able to think even more and have an idea that could improve all the other organs of my body, eliminating wrinkles naturally, removing all the smoke from the lungs and the rhinitis from my nose, and making my heart recover the capacity for dating. With two brains, I could let one have fun while the other worked, being a workaholic and, at the same time, enjoying life. With two brains, one would analyze the other and we'd be able to eliminate existential guilt and childhood traumas. With two brains, I'd sleep more deeply and my dreams would be more real. I could be more tolerant, think better before acting and be more spiritualized, because you can imagine how Zen I'd be by duplicating my capacity for meditation. With two brains, my concentration capacity would double and this would reflect on the results of anything to which I dedicated myself. I might even be a plastic artist and cultural producer with equal quality and I wouldn't have to choose between investing in this or that professional personality. Therefore, for mankind's sake, I ask that one more brain is given to me, besides the one I already have, and in return I promise to develop many projects that bring benefits to the society, in harmony with the sustainable development of the arts circuit.
G. B. Cultural producer, 40 years old.

The participant mentions the need to have one more brain, which takes us to the discourses about the possibility of obsolescence of the body (and mind) and to the consequent need of constant perfection – discourses that are present in studies about the body in current times (Sibilia, 2009). She requests “one more brain” not to replace her own, but to be able to “perform all the tasks” related to her profession and also other things she would like to do (for pleasure) and which are impossible to her because of her work – one brain to work and another one to have fun. To the participant, the neurological improvement provided by the two brains would help in the development of projects in different levels, meeting the increasingly exigent, speedy and complex demands of our days.

We would also like to highlight the fragment of the justification that mentions the possibility of body improvement orchestrated by the brain:

[...] have an idea that could improve all the other organs of my body, eliminating wrinkles naturally, removing all the smoke from the lungs and the rhinitis from my nose, and making my heart recover the capacity for dating. [...].

This fragment evidences the belief in the superiority of the brain in relation to the other organs, because the participant argues that one more brain could

represent “better body performance and greater control over the other organs”, including the heart, which emerges, again, as the “place” where the emotional and sentimental capacities are. The participant mentions a heart that would have lost the capacity for dating (perhaps the symbolic picture of a broken heart), but that, with the help of one more brain, this capacity might be recovered. In other words, in one of the possible interpretations, it would be possible to say that the higher capacity for rationalization would allow solving the problems associated with the “heart-feeling”, with emotion, which is discussed by Vaysse (2005).

By multiplying her meditation capacity, the participant mentions that she could more tolerant, Zen and spiritualized. This takes us to the other comprehension of brain, that is, the one that refers to it as the organ connected with spirituality and with the different mental capacities (the brain as the “place” of the mind), which is commonly found in many cultural contexts and which is, today, object of intense scientific investigations (Ortega, Vidal, 2007; Caponi, 2007, Ehrenberg, 2009, among others).

The fragment, like the entire text of the justification of the participant G.B., reproduces some beliefs about the brain and the mind. Ortega (2008a) argues that they are the result of the mind-brain association carried out by the scientific dissemination in the different media (newspaper, magazine, television, cinema, among others), which produces a significant effect on popular culture. This same author highlights that

when a culture like ours equalizes the cerebral statute with the mental statute and with personality itself, then the images become harmful when they disseminate reductionist and objectivated views of the mind and of the human body, with serious consequences in many sociocultural and clinical spheres (Ortega, 2008a, p.143).

Ortega mentions, especially, the way in which some media segments disseminate such technological advances, whose infinite promises might even map emotions, cognition, thought and reasoning: “functional neuroimages seem to provide visual diagnostics and tell us why we are how we are” (Ortega, Vidal, 2007, p.258). Ortega (2008a) also analyzes how the North-American cinema has produced identifications of the mind with the brain, appropriating the knowledge of neuroscience and, thus, converting them into commonplace, without any kind of questioning. Some premises that are not explained in these utilizations of neuroscience knowledge are: that we could know exactly the location of the memory in the brain (and delete it arbitrarily, like in the movies), “that mind is intrinsically the brain; and that the human being would be essentially constituted by the brain, that is, a new anthropological figure called ‘cerebral subject’” (p.146).

According to Ortega and Vidal (2007) and Ehrenberg (2009), the term ‘cerebral subject’ summarizes the reduction of the human being to the brain, which would be the only necessary organ to the formation of personal

identity. In this way, the organ would respond to everything that had been formerly attributed to the person, to the individual. It is in this direction that the brain, as the organ that is responsible for the self, can be problematized based on the justification presented below, in which the participant requests the organ/work of art neuroglial cell.

What is the place of the 'self'? If in one period the liver was the place of the truth of the bodies, and in another the heart was the point from which emanated the essence of the people, we live a moment in which the brain has become the place of conscience. And I want my conscience – I want to recover it, recreate it, own it one more time, today and always. Because of this, I want new neuroglial cells, so that they nurture my neurons, so that they support their activities, so that they maintain each one in its appropriate place and separate them unobtrusively when they fight. As a thinking being, I need more and more neuroglial cells so that my 'self' works in the best possible way: to reflect on my problems and find clear ways to solve them, to rationalize my love pains and finally believe that it never deserved someone as wonderful as 'me', to see and believe in what is obvious. New neuroglial cells to a new 'me'. Better neuroglial cells result in a better 'me'.
T. H. Journalist, 26 years old.

The participant highlights that, in the contemporary world, the brain started to be considered the place of conscience. In the conception of the cerebral subject, in which the individual is reduced to his brain, Ortega (2008b) points to the existence of a belief that this organ "is the body part that is necessary for us to be ourselves, in which the essence of the human being is, that is, personal identity understood as cerebral identity" (p.490).

This anthropological figure, the "cerebral subject" (I am a brain that inhabits me), favors the emergence of what this same author has called neuroasceticism – in opposition/supplementation to the traditional asceticism (centered on the body only as a means for spiritual elevation). Therefore, they would be cerebral self practices that aim at body improvement and optimization, at the maximization of its capacities (Ortega, 2008b). The trend of "cerebrality" is defined by Ortega and Vidal (2007) as "the property or quality of 'being', rather than only 'having', a brain" (p.257). According to Ortega (2008b), this trend allows that what used to be understood as pathology starts to be seen as a new identity ("neuroidentity"). In this context, the cerebral subject "implies forms of subjectivation, that is, relationships with oneself and with the others as cerebral subjects" (Ortega, 2008b, p.498). These different forms of subjectivation include cerebral self-help literature, games, software, vitamins and supplements, among other products for training and improving the brain – "neurobics", a kind of gym to the brain, enabling the formation of a new market to be explored. "The cerebral subject has transposed the vocabulary of body fitness to the brain" (Ortega, 2009).

The text of the participant T.H. also denotes the discourse about cognitive

enhancement⁹, as a way of body optimization, in vogue nowadays: “New neuroglial cells to a new ‘me’. Better neuroglial cells result in a better ‘me’”. But what would a better ‘me’ mean? A ‘me’ that is able to ‘rationalize’ – to solve problems or love pains, as the participant wishes? This is also present in the justification presented below, in which the participant mentions the need of more neuroglial cells.

I’m in urgent need of a transplant of neuroglial cells. Huge thoughts have been pervading me for some time and the neuroglial cells that I have in my body are not able anymore to maintain the adequate conditions for my neurons to survive and also to enable neuroplasticity. Without them (the neurons and neuroglial cells), how am I going to make new connections to foster my thoughts? If there are no conditions for neuroplasticity, how am I going to risk new gestures, rehearse other movements, produce new ideas? [...] As you can see, this transplant is vital to me.

M. F. Physiotherapist, 34 years old.

It is in this direction that Ortega (2009) highlights that the neuroeducational measures, cognitive enhancement and other types of neuroascetic practices become current money, almost achieving a character of compulsoriness in a society that favors active and entrepreneurial selves (p.14).

FINAL ARTICULATIONS

During the development of the artistic action that originated this study, we attempted to approximate the field of the sciences, especially in the scope of an increasing medicalization of the body, and the field of the arts, as regards the issue of the donation of organs and tissues and the inclusion of an artistic proposal in the arts circuit. This involved questions related to the body in contemporary times as a way of provoking tension in the politics of the two systems. In this direction, the action *Donations of the Body* was constituted as a form of political art that attempted to mobilize the body in an action, problematizing the system of transplants of organs and tissues from the perspective of the receptor (a position experienced by the participants in the action as they needed to enroll and undergo a selection process to receive a work of art/organ), in the intersection between the sciences and the arts. The proposal included the effective participation of the public (of the spectator), inviting them to think about the theme and to express themselves through a written production, justifying the wish and/or the need to be in the waiting line to receive an organ that was available for donation, in the form of an artistic object.

An important point that was found in the participants’ texts, which

⁹ Nikolas Rose (2007) argues it is a form of optimization and Renato Janine Ribeiro (2003) believes it is a form of amplifying the human capacities (especially in relation to health), always towards a “plus”.

determined the direction of the analysis of the justifications that they constructed to receive the organs/works of art, was the symbology and phantasms involved in the theme of transplants and the centrality of the discourses about the heart – as being the seat of emotions – as opposed to the brain – which would represent the organ of rationality, of the ‘government of the self’. Thus, although the brain has been emerging and competing in the last years as “the new” definer of the subject, it seems to us that the heart – and its “manifestations” interpreted as evident emotions: “heart in one’s mouth”; “rapid heart”, among others – has maintained its centrality.

COLLABORATORS

The general conception of the paper was discussed by the two authors. Z. Cardozo wrote the main body of the text and L.H.S.Santos revised it, giving suggestions and incorporating fragments to the final version.

REFERENCES

- BOURRIAUD, N. **Estética Relacional**. São Paulo: Martins Fontes, 2009.
- CANEVACCI, M. **Culturas eXtremas**. Mutações juvenis nos corpos das metrópoles. Rio de Janeiro: DP&A, 2005.
- CAPONI, S. Da herança à localização cerebral: sobre o determinismo biológico de condutas indesejadas. **Physis** vol.17 n.2, Rio de Janeiro, 2007.
- COUTO, E; GOELLNER, S. V. (Orgs.). **Corpos Mutantes**. Ensaios sobre novas (d)eficiências corporais. Porto Alegre: Editora da UFRGS, 2007.
- COSTA, Marisa Vorraber. Estudos culturais e Educação - um panorama. In: SILVEIRA, Rosa Maria Hessel (Org.). **Cultura, poder e educação**: um debate sobre estudos culturais em educação. Canoas: Ed. da ULBRA, 2005. p.107-120.
- EHRENBERG. A. O Sujeito Cerebral. In: **Psic. Clin.**, Rio de Janeiro, v.21, n.1, p.187-213, 2009. Disponível em <http://www.scielo.br/scielo.php?script=sci_arttext&pid=S0103-56652009000100013>. Acesso em: 14 jan. 2010.
- FERREIRA, A. B. H. **Novo Dicionário Eletrônico Aurélio Versão 5.0**. Curitiba: Positivo, 2004.
- FISCHER, R. M. B. Foucault e a análise do discurso em Educação. **Cadernos de Pesquisa** (CEDES), v. 114, p.197-223, 2001. Disponível em: <<http://www.scielo.br/pdf/cp/n114/a09n114.pdf>> . Acesso em: 15 set. 2009.
- FOUCAULT, M. **A ordem do discurso**. São Paulo: Loyola, 2009.

HARAWAY, Donna. **Modest_Witness@Second_Millennium.Female Man@Meets_OncoMouse™**: Feminism and Technoscience, New York: Routledge, 1997.

LE BRETON, D. A Síndrome de Frankenstein. In: SANT'ANNA, D. **Políticas do Corpo**. 2.ed. São Paulo. Estação Liberdade, 2005.

MONTEIRO, R. H. Imagens médicas entre a arte e a ciência: relações e trocas. In: **Revista Cinética**, v. 1, p. 01-16, 2008. Disponível em: <http://www.revistacinetica.com.br/cep/rosana_monteiro.htm>. Acesso em: 05 out. 2009.

ORTEGA, F. Neurociências, neurocultura e auto-ajuda cerebral. In: **Interface – Comunic., Saúde, Educ.**, 2009. Disponível em: <<http://www.interface.org.br/arquivos/aprovados/artigo144.pdf>>. Acesso em: 16 fev. 2010.

_____. **O Corpo Incerto**: corporeidade, tecnologias médicas e cultura contemporânea. Rio de Janeiro: Garamond, 2008a.

_____. O sujeito cerebral e o movimento da neurodiversidade. In: **Mana**, v.14, n.2, p.477-509, 2008b. Disponível em: <http://www.scielo.br/scielo.php?script=sci_arttext&pid=S0104-93132008000200008>. Acesso em: 14 jan. 2010.

ORTEGA, F.; VIDAL, F. Mapeamento do sujeito cerebral na cultura contemporânea. In: **RECCIIS - R. Eletr. de Com. Inf. Inov. Saúde**. Rio de Janeiro, v.1, n.2, p.257-261, 2007. Disponível em: <<http://www.reciis.cict.fiocruz.br/index.php/reciis/article/view/90/91>>. Acesso em: 14 jan.2010.

RIBEIRO, R. J. Novas fronteiras entre natureza e cultura. In: NOVAES, A. (Org.). **O homem-máquina**: a ciência manipula o corpo. São Paulo, Companhia das Letras, 2003. p.15-36.

ROSE, N. **The politics of life itself**: biomedicine, power, subjectivity in the twenty-first century. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007.

SANT'ANNA, D. B. (Org.) **Políticas do Corpo**. 2.ed. São Paulo. Estação Liberdade, 2005.

_____. Cultos e enigmas do corpo na história. In: STREY, M; CABEDA, S. (orgs.). **Corpos e subjetividades em exercício interdisciplinar**. Porto Alegre: EDIPUCRS, 2004.

_____. **Corpos de Passagem**: ensaios sobre a subjetividade contemporânea. São Paulo: Estação Liberdade, 2001.

SANT'ANNA, D. B. Descobrir o corpo: uma história sem fim. In: **Educação & Realidade**, v. 25, n.2, p.49-58, 2000.

SIBILIA, P. A tecnociência contemporânea e a ultrapassagem dos limites: uma mutação antropológica? In: NEUTZLING, I.; ANDRADE, P. F. C. (Orgs.). **Uma sociedade pós-humana** – possibilidades e limites das nanotecnologias. São Leopoldo: Editora Unisinos, 2009. p.123-140.

_____. **O Homem Pós-orgânico**. Corpo, subjetividade e tecnologias digitais. Rio de Janeiro. Relume Dumará, 2002.

VAYSSE, J. Coração Estrangeiro em Corpo de Acolhimento. In: SANT'ANNA, D. **Políticas do Corpo**. 2.ed. São Paulo. Estação Liberdade, 2005.

ⁱ Translated by Carolina Siqueira Muniz Ventura.

Translation from **Interface - Comunicação, Saúde, Educação**, Botucatu, v.15, n. 38, p. 635 - 647, 2011.