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A DEFENSE OF THE EROGENOUS BODY IN ORGANIZATIONAL STUDIES

Em defesa da consideração do corpo erógeno nos Estudos Organizacionais

En defensa del cuerpo erógeno en los Estudios Organizacionales

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ABSTRACT

This article aims to contribute to the study of corporeality in the field of organizational studies from the perspective of the psychoanalytical notion of the erogenous body. Investigations into corporeality and the psychoanalytical framework exist in organizational studies, but there is also a lack of psychoanalytical contributions with specific regard to the body in this field. We demonstrate that this gap exists by revisiting the question of corporeality in organizational studies, starting from the rationalist origins of the kinship between anatomopathological medicine and the theory of organizations. We then present the psychoanalytical conceptualization of the erogenous body starting with its rupture from anatomopathological medicine. In conclusion, we present an extensive ethnographic study of the body in investment banks and discuss how the notion of the erogenous body can throw light on the impasses found in it.

Keywords: corporeality, psychoanalysis, erogenous body, organization, management.

RESUMO

Este artigo pretende contribuir com o estudo da corporalidade no campo dos Estudos Organizacionais a partir da noção psicanalítica de corpo erógeno. Existem investigações tanto sobre a corporalidade quanto de quadro psicanalítico no âmbito dos Estudos Organizacionais, mas há também uma lacuna a respeito das contribuições psicanalíticas especificamente sobre o corpo para esse campo. Demonstramos essa lacuna a partir de uma retomada da questão da corporalidade nos Estudos Organizacionais desde as origens racionalistas do parentesco entre medicina anatomopatológica e a teoria das organizações. Em seguida, apresentamos a conceitualização psicanalítica de corpo erógeno desde uma ruptura com a medicina anatomopatológica. Por fim, retomamos um extenso estudo etnográfico sobre o corpo em bancos de investimento e discutimos como a noção de corpo erógeno pode iluminar os impasses nele presentes.

Palavras-chave: corporeidade, psicanálise, corpo erógeno, organizações, gestão.

RESUMEN

Nuestro objetivo es de contribuir con los estudios sobre corporalidad en el campo de los estudios organizacionales desde la noción psicoanalítica de cuerpo erógeno. Hay investigaciones acerca de la corporalidad y también de cuadro psicanalítico en los estudios organizacionales, pero hay también un vacío con respecto a las contribuciones psicoanalíticas especificamente sobre el cuerpo en ese campo. Presentamos ese vacío desde una recuperación de la cuestión de la corporalidad en los estudios organizacionales a partir de los orígenes racionalistas del parentesco entre la medicina anatomopatológica y la teoría de las organizaciones. A continuación, presentamos la conceptualización psicoanalítica de cuerpo erógeno desde una ruptura de la medicina anatomopatológica. Finalmente, examinamos una extensa etnografía acerca el cuerpo en bancas de inversión y discutimos cómo la noción de cuerpo erógeno puede aclarar los impasses presentes en él.

Palabras clave: corporeidad, psicoanálisis, cuerpo erógeno, organización, administración.

INTRODUCTION

The interest in examining the place of the body and the theme of embodiment in Organizational Studies began between the end of 1980s and the 1990s, when the field started to open to other theoretical perspectives that some classified as “post-modern”, far away from traditional business interests (Dale, 2001). Since then, a series of investigations in the area started to become sensitive to the matters of the body, particularly linked to themes such as gender, diversity, emotion and expression of feelings, sex, gestures, and ornamentation (Flores-Pereira, 2010). Thus, from this moment on, we can affirm that a “small but steady stream of scholarship” (Hope, 2011 p. 138) emerged around the subject. We follow the translation suggested by Flores-Pereira, Davel and Almeida (2017), who, despite acknowledging that “the term *embodiment* hasn’t been consensually translated to Portuguese, being used in different ways by Brazilian researchers” (p. 196), defend using the term as it is being used in Anthropology, reputed as the great resource of the revision of the cartesian conception of body.

However, there are few studies that approached it from Psychoanalysis. Since the 1990s, important works regarding the systematic presentation of the psychoanalytical approach to Organizational Studies were produced, such as Diamond (1993), Hirschorn and Barnett (1993), Obholzer and Roberts (1994), French and Vince (1999), Gabriel (1999) and Arnaud (2004). None of them, though, approached specifically the body from a psychoanalytical perspective. More recent works, such as Fotaki and Pullen (2019), used Psychoanalysis to think about questions specifically concerned to diversity and feminism. One could object that, following Dashtipour and Vidaillet (2020), the psychodynamics of work has been showing the centrality of the body in working and therefore in the functioning of organizations. But the founder of this field himself, Christophe Dejours, attests that the theory of the body from which such reflections are extracted is rather the one from Michel Henry (Dejours, 2012, v. 1). Thus, it seems to be few investigations that Thus, there seems to be a scarcity of investigations that specifically address the contributions of the psychoanalytic view of the body to Organizational Studies.

This article aims to contribute to the reversion of such scarcity resuming the psychoanalytical approach about the theme in question, subsumed in the notion of erogenous body. Flores-Pereira (2010) points out that four big approaches inform the reflections about embodiment in the field of Organizational Studies. We state that because of its singularity and potential to mitigate problems that ravage organizations today, the psychoanalytical approach could inaugurate a fifth line of investigation in this field. For that, first we will show how the idea of body was built in the studies about organizations and how they were finally able to address embodiment. Second, we will point out the absence of psychoanalytical considerations in Organizational Studies and the consequences of such absence. We will then recover the notion of erogenous body formulated by psychoanalysis, underlining the rupture provoked by it regarding the hegemonic conception of body built by the anatomopathological medicine. Lastly, we aim to indicate how, from a psychoanalytical review of the long ethnography of Michel (2011), the psychoanalytical approach can contribute to conceptual and methodological refining in Organizational Studies regarding embodiment and its impasses.

ORGANIZATIONAL THEORY: FROM BIOLOGICAL BODY TO EMBODIMENT

As [Karen Dale \(2001\)](#) reveals in detailed fashion, the concept of organization dates to Enlightenment and is linked to the arising of both the anatomopathological medicine and the then new social and political institutions. The common ground to these knowledges was the imperative of knowledge production by means of categorizations and divisions – guideline that, indeed, denotes a central characteristic of the western modern knowledge. That way, both anatomy and the sociopolitical milieu of the Lights were guided by that line: such as the anatomopathology was born from ordering the body in its structures and functions, the enlightenment institutions were born from the bureaucratic ordering. It was in this “similar cognitive space” ([Dale, 2001, p. 111](#)) that the idea of organization was born.

Here is the reason that it was conceived as an organism. The word already indicates it: “organization” comes from “organ”, which modern definition was erected from the studies of anatomy. [Dale \(2001\)](#) recovers the historical arch from Descartes to Bichat to sustain what she designates as “anatomising urge” (p. 23), that is, a certain requirement of the knowledge in operating by the decomposition of the world in smaller intelligible parts, by its classification and ordaining. The organizational theory, having conceived the organization as an organ along the lines of a biological line, originally took the organization “as a given” ([Dale, 2001, p. 129](#)), that is, a natural entity.

In addition to conceiving the organization in these, shall we say, somatic terms, such theory also offered a naturalized and therefore passive comprehension of the human body. Here again the weight of Cartesianism, and specially its ontological dualism, is evident, showing itself, as [Dale \(2001\)](#) remembers, even in terms and expressions of management that signalize the primacy of vision over the object and of the mind over the body (“supervisor”, “head office”, etc.). As [Le Breton \(2002\)](#) observes, Descartes’ metaphysics has found its realization in the industrial world: “It is Taylor (and Ford) who actually fulfill the judgement implicitly pronounced by Descartes” (pp. 79-80). So, the body was taken by organizational theory, in its origins, as a tool of the mind and therefore as an object to be managed.

Therefore, it doesn’t mean exactly that the body was absent from this theory, but that it figured as “an absent presence”, as point out [Hassard, Holliday and Wilmott \(2000, p. 4\)](#). More specifically, the founders of the modern work organization analysis, namely Taylor and Weber, did not “*directly* considered the embodied quality of organizational work” ([Hassard et al., 2000, p. 6, our emphasis](#)). Now, in an organizational approach where impersonality, technicism and rationalization should figure as beacons for the authority figures, there was no place for any emphasis to the body. Its direct consideration would require a series of rearrangements of epistemological nature.

On the one hand, as observed [Flores-Pereira \(2010\)](#), important changes in the field of Social Sciences and Philosophy were responsible for the reconsideration of embodiment in Organizational Studies in the last decades of the 20th century. As we have pointed out, the author identified four lines of investigation about the body stemming out of these changes, and three

of them began to inform such reconsideration: a first line, that began with the anthropological investigations of Mauss, showed how the body represent the society that gives it shelter, what revealed its “sociocultural” face; a second line, that goes from Durkheim to Bourdieu, revealed the body as *locus* of hierarchization and classification of individuals, what carried its “socio-hierarchized” face; a third line, that becomes paradigmatic in the researches of Foucault, bring to light the social technologies responsible for making the bodies docile, what indicates its “sociopolitical” face. While crucial to the unlinking between body and biology, these three lines made it a “social object” (Flores-Pereira, 2010, p. 421). In this way, they could not free the body of an objectified and passivated conception. According to the author, it was only with a fourth line of study, derived from the phenomenological reflections, especially the ones from Merleau-Ponty, that it was possible to “rescue the incorporated dimension of the sociocultural environment” (Flores-Pereira, 2010, p. 422), that is, that came the understanding that the person doesn’t inhabit the body but is herself the body.

So, the impact provoked by these four lines of study identified by Flores-Pereira (2010) was of metaphysical order. The author presents an overview of the multiplicity of inquiries that were the result of such deconstruction, but we would like to stress out that, fundamentally, what was achieved was the removal from the Organizational Studies the ontological moat, erected since Descartes, between mind and body. This way, the achievement of such inquiries was de conception of “an embodied person” (p. 428), that is, a person in whom mind and body form an indistinct whole.

On the other hand, as Souza, Costa and Pereira (2015) point out, the Organizational Studies themselves started do contribute to the inquiry of embodiment from the moment they reconsidered their object. Since the advent of understanding the organization no more like structure, but as the exact opposite – process or organizing, that is, transmissions of mutable events –, it was not possible anymore to account for it in the traditional, that is, positivistic and functionalistic, way. Since this changed has determined that “the organizational studies have as object of analysis the ordering processes, not enterprises” (Souza et al., 2015, p. 732), everything that was of this nature was of interest for the field. Since body is “performance – non-inert, active, particular, subjective, contingent and historical [...]” (p. 734), that is, “it is not a thing or a substance, but the continuous creation of events or happenings [...]” (p. 735), it undoubtedly figures among the objects of research of Organizational Studies. As seen, the reconfiguration verified in this field allowed that it also began to contribute to the inquiring of embodiment.

Since then, various fronts of research were developed in these studies. Gärtner (2013) made a survey of the works about embodiment, cognition and learning published since 1990 and found six approaches. Briefly, in the first one (*Brute embodiment*), the body is conceived as a hardware and the mind as a software, which represents the popularization of the cognitive-computational view in Organizational Studies; in the second (*Physiological embodiment*), it is emphasized the importance of neural activity and of physiology in the functioning of the body; in the third (*Enactive lived embodiment*), the role of the sensorimotor body in the tacit acquisition of knowledge is underlined; in the fourth (*Intelligible embodiment*), it is explored how much the bodily experiences model the acquisition of knowledge; in the fifth, (*Situated embodiment*),

it is stressed the importance of the body in situating the process of acquisition of knowledge in time and space, in here and now; finally, in a sixth (*Social embodiment*), the objective is to show the relationship between social structures and body. A survey like this indicates both the diffusion of embodiment as a theme in Organizational Studies and the plurality of forms in which it has been developed.

About the absence of psychoanalytical considerations concerning the body in Organizational Studies

Reading the briefly resumed trajectory introducing the theme of embodiment above, one can already notice the absence the psychoanalytical approach. On the one hand, as indicated, this approach in general has been present in Organizational Studies. So that we don't stick just with the classical studies listed before, it should be stressed that the interlocution with Psychoanalysis is in the making, approaching conceptions beyond the classical Freudian ones, such as those from Lacan (Paes & Dellagnelo, 2015) and the Frankfurt School (Paula, 2013), and more specific organizational aspects in light of psychoanalytical theory, such as leadership (Godoi, Cargnin, & Uchôa, 2017). This recent interlocution, on the other hand, still lacks the resuming of the psychoanalytical approach of the body.

Repairing this absence is necessary above all because Psychoanalysis brings an approach capable of understanding and inquiring the strong presence of the somatic plan in contemporary pathologies, related or not to work. As Fernandes (2003) attests, the so-called contemporary symptoms carry to the center specially the body and its submission to:

the abounding and varying eating disorders, the compulsion to work, to physical activities, the never-ending surgical interventions to model the body, the compulsive sexuality, the horror of ageing, the demand of action, the terror of passivity, the psychopathological search of health or, in contrary, a pathological forgetting of the body, and still the variety of somatization conditions. Symptoms that [...] denote the complete submission of the body. (p. 17).

Regarding the work-related illnesses, those that are in ascension since the post-Fordism consolidation, which brought precariousness to the world of work in different levels (Franco, Druck, & Seligmann-Silva, 2010), present body events in a, at the same time, enigmatic and alarming way: “depressive conditions; Burnout; Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD); dependence on alcohol and other substances (illegal drugs and psychotropics)” (Franco et al., 2010, p. 239). In addition to being a public health issue, these illnesses generate fabulous losses to organizations (Pfeffer, 2018).

Organizational Studies need a notional arsenal to follow this huge problem. Despite the great reason in a practical level of the admission of embodiment in the field in question being

precisely the profound capture (with the advent of the post-Fordist work organization) of who works at the level of the body, attention was given overall the representational and intellectual aspects of the phenomenon. As Kerfoot (2000) indicated, “the need for managers themselves to be attentive to the body and aware of its perception by others is perhaps as never before, and where *the gaze of the 'other' in organizations is intensified by discourses of managerialism*” (p. 231, our emphasis). A series of authors in the field in question thematized this reconfiguration and the harmful effects of what became known as managerialism or managerial on the post-Fordist or Toyotist subjectivity – for example, Faria and Meneghetti (2007), Gaulejac (2007), Kilkauer (2013) e Clegg (2014). None of them, however, seems to have given specific attention to the body and to the way the post-Fordist organizations submits it.

Let’s take the Faria and Meneghetti (2007) perspective, because of huge relevance and diffusion it has on Brazilian Organizational Studies. The authors designate what they name “sequestration of subjectivity”, verified with the ascension of Toyotism and that

consists in the fact that [this ascension] take ownership, in a planned way, through programs in people management, and surreptitiously, furtively, covertly, of the *conception of reality* that integrates the dominion of *psychic, emotional and affective activities* of individual or collective subjects that compose it (workers, employees). These activities form the *base of perception and representation* that allows the subjects to *interpret the concrete by the way of thought and act*. The sequestration of perception and subjective elaboration deprives the subjects of their freedom to take ownership of reality and to elaborate, organize and systematize their own knowledge, being at the mercy of the knowledge and the values produced and fed by the sequestering organization. (p. 52, our emphasis).

We notice how, despite underlining the wide range of the subjects’ activities (psychic, emotional and affective) determined by such sequestration, the author don’t highlight the somatic plan. They stay in an intellectual plan, focusing the dimensions of thought, interpretation, perception. We could then conclude that a sequestration of the body is not thematized. With this we don’t want in anyway suggest that there is opposition between body and subjectivity or that the authors’ construct is of no help to think the forms of submission in Toyotism. After all, as they stress, “the individual’s subjectivity is not only in his or her consciousness, but also in the circulation where mind, affects, body, bonds, work, home and the others participate [...]” (p. 50). Anyway, they make clear that Toyotism presents “*a formal-intellectual subordination*” (p. 62, our emphasis), not a bodily one as in the Fordism.

Well, the clinical and epidemiological data indicated above makes us conclude that is at least risky to suppose such a “formal-intellectual” primacy. Below we have selected a long ethnography, made in an organization with more-than-typical post-Fordist characteristics – an investment bank – in order to show how the capture of work organization is done at the level of the body. However, before that we must resume the question of the body within the psychoanalytic frame of reference.

Psychoanalysis: from biological body to erogenous body

Such question has always posed itself in a significant way to Psychoanalysis, which theoretical development is followed by changes in the role that this notion plays in its theoretical building (Cukiert & Priszkulnik, 2000).

The relationship that Freud establishes with the body is nonetheless, at least in a first moment, dubious. While he perceives that hysteria had no organic cause and that, therefore, the traditional medical knowledge, grounded in certain deterministic organicist assumptions regarding illnesses, didn't give him nor an etiological hypothesis nor an adequate treatment, Freud had in mind some scientific basis for Psychoanalysis. This basis was looked for from biological and physiological bases for his psychological proposals (Freud, 1995). The rupture with this ideal of scientificity will culminate with the refusal of this medical model of diagnosis, treatment and pure and simple organicity, giving place to the psychic, always from the study of hysteria. It is interesting to cross the development of the Freudian theory about the body with the abandonment by Freud first of Charcot's hypnotic method and, later, of Breuer's cathartic method. It is from the determination of the unconscious' laws that he will search for techniques to interpret it.

Freud studied at the Salpêtrière, where he got in touch with Charcot who, with hypnosis and suggestion, made symptoms appear and disappear just from talk. The subjacent hypothesis to this practice is that there is an instance of thought that is not the conscious one. Here is a first rupture with the organic: to Freud, repressed sexual "ideas" could cause symptomatic effects in the body – the conversion mechanism – and these symptoms could be treated from a talk therapy – catharsis and abreaction.

Freud states that anxiety attacks' manifestation can be linked to the "disorder of one or more body functions – such as breathing, cardiac activity, vasomotor innervation and glandular activity" (Freud, 1974a, p. 111). It seems to be a direct relationship, then, between the anxiety manifestation and the body, even if at this moment just the organic functions of the body affected by psychological states are in question, without any reference to a "erogenous" body.

If the somatic disorders relate to the disturbances of the body's organic functions, even so it is already away from a conception that takes it as purely a biological organism, pointing to a subtle and delicate interaction between mental and somatic by means of conversion mechanisms. As Fernandes (2003) says:

if the body that Freud's theoretical building announces is not to be confounded with the biological organism, object of study and intervention by medicine, it presents itself at the same time as a stage where the complex game of relationships between psychic and somatic plays out and a character taking part in the plot of these relationships. (p. 55).

In the *Studies on hysteria* (Breuer & Freud, 1974) the case of Anna O. is established as the founding myth of the discipline, even though it was treated and described by Breuer. A summary of the case: Anna O. presented paraphasia, strabismus and other grave disturbances of vision,

various paralysis in the upper right part and the inferior extremities of the body as well as in the neck, besides cough, headaches, and an affection of the trochlear nerve (Breuer & Freud, 1974, pp. 64-66). The first example of the cathartic method's success is narrated by Breuer – the patient was mute; the inhibition happened because of an offense taken by her as a very serious one and, once it was recalled under hypnosis, she started to speak again. Her contracture in the right arm was related to a hallucination while taking care of her father, when she tried to scare away with her right hand the “snake” that was sleeping on the backrest of the bed and didn't answer to her intentions. There was then the association between the hallucination of the snake and the arm's paralysis and analgesia. She tried to pray, but she only remembered a pray in English – and since then only communicated in this language, not even understanding German, her mother tongue. The case also presented temporal splitting of the consciousness, when she revived exactly the day lived one year before; there were also *absences*, during which various symptoms also appeared. According to Breuer, these secondary states had great influence over the symptom formation, since its products, given the fragile state of the patient, started to force its entrance upon consciousness.

In this moment, we are in the beginnings of Psychoanalysis, with a therapeutic practice that resorts to hypnosis to make the hysterical symptoms disappear. Freud employs the cathartic method such as proposed by Breuer. Behind the practice of hypnosis and the cathartic method underlies the phenomenon of suggestion, based in the existence of conscious states besides vigil and sleep.

The theory behind cathartic method stated that every hysterical phenomenon had its origins in a trauma, an emotive manifestation of great intensity; however, the causal link between the hysterical symptom and the trauma that triggered it many times scaped the consciousness of the patient, what made any questioning by the doctor fruitless. If the doctor could bring the memory of trauma up and the emotion was revived, even if in another state of consciousness, the symptom in question would disappear.

With this new way of accounting for hysteria it was possible that a nervous illness had a psychic origin – that is, a psychic trauma engendered a somatic manifestation. It is the revival of this emotion and the situation that caused it, put into words, that founds the efficiency of cathartic method. The authors say:

The person's aggravated reaction to the trauma only exerts an entirely “cathartic” effect if it is an adequate reaction – for example, revenge. But language serves as substitute for the action; with its help, an emotion can be “abreacted” almost with the same efficiency. (Breuer & Freud, 1974, p. 49).

Here it is, the birth of the so-called “erogenous body”, eroticizable, beyond organic, biological, and somatic: the talk therapy operates from a dimension of representation of the body, a metaphoric body. The origin of the hysterical symptom of conversion is not random neither is reduced to anatomy but is intrinsically related to the lived traumatic situation. For example, in the case of Elisabeth von R., described by Freud, one of the symptoms presented

by the patient was pain in a specific part of the leg, without an organic affection being present. During the cathartic treatment carried under hypnosis, a memory was brought up that it was in that point that the ill father's leg leaned on during the change of bandages, change that was made by the patient herself.

In his theoretical articulation about the body, the concept of drive (*Trieb*) is paramount: it stands “in the frontier between the mental and the somatic, as the psychic representation of the stimuli that originate inside the organism” (Freud, 1915/2010, p. 55); and its source is a somatic process that is represented in the psyche by the drive. There is a plan where organic and psychic are not opposites. For Psychoanalysis, the body must be thought beyond an organic model of symptoms causality. It is only from its conceptualization beyond the biological that the “talk therapy” may make sense as theoretical conceptualization. It is no longer possible to confound embodiment with organicity. To Fernandes (2003), beginning with the concept of drive, “the Freudian theory would allow to highlight that the somatic, that is, the set of organic functions in movement, inhabits a body that is also the place of fulfillment of an unconscious desire” (p. 34).

Notwithstanding the body's central position for Psychoanalysis, according to Nasio (2009) Freud never used the expression “image of the body”, an expression that entered Psychoanalysis only in the last decades of the 20th century. To Nasio, from the point of view of the image, the ego designates a mental double formed by the set of alive and poignant bodily sensations. The ego would be at the same time an identity (naming the self of a subject), a perceptive (the boundary of the psychic between external and pulsional realities) and an imaginary instance. He is clearly based in the explicit Freudian statement: “the ego is first of all a bodily ego” (Freud, 1974b, p. 40).

On the need to include the erogenous body in Organizational Studies: example of contribution from a psychoanalytical analysis of an ethnographic study

Resuming what we announced in the beginning, despite the four lines of inquiry presented by Flores-Pereira (2010) having franked the Organizational Studies the aforementioned huge conquest, thus it looks like it still lacks to them the consideration of a fifth line of inquiring: the erogenous body, in the way presented above and conceptualized by Psychoanalysis.

It is worth mentioning that Psychoanalysis doesn't attack rationality but the illusion of control (Gabriel, 1999). Thus, the classical comparison of Philip Rieff according to which Psychoanalysis is “a regime of mental management [...] in which the ego plays functions not so different from the managers' ones” (Gabriel, 1999, p. 284) is wrong. Nevertheless, if one still wanted to understand the analytical knowledge in these terms, then it would be an ego that “faces constantly forces much bigger than his” (p. 285). Freud uncompromisingly defended the scientific status of Psychoanalysis, sharing widely the western canons of rationality. However, he stressed that in front of the unconscious it is only possible to create certain regions of order that are always subjected to disorder. Gabriel (1999) shows that there lies an important lesson to

management: “the hybris of management resides in pretending that Fortune doesn’t exist or that she can be persuaded and placated by servility” (p. 286).

The long ethnographic study accomplished by Michel (2011) in two investment banks helps us show and understand this field of questions. Her study impresses both by duration (nine year, even though she states that it as ongoing study. The author resumes these questions in at least two later moments [Michel, 2014, 2015], without adding new material for what interests us here) and by the observed, collected and analyzed material (approximately 7 thousand hours of observation, more than 600 formal interviews, 200 informal interviews in addition to the annual productivity reports of the bankers involved in the study and bank material about selection, training, and socialization – pp. 334-335). It is certain that the author experienced the results she presents in her own body: having worked first in a German bank as an intern and later as analyst in Goldman Sachs, where she endured journeys of 80 to 100 hours a week, she describes the estrangement with her own experience (Michel, 2016) in changing from a culture to another and also how this previous experience opened her the doors that allowed the accomplishment of the study.

From the realization that the so-called workers of knowledge, the category under which fall the observed investment bankers, state having autonomy regarding when and where they work but present longer and more uniform working hours than a personal choice model would indicate (Michel, 2011, p. 326), the author presents what she considers to be a paradox: where the workers indicate to have autonomy to do their own schedules and manage their workloads, they find themselves under organizational controls that make them work more, for long periods, during nights, holidays and weekends.

Here we have a first aspect that we should highlight: the dimension of an ignorance about what seems to be more controllable to the workers. They judge themselves to be autonomous but are not and it is their own bodies that show them. It is an illustration for what we designated above as the point of view blurred by the statue of the body. It is important to point out this aspect because it is not acknowledged by who work and it is not emphasized, it seems, by any of the four lines of inquiry presented by Flores-Pereira (2010). This way, as much as embodiment has been acknowledged, it is still needed to show that it is not usually acknowledged. This is exactly the point emphasized by the psychoanalytical approach of the body, that always stresses the unconscious, phantasized and idealized dimension.

The second aspect to be highlighted is the ignorance expressed in the way how the author herself goes through the most current explanations about workers’ engagement. She resumes the literature about motivation, which points that the workers “work hard for firms that satisfy autonomy and thus increase intrinsic motivation” (Michel, 2011, p. 327) of these individuals, and highlights that some of the conditions present in those environments reassemble those used in the Psychology labs to diminish autonomy and intrinsic motivation, such as high pressure and short deadlines. Then she resumes the cognitive theories about control that explain more adequately why the works of knowledge work so hard but fail to address the so-called “autonomy paradox”. This leads her to resort to the socializing approaches, that focus in the acculturation

processes. It is when the authors' assumptions appear clearly: "[Socialization] ensues when employees accept a firm's culture. Organizations *target employees' minds*. [...] Workers thus exert themselves on a firm's behalf even without external control" (p. 327, our emphasis). We are not astonished that, under this approach, it is still "unclear why workers experience effort as self-chosen, versus submission to a collectively designed culture" (p. 327). There is an assumption that there is an undivided subject. That's why what is obtained is designated as a paradox. At the same time a dualist point of view is surreptitiously hold: "The answer may be that some controls are not cognitive but bypass the mind—the domain of cognitive control theories—and target a neglected domain: the body" (p. 327).

At this point it seems pertinent to resume the question of the body as conceptualized by Psychoanalysis. As [Fernandes \(2003\)](#) states:

Well, if the body appears as a place, stage where the relationships between psychic and somatic play out, this is equivalent to saying that Freud produces here an important rupture in the conception of body distinguishing it from the somatic, that is, in Freud the body doesn't confound with the biological organism. [...] the body in Freud is not governed according to a unique and determined rationality, the somatic rationality. It is governed according to a double rationality, that from the somatic and that from the psychic. (p. 112).

Thus, it is not possible to take the body in consideration as a separated dominion. Insisting in a model based on an ontological distinction, illustrated by the difference between bodily controls and mental or cognitive controls, makes a dichotomy of cartesian inspiration last. This dichotomy, we presented, has its origins in a rationalism that is questioned and criticized by the field of Organizational Studies itself or at least by one of its strands.

Given that these "embodied controls" are not visible, their influence is only indirect on perception of autonomy reported by employees and, taking into account the time needed to the body to "break", "wear" or "fail", the relationship between embodied controls and illness bay have been ignored by literature simply because observational studies don't last long enough so that these data appeared. In this sense, once more the notion of erogenous body allows us to see another possible answer. As [Fernandes \(2007\)](#) states: "it is observed a constant imperative of immediate overcoming of all suffering, as if the scars of the pains of life couldn't find a psychic inscription anymore, getting destined to a bodily inscription" (p. 342). What appears, then, is the erogenous body's representational character, the last refuge for that that escapes the mental controls instilled by socialization in the model proposed by [Michel \(2011\)](#). She highlights, still, that organizational research about the body "are rare" and "often takes a realist "physiological lens", which assumes that the body is a biological object" ([Michel, 2011, p. 331](#)). To fulfill this theoretical gap, she presents a model of the relationship between the observed subjects with their own bodies, from the embodied organizational control point of view and its consequences both for the subjects and for the organizations. This model predicts three distinct moments:

The body as object: in this first moment, between years 1 and 3, the body is understood as an object that the mind can control. They worked long hours, neglected family and hobbies, and fought their body's needs in order to enhance productivity. They suppressed the need for prolonged sleep [...]. They ignored illnesses and did not give priority to their health" (p. 340). According to the banks' annual reviews, the subjects presented high technical and judgement performance. The also high organizational control over the subjects, even though not perceived, presented positive results to the organization.

Year 4 onwards: the body as antagonist. "Starting in year 4, bodies forced themselves into awareness through sometimes incapacitating problems. [...] Bankers experienced puzzling bodily and psychological responses. The body here is separate from and inferior to the "I," like an object one can kick" (p. 342). The bankers developed embarrassing tics (nail biting, nose picking, hair twirling) and experienced their body antagonistically "taking over", "taking revenge" or "fighting back": "A banker combated her eating disorder by fasting and exercising more, training for a marathon even after midnight. [...] Bankers also sought distraction. They shopped, partied, and consumed pornography to counteract numbness, achieve control, and escape" (p. 343). In this moment, the subjects experienced high organizational control, but with unexpected and negatives consequences for themselves and for the organization, including ethical judgments lapses and reduced creativity.

From year 6 onwards: body as subject. "By year 6, about 40 percent of the sample treated the body as a subject that could guide action ('body as subjects'), gave up control over the body, and attended to its cues. The remaining 60 percent continued in the 'body as antagonist' role" (p. 347). In place of antagonizing with their bodies, which should have been controlled and tamed in the earlier moments, the bankers "developed the following three strategies, which I did not observe in the body as antagonists: (1) they became distrustful of and stepped back from the mind; (2) they surrendered agency while acting; and (3) they developed a relational orientation toward the body" (p. 348). The body, then, "helped bankers recognize and transcend control" (p. 350). In this moment, the low organizational control presented positive consequences to the organizations, such as higher ethical judgements and creativity.

The scheme's developmental character is to be noted: apart from the chronological order (from first to third year, from third year onwards and from sixth year onwards) there's also the fact that only some subjects attain the stage of body as subject. This way, it is assumed that in a moment of redemption we would have dominance and knowledge over the body. Besides, it is understood as an other, sometimes controlled and controllable object, sometimes rebelled object, sometimes subject, still well within the coordinates from the cartesian project. The four lines of inquiry in Organizational Studies resumed above show how it is a wrong assumption, for the body is always social, but our point is different: this body is inapprehensible if taken as purely biological or somatic. That's what is at play when "[the] regime of urgency and the intolerance to the demands of reality take to some kind of abolition of temporality, refuge of desire, contradictions and interdictions. This way, the mechanisms of refusal and avoidance of reflexive thought gain a prominent place" (Fernandes, 2007, p. 341), mechanisms that find their

own destiny in the body itself. A body that amidst discourses, ideals and techniques described by the participants of the study to control it, frame it and enhance it, insists on breaking, failing and falling ill despite the embodied and mental controls highlighted.

According to [Parker \(2016\)](#), an audience of lacanian psychoanalysts in a Critical Management Studies (CMS) conference vibrated with a presentation and discussion about the text presented above ([Michel, 2011](#)): “The audience at the ‘Re-working Lacan at Work’ conference were transfixed and delighted by how the bankers used, abused and in many cases ended up destroying their bodies [...]” (p. 34). The question, then, became how to leave the mesmerized state to understand the limits of Michel’s critique (in the last stage, let us recall, both the subjects align with the demands presented by their bodies and the organization benefited from the change of the subjects’ relationship with control) and what could be the psychoanalytical contribution in enlarging such horizon:

The lesson here is not so much that there are aspects of ‘organizational control’ of their bodies in the real that employees only belatedly acknowledge, but that there is a necessary gap between the experiential, imaginary realm that [Michel \(2011\)](#) is accessing and then building her ‘ground theory’ from and the symbolic processes that can only be grasped theoretically as manifestations of structure, as real. ([Parker, 2016, p. 36](#)).

It is in this gap that Psychoanalysis operates, because the body is the locus in which a “complex plot of relationships between psychic and somatic, or, in other words, the set of organic functions in movement inhabits a body that, crossed by drive and language constituted by alterity, is also the place of fulfillment of an unconscious desire” ([Fernandes, 2003, p. 116](#)). That this unconscious desire may express itself despite control mechanisms, whether bodily or mental, the result of a socialization fomented by organizations and despite of the will stated by the subjects themselves, here lies the presence of the erogenous body.

This way, not even the individuals that attain the supposed “stage” of “body as subject” do it. There is here the assumption of a domain of self that doesn’t really occur, which is clear in this passage:

Unobtrusive controls thus managed time, space, and energy. Unlike explicit cognitive controls, they were embodied in the environment and routines, sometimes for reasons unrelated to control. As long as they were junior, bankers mostly noticed verbal messages about autonomy and downplayed the importance of embodied controls, which made resistance less likely. As they became senior, some bankers noticed embodied controls: “I always thought that my choices are my own. Now I see how the bank subtly chooses for you” (Bank A director). But the unobtrusive controls had evolving effects on how bankers related to their bodies, which had consequences for the organization. ([Michel, 2011, p. 340](#)).

From the psychoanalytical notion of erogenous body, the body is a mirage. Moreover, there is here not only an ontological but a methodological lesson: as well as the body cannot

be apprehended in such a way, the research in organizations should understand that it is not “accumulating huge accounts of empirical data which has to be gathered and obsessively ordered” (Parker, 2016, p. 36) that one can solve the problem of research. However extensive and profuse Michel’s ethnography was, she nonetheless cannot solve the “autonomy paradox”, even though highlighted it. Acknowledging that there is a foundational impossibility to accede to the real is a lesson still to be understood by academia.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

In this work, we aimed to show that a fifth dimension of the body must be considered within Organization Studies: the erogenous body, such as described and formulated by Psychoanalysis. If, in a first moment, we showed how embodiment have been thematized in this research field, we revealed, then, how there is still a crucial dimension to be considered.

The ethnography undertaken by Michel (2011) is fertile material because of what it shows and hides. It highlights in a robust way how the organizational controls appear in the body and how they don’t need to be explicit nor conscious to act. The material reveals, still, that not even the traditional motivational theories nor the cognitive theories of control can explain what is observed, faced as a paradox because an undivided subject is assumed. And it is here that we enter the territory of both the employees’ and the author’s ignorance. Once the mind gives place to the body in the center of a theoretical model that aims to explain the relationships of mutual determination between the organization’s participants and the organization itself, a conceptual refinement about what is this body becomes necessary. Even in the impressively extensive ethnography in consideration, that takes the body as center, the body is nonetheless, well, an organic, somatic body that presents inexplicable pains and debilitating illnesses, sometimes object of control, sometimes something to be conquered, sometimes something which own inexplicable demands can be aligned with the organization’s ones.

It is in this point of incidence that the definition of body apparently at play, an inheritance more or less explicit of the cartesian project and its dualists coordinates, can’t handle what it proposes to explain and also surpass, that we realize how foundational is the contribution of Psychoanalysis and its conception of erogenous body to the grounding of embodiment.

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AUTHOR'S CONTRIBUTION

Marcelo Galletti Ferretti and Luiz Eduardo de Vasconcelos Moreira worked on the conceptualization and the theoretical-methodological approach. The theoretical review was conducted by Marcelo Galletti Ferretti. Marcelo Galletti Ferretti and Luiz Eduardo de Vasconcelos Moreira participated in redaction and final review of this text.