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- 102 Waseet, 200, 3.  
 103 Waseet, 211, 1.  
 104 e.g. Gardiner sign-list W10; Erman *et al.*, *Wörterbuch* III, 106, 18–107, 10; Faulkner, *A Concise Dictionary*, 171. cf. Coptic *hele* Černy, *Coptic*, 278), and Egyptian-Arabic Hallat.  
 105 Erman *et al.*, *Wörterbuch* III, 107,+11.  
 106 Erman *et al.*, *Wörterbuch* III, 107, 4–5.  
 107 Erman *et al.*, *Wörterbuch* III, 109.  
 108 Erman *et al.*, *Wörterbuch* III, 392, 5–7; Faulkner, *A Concise Dictionary*, 203; Meeks, *Année Lexicographique* 773268, 783227, 792345.  
 109 *Lisan* X, 141, 2.  
 110 *Maqaiées* IV, 401.  
 111 *Waseet*, 690, 2–3.  
 112 Faulkner, *A Concise Dictionary*, 203.  
 113 *Waseet*, 690, 2.  
 114 Faulkner, *A Concise Dictionary*, 203.  
 115 *Waseet*, 690, 1.  
 116 *Lisan* X, 155, 2–156, 1.  
 117 Faulkner, *A Concise Dictionary*, 203; Lesko, *A Dictionary* II, 208; Meeks, *Année Lexicographique* 783226.  
 118 *Lisan* X, 110, 1.  
 119 Erman *et al.*, *Wörterbuch* V, 465, 5; Faulkner, *A Concise Dictionary*, 314.  
 120 *Waseet*, 984, 3.  
 121 *Maqaiées* V, 411–412.  
 122 *Waseet*, 948, 3.  
 123 Erman *et al.*, *Wörterbuch* V, 464, 5; Faulkner, *A Concise Dictionary*, 314.  
 124 Erman *et al.*, *Wörterbuch* V, 465, 9.  
 125 *Lisan* XIV, 89, 1, 90, 2.  
 126 *Waseet*, 946, 3.  
 127 Erman *et al.*, *Wörterbuch* V, 464, 3.  
 128 *Lisan* XIV, 96, 2–97, 1.  
 129 Erman *et al.*, *Wörterbuch* V, 462,+16; I, 154, 5.  
 130 *Lisan* I, 343, 2–344, 1.  
 131 Faulkner, *A Concise Dictionary*, 314.  
 132 Erman *et al.*, *Wörterbuch* V, 465, 1.  
 133 *Lisan* IV, 418, 2.  
 134 Erman *et al.*, *Wörterbuch* V, 464, 4.  
 135 *Lisan* XIV, 100.  
 136 Erman *et al.*, *Wörterbuch* V, 466, 11–12.  
 137 *Lisan* XIV, 97.

## The Notion of the Heart and the Idea of Man: The Effect of Anthropological Notions on Medical Practices

Rogério Ferreira de Sousa

### Introduction

The present study has two main goals. First, to contribute to an improvement of our understanding of Egyptian anthropology as it relates to medical practices. Medical studies of practices in antiquity always include a great risk. To our contemporary scholars it is very easy, if not inevitable, to try to recognize in ancient knowledge our own interpretation of reality, especially when we are speaking about anatomical representations and therapeutic practices. When our contemporary doctors study Egyptian medicine, they inevitably project their own scientific referential and tend to evaluate them with their modern trend of reading reality. In this perspective, ancient knowledge always seems poor, underdeveloped, and even incomprehensible or irrational.

Nevertheless, we believe that we can come to a completely different conclusion if we change our own point of view. First, we must rebuild the cultural trend that supported Egyptian medical theories and interpretations. Egyptian medical knowledge resulted from an historical process and cannot be transposed to a different context. This means that we must rebuild, as genuinely as possible, ancient Egyptian ideas about health and disease. With this perspective in mind we must consider that, in every society, therapeutic intervention is not only connected with specific medical knowledge, it is related to a broader vision of humanity. This idea necessarily implies that different conceptions about human beings led to a different therapeutic intervention. So our second goal is to develop a comparative study between pharaonic medicine and contemporary therapies. Naturally we must limit our approach to a specific kind of disease.

Given the central role that the heart performs both in the Egyptian vision of the body and in our own conceptions about anatomy, we will focus our attention on heart therapies. We will show how this conception easily summarizes and deeply reflects the whole representation of human beings, both in ancient Egyptian culture and in contemporary society.

The choice of the heart for our study has one more justification. Besides our knowledge of the cultural relevance of the heart in ancient Egypt, we are fortunate to possess a medical treatise concerning the heart, the well-known "Heart Treatise" of the Ebers Papyrus, which provides precious information about anatomical notions relating to the heart and some therapeutic prescriptions. To obtain a more general understanding about the cultural meaning of the heart in ancient Egypt, it is not difficult to extract information from the literature.

In this short article we will provide a short overview of cultural aspects of the heart, both in ancient Egypt and in contemporary medicine, and will indicate the ideas of humanity that are underlined by them.

### The Notion of the Heart and the Idea of Humankind in Ancient Egypt

All Egyptological literature agrees on the point that the heart performed a central role in a person's life. About the relation of the heart to other human components, much has been said. Concerning the *ka*, the heart seems to exist in a close relationship to it, and they are often identified with each other.<sup>1</sup> The identification between the heart and the *ka* is very ancient and goes back to at least the Old Kingdom. In the Pyramid Texts, the expression "possessing the heart" has an equivalent meaning of possessing one's *ka*.<sup>2</sup> This is because the heart allowed the *ka* to manifest its power of life. Later, when the *ka* became closely connected with the idea of destiny, we can see that the *ka* can have an important influence in the formation of the heart-conscience of each person. In the New Kingdom the idea of possessing the *ka* inside the heart is clearly established. It is by means of each one's heart that is possible to find one's *ka*.

The same close relationship also existed between the heart and the *ba*. Only in Middle Kingdom do these two notions start to be more connected. As a manifestation of power, the *ba* needs the heart to be in its place. In the Coffin Texts the *ba* must be inside the heart.<sup>3</sup> In the funerary texts of the New Kingdom we find that possessing one's heart is a necessary condition to allow the *ba* bird to go out of the tomb.<sup>4</sup> However, during this same period, the connection between the heart and the *ba* became stronger than with any other component of human nature. Since the *ba* has a divine nature, it became "the god that lives in the heart."<sup>5</sup> This idea leads to the image of the heart conceived as a temple, a shrine where the *ba* manifested his power.<sup>6</sup>

The connection between the name and the heart is also well known and is extensively documented through Egyptian onomastics, both in royal and in common names.<sup>7</sup> Just to mention one example, the case of the Twenty-sixth Dynasty, which indeed is a cardiac dynasty. In general, the word *ib* used in royal names tends to establish an equivalence between the king's heart and the god's heart. For commoners, the presence of the heart has an auspicious meaning: usually the word *ib* is used in association with the words *nefer*, *hotep*, or *ankh*. This concern is obviously related to the idea that the name has the secret of each person's life.

The heart was also the center of emotions and love, thought and wisdom. This close association between feelings and consciousness clearly shows that, in ancient Egypt, the relationship between emotion and thought were firmly established and were presented as two different faces of the same reality.<sup>8</sup>

The heart depended also social and cosmic integration. It was by means of "listening to the heart," or by "following the heart," that each person could achieve prosperity in this life and finally be accepted among the divinities in the netherworld.

It seems also that the heart reproduced, to each person's scale, the entire cosmos. Some rather common metaphors relating the heart to images of fire and water might shed some light on this subject. In fact, images of fire were used when the heart was angry or was in conflict. On the other

hand, images of water were used when the heart was pleased or satisfied. So, by the nature of his or her feelings or thoughts, in each person's heart lives the hated fire of the desert or the heavenly water of the Nile.<sup>9</sup>

One other example that might illustrate this particular issue, is given, apparently, with the use of the words *ib* and *hati* in a dualistic way. Especially during the New Kingdom it was possible that the words *ib* and *hati* were used in the same way as The Two Lands. In fact, in funerary texts, *ib*, like Upper Egypt, is always written before *hati*, which might be identified with Lower Egypt. With this metaphor, it was possible that, in Egyptian thought, each man could guarantee the harmony between *ib* and *hati*, in the same way that pharaoh kept harmony between Upper and Lower Egypt.<sup>10</sup>

Besides this quick overview of the main characteristics of Egyptian beliefs relating to the notion of the heart, we must stress that it underwent an important development during the span of Egyptian civilization, reflecting the deep changes that occurred in the conceptions of human beings themselves.

About the heart, we can identify three stages of development, each corresponding to a major period of pharaonic history.

In the first we can consider the stage of the *cosmic heart*, which characterizes the notion of the heart during the Old Kingdom. In this period, texts, both funerary and religious, emphasized the heart of god, creator of all existing beings. In human scale, the cosmic qualities of god's heart are revealed in the king's heart. Although they possess a heart, the subjects turn themselves to the king's heart to be nearest to the cosmic qualities of the creator god.<sup>11</sup>

For the second stage we've taken from Helmut Brunner his happy expression "the listening heart."<sup>12</sup> We had established the stage of the listening heart in the period of the Middle Kingdom. As Jan Assmann brilliantly pointed out in his study about *Ma'at*, the collapse of Old Kingdom monarchy led to the beginning of individualism.<sup>13</sup> This new phenomenon had important consequences not only for the notion of humanity, but also the notion of the heart, which became the organ through which each person found their own place in the social and cosmic order. Since then, they must be judged through the weighing of the heart in order to guarantee survival in the netherworld.

We've called the third period, the stage of the *loving heart*, which is contemporary with the New Kingdom. In fact, in this period, love moves from god toward the human heart without any intermediaries such as the king or the priest. Flourishing a speech about love puts a person's heart in command, obliging everyone to follow their orders, which often differ from the pharaonic order.<sup>14</sup>

With that temporal distinction in mind, we can finally approach the anatomy of the heart. It was Thierry Bardinet who distinguished between the words *ib* and *hati*, as they appear in medical texts.<sup>15</sup> According to his point of view, the heart *hati* had the significance of the heart muscle itself, as the word *ib* referred to the inner part of the body in a much broader sense. Being an integral part of the heart *ib*, medical texts also refer to the existence of *met* conductors, which connect the heart *hati* to every part of the human body. These *met* conductors can't be identified with blood vessels as has often been done.

Given the extraordinary complex nature of human beings, according to Egyptian anthropology, a person can live in a multitude of ways, especially after death. According to some perspectives, each component of a person can be understood as a level of conscience; the *ka* refers to a level very near physical life, the *ba* corresponds to a higher degree of conscience, and the *akh* to a level of illumination. As the center of conscience, the heart progressively gained some of the properties of the other human components, becoming a complex entity, both organic and highly spiritual, allowing each person to unite themselves with the forces of creation.

## What Concept of Humankind is Underlined in the Contemporary Notion of the Heart?

In what concerns contemporary society, given the extremely abundant sources of information, we will focus our analysis on medical knowledge, which in fact is the only knowledge that really matters to contemporary doctors in their practice.

We will choose some OMS important documents related to heart diseases and in addition, since we can collect data directly from real life situations, we will present some statistics concerning the main treatments that are performed with heart patients. Our hypotheses is that, according to contemporary scientific views, the heart is merely a pump and reflects a more broader mechanical view of humankind. The problem is that, in spite of revealing, in a majority of cases, a great need of psychological support, heart patients are mostly treated only with biochemical prescriptions in order to regulate the "mechanism" of the heart.

In fact, the literary vision of the heart as a pump brought some problems relating the heart's disorders with emotional distress that are mainly connected with the brain. It is not my purpose here to study medical anatomy, but anguish as well as pleasure has an important physiological impact on the cardiac system.

In this vision, we are finally nearest to the ancient Egyptian concepts of feelings and knowledge. In fact, in everyday life, real knowledge comes from the heart, from its sensations, intuitions, and sensibilities. This is indeed our primary conscience.

### Final Remarks

Anticipating our own results, we can try to make a comparison between ancient Egyptian beliefs about Man, and our own beliefs. In a certain way, according to our hypothesis, it is us who seem to be poorest. In fact, in ancient Egypt, it was possible for a person to view his or her existence in a multitude of ways. The heart was a personal god, a little bit of divine power that gave one knowledge and strength. "Following the heart" was a way to full integration both in society and in divine order. In our times, however, the heart is merely the pump that keeps the body in action. Maybe ancient Egyptian wisdom can enable contemporary people to re-discover the meaning to our own existence.

#### Notes:

- 1 R. Ferreira de Sousa, *O coração e o Homem no Antigo Egipto: contributos para a compreensão de uma "Psicologia" antiga*, Tese de mestrado, 57.
- 2 P. T. 1869, "you have your heart, you have your double."
- 3 H. Schneider, "Bringing the *ba* to the Body—A glorification Spell for Padinekhtncbef," *IFAO* (1994), 357–358.
- 4 The Book of the Dead, Chapter 26.
- 5 F. Daumas, *La Civilisation de l'Égypte pharaonique*, (B. Arthaud, (ed.) Col. Les Grandes Civilizations: Paris, 1987), 227.

6 F. Schwarz, *Initiation aux livres des morts égyptiens*, (Paris, 1988), 75.

7 Ferreira de Sousa, *O coração*, 65.

8 A. de Buck, "Egyptische Philologie, Een Groep Dodenboekspreuken Betreffende het hart," *JEOL* 9 (1933), 14.

9 H. Brunner, "Das Herz im ägyptischen Glauben," *Das hörende Herz. Kleine Schriften zur religions und Geitesgeschichte Ägyptens*, (Friburg, 1988), 18.

10 Ferreira de Sousa, *O coração*, 93.

11 Ferreira de Sousa, *O coração*, 20.

12 H. Brunner, *Das hörende Herz. Kleine Schriften zur religions und Geitesgeschichte Ägyptens*, (Friburg, 1988).

13 J. Assmann, *Maât, l'Égypte pharaonique et l'idée de justice social*, (Paris, 1989).

14 Ferreira de Sousa, *O coração*, 171.

15 T. Bardinnet, *Les papyrus médicaux de l'Égypte Pharaonique*, (Fayard: Paris, 1995), 70.