

Apraxia: the complex relationship between body and speech

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This study was triggered by clinical questions related to the problem of Apraxia. When there is incontestable neurological disease, any articulation disorder is immediately assumed and labeled as a Speech Apraxia or Dysarthria. Even when an organic damage cannot be effectively confirmed by medical diagnosis or technological devices, if there is a suspicion of its existence, clinical reasoning tends to follow the same direction. In these conditions, specifically, the suspicion falls on Apraxia of Speech, a disease usually defined as a motor speech disorder in which articulatory and prosodic difficulties are observed, without muscle damage. Therefore, a question can be raised: what causes these functional symptoms? Apraxia affects the body and “the body” is, by tradition and right, (exclusive) research object of Physiology and Pathology. I endeavored to indicate and justify the strength of that

theoretical and clinical discourse, which sustains itself on the philosophical dichotomic opposition between mind and body, i.e., between reason/cognition and body/organism. Apraxia is, thus, traditionally approached, studied and defined through that perspective. In the present study, however, Freud is taken as a landmark because he introduced a completely different trend of reasoning which dissolves the philosophical and psychophysical dualism mind-body. Affected by the ‘wreckage’ of hysteria and the ‘holes’ of aphasia, he saw that structure and functioning do not go side by side. Hence another conception of body must be introduced and developed in Apraxia studies – the human body is bodylanguage. This thesis tried to follow Freud’s theoretical direction concerning the relationship between body and language in Apraxia.

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