

## Among Body, Image, and Word: the Power of The Libido

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**ABSTRACT** – This article originated from the will to understand how Freud formulates, in his theoretical work, the importance of the word, despite how obvious it may seem to use it as a tool for psychic treatment. Therefore, we researched the basis of his thoughts to check how he elaborates it so that we could address the question appropriately. Not only did we notice that Freud thinks of the word as one of the dimensions in which the libidinal energy goes through the psychophysiological mechanism, but also, it came to our attention that we should consider the interconnection between the body and the images of the soul [*seele*] to understand the function of the word in his work.

**KEYWORDS:** Body, image, word, libido, psychophysiological

## Entre Corpo, Imagem e Palavra: O Poder da Libido

**RESUMO** – Deixando de lado a aparente obviedade de utilizar a palavra como ferramenta para o tratamento psíquico, o presente artigo partiu do desejo de compreender como Freud formulou em sua obra teórica a importância da palavra. Para que a matéria fosse devidamente tratada, buscamos nas bases do pensamento freudiano sua elaboração. Esta pesquisa permitiu-nos entender que Freud formula a palavra como uma das dimensões em que a energia libidinal transita no aparelho psicofisiológico. Isso também nos proporcionou a ponderação de que é preciso reconhecer a interdependência entre o corpo e alma [*Seele*] para que a função da palavra seja devidamente compreendida em sua obra.

**PALAVRAS-CHAVE:** Corpo, imagem, palavra, libido, psicofisiologia

The aim of this article is to understand and answer the question: “How did Freud comprehend the word [*Wort*] and its processes in his theoretical - not clinical - work so that he considered it a tool in the psychic treatment?”. During our research, it has become clear how extensive and complex this subject is. That’s why we’ve decided to check the basis of Freud’s psychoanalytic theory to clarify the matter.

Freud’s work about the word and its connection with the psychic process was discussed in the following texts<sup>1</sup>: “Psychical (or mental) treatment”<sup>2</sup> (Freud, 1890/2017a), “On Aphasia” (Freud, 1891/2016a), “Project for a scientific psychology” (Freud, 1895/1996a), “Letter 52” (Freud, 1896/2016b), “The Interpretation of Dreams” (Freud, 1900/1996b, 1900/1996c), “Formulations on the Two

Principles of Mental Functioning” (Freud, 1911/2004), “On Narcissism” (Freud, 1914/1996d), and “The Unconscious” (Freud, 1915/1996e).

Freud proposes in the texts some important discussions related to the theme of the word [*Wort*], the reason we chose them. We followed the chronology of the publications to present our study while recreating the development of his ideas. We noticed that each text adds another theoretical level to the discussion, so we’ve decided to gradually answer our question, which means that all points conveyed throughout the text are to be synthesized at the final topic “The power of the libido”.

We have noticed, based on our scope, that to understand the function of the word [*Wort*] in the psychic treatment,

<sup>1</sup> This text was originally written in Portuguese and translated to English as well as all the citations. These titles refer to the standard translations of Freud’s works to English.

<sup>2</sup> The standard translation of the term *seelenbehandlung* from German to English in this title uses “mental”, but a more appropriate translation would be “Psychical or (soul) treatment”, which is the meaning conveyed here.

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as proposed by Freud, it is essential to understand the relationship between body and soul [*Seele*], and what connects them.

It is important to clarify that *Wort* is used the same way in German, English, and Portuguese, meaning “word”, “*palavra*”. Besides its commonplace use, since Freud formulates a whole theory of the “word”, we have decided to use it as a Freudian concept. According to Freud, “the word is a complex representation [Vorstellung] of visual, acoustic and kinesthetic images [Bild], in a way that corresponds to an intricate associative process [*Assoziationsvorgang*]” (Freud, 1891/2016a, p.102).

## THE WORD IN THE “PSYCHICAL (OR MENTAL) TREATMENT”

In the “Psychical (or mental) treatment” (Freud, 1890/2017a), one of the first Freudian works, he appoints the word [*Wort*] as a mean to operate “in the first instance” (p.19), which “will influence the human soul” (p.19). When he writes that the word [*Wort*] is an essential tool for the psychic treatment he says that its importance rests on the “magic power” connected to it: “the words used in our everyday speech are nothing other than paled magic. But it is going to be necessary to make another detour to clarify *how science* [emphasis added] can bring to the word at least some part of its former magical power” (p.19).

Freud’s scientific tendency can already be seen in this text from 1890, and it was reaffirmed many times ever since (Freud, 1915/2017b, 1933/2018b). He starts his text (Freud, 1890/2017a) by making a compilation-like of the medical thought, to show that the connection [*Wechselbeziehung*] between body and psychic has always been recognized, even though it hasn’t been perceived as reciprocal yet. He comments that it used to be easier for the physicians “in earlier times” to recognize that the psychic depends on the body more than the contrary, which means “the effect of the psychic upon the body, and they seemed to be afraid to defend the autonomy of the psychic, as if it would imply they were abandoning the scientific ground where they stood” (p.22). Then, he continues his observations and shows a variety of psychic diseases to point out how much physical symptoms “are clearly influenced by excitement, mood swings, worry, etc., as well as they can disappear and give place to a perfectly good health without leaving any traces even after lasting for a long time” (p.22). Freud says that even though medicine has later concluded the diseases of the soul [*Seele*] are related to the nervous system, in the examinations of the patients’ brains no evidence of physical alterations was found. In order to comprehend this phenomenon, patients with such dysfunctions were called neurotics, which is why, according to Freud, between the decades of 1870s and 1890s, the medical understanding that

It is also necessary to clarify that we used the terms “representation”, “image”, “psychic image”, “soul image” and “idea” as synonyms. By doing so, we encompass both the elements that constitute the representation and those that are successively elaborated from the excitation that comes from the drive. Throughout the text, when we referred exclusively to the elements that constitute the representations, we used *Bild/Bilder* between brackets. We also put between brackets all German terms and the complexity of elements associated with or derived from the drive, for which we used *Vorstellung/Vorstellungen*.<sup>3</sup>

there is an influence [*Einfluß*] of the psychic upon the body led to the recognition of the interconnection of the interactive [*Wechselwirkung*] effect between them.

Freud (1890/2017a) says that most of the mood states – like sadness, anger, grief, worry, happiness – have body correspondents that “are perceived in the tension and the relaxation of their facial muscles, in the focus of their eyes, in the vascularization of their skin, in the use of their vocal tract, and their body posture” (p.24). Therefore, for him, the bodily states are “trustworthy signs that allow us to infer the psychic processes, which are more reliable than the manifestations almost simultaneous and intentional in the forms of words” (p.24).

Freud (1890/2017a) is clear concerning the “quite special relationship” (p.25) between affections and somatic processes. He ponders that “(...) strictly speaking (...) they are “affective” in a certain way, and none of them is detachable from the bodily manifestations and the capacity to transform bodily processes” (p.25). After an explicit comment on the interactive [*Wechselwirkung*] effect between body and psychic, Freud refers to the word as access to the representations [*Vorstellung*]. Therefore, a path, at the same time, to the psychic and the body.

In fact, other arguments used by Freud (1890/2017a, p.31) corroborate the idea that the psychic is influenced by other things besides the word: will, attention, expectation and faith. He dedicates some pages to specificities of the influence of the word through hypnosis and, at this point, it is clear the magic power he refers to when he connects words and representations:

The word representation [*Vorstellung*] given to the hypnotized by the hypnotist provokes a psychic-body [*seelisch-körperliche Verhalten*] behavior correspondent to the content. On the one hand, there is obedience, but on the other, there is an increase in the physical influence of an idea. The word here returns to its former magic (Freud, 1890/2017a, p.36).

<sup>3</sup>We used the “Dicionário comentado do Alemão de Freud” (“An Annotated Dictionary of Freud’s German terms) by Luiz Hanns (1996) as a reference to distinguish the terms.

When Freud refers to magic, that's what he means: procedures from an immaterial nature – since they use the representations [*Vorstellung*] – that affect the matter; a word physically impacts the body and *vice-versa*. Some questions that were further addressed in his works had already appeared here: the first one is the interconnection [*Wechselbeziehung*] between body and psyche; and the second one is the therapeutical power of the word since it works as a connection to the representations [*Vorstellungen*] which, in turn, simultaneously influence [*Einfluß*] psyche and body, as far as the word carries an idea, and with the idea, arousal.

But, after all, how can something with an immaterial nature, like the soul processes [*Seele*], influence something with a material one, like the body? According to our understanding of Freud's work, this is possible if we use body and psychism as one subject of study that shares the same function. When Freud theorizes his *Phantasieren*<sup>4</sup>, in the “Psychical (or mental) Treatment” (Freud, 1890/2017a), he uses the reference to the magic as a resource to start changing the biological perspective, which used to be

strictly mechanic yet conventional for the Medicine at the time, i. e., an effect connected to a cause. This text seems to be the first step in the direction of something that lasts throughout his works: he proposes something that is neither magic in a mystical way nor mechanistic so that it would be possible to understand the functional influence of the psychic over the material and *vice-versa*. This influence is even more explicit in the texts “On Aphasia” (Freud, 1891/2016a) and “Project for a scientific psychology” (Freud, 1895/1996a). In these writings, Freud states that he does not believe in vitalism (for which the energy that animates the body is unfathomable) but believes this energy should be studied, starting from the arousal that stimulates the sense organs. Therefore, the psychic is not related to mysticism: as characteristics of the soul [*Seele*], the representations [*Vorstellungen*] are sensory impressions. Then, Freud dismisses the mechanistic perspective, sets up a function-based approach theory that refutes the localization and uses the reformulated biology in his interpretation of the associative processes.

## THE WORD IN “ON APHASIA”

Freud starts “On Aphasia” (Freud, 1891/2016a) with an overview of Broca's, Wernicke's, and Lichtheim's theory to summarize their explanations about the types of aphasia known so far. He analyzes the logic behind these authors' propositions and shows the contradictions of each one of them. He, then, criticizes their models to be based on a pre-concept related to the localization<sup>5</sup> [*Lokalisationslehre*] of the representations [*Vorstellungen*], which shows the internal contradictions of their models since they can be applied to some types of aphasia, but not all of them are explained in their studies.

It is possible to notice at this point “On Aphasia” (Freud, 1891/2016a) how Freud will solve the localization-problem by using the concept of functional language. Also, the vocabulary he will further use in his psychological formulations is in this text from 1891: the conceptualizations of the mental images [*Bilder*] and representations [*Vorstellung*] come from the dialogue with neurology and were kept in his psychoanalytic theory. Besides, an essential concept of psychoanalysis appears here: the process called association. At that time, neurology used to be a more mechanistic science. Its focus on strictly causal matters had

to change to accept studies focused on immaterial things (such as images, representations, and energy).

Despite the change, some explanations for the immaterial concepts were still based on a mechanistic logic, thus clearly showing the position of the field in the so-called “quarrel of methods”<sup>6</sup>. Leaving aside the well-known quarrel, Freud theorizes about a third possibility: if body and psyche are interconnected [*Wechselbeziehung*], then it is not necessary to separate the Natural Sciences from the Human Sciences.

Freud (1891/2016a) considers the existence of the representations<sup>7</sup> [*Vorstellung*] the same way the theories he criticized do - in his discussion about the first theories on aphasia, such as Broca's and Wernicke's. However, his aim is to refute these images/representations as functions strictly connected to brain areas, which means that he neither rejected their biological basis nor their immateriality. Therefore, the representations [*Vorstellungen*], essential for the psychoanalysis, were already being discussed by Freud in 1890, and later reaffirmed in his studies on the aphasias. This text adds to the “Psychical (or mental) treatment” the understanding of the association as a function in the

<sup>4</sup>The “singular ‘rationality’ denominated *Phantasieren* in Freud's works means here ‘to transcend’, or to find analogies that were registered differently or even ‘to conjecture’, which takes us to the limits of the rationality in the ‘scientific’ way of knowledge” (Assoun, 1983, p.105).

<sup>5</sup>The German term *Lokalisationslehre* is used by Freud and translated in “On Aphasia” (1891/2016a) as localization.

<sup>6</sup>To learn more about the quarrel of methods and Freud's point of view about it, check the “Introduction to Freudian Epistemology” (Assoun, 1983).

<sup>7</sup>Luiz Hanns (1996) comments on the use of the concept of *Vorstellung* in the context of medicine in the entry word “Representation” in the “Dicionário comentado do Alemão de Freud”.

representative process. So, once again, it is possible to verify in the Freudian works the reason the words influence the psychic and the soma: body and soul are interconnected [Wechselbeziehung] in the functional theory.

Freud's analysis (1891/2016a) about Wernicke's aphasia introduces the idea that the paraphasia the latter defended as the result of nerve rupture (a-b/sensorimotor) is not different from the signals of confusion and impairment of words observed in healthy people due to stress, tiredness, affective disorder or split attention. Freud infers that "It seems appropriate to us to consider paraphasia in its broadest coverage, a symptom purely functional, a sign of a less accurate performance capacity concerning to the associative language apparatus (p.31). Therefore, paraphasia is not merely an anatomical/material illness, which "doesn't exclude the fact that it can happen in its typical way, as an organic focal symptom" (p.32). Such argument is the first step to understand that aphasias, in general, are the consequence not only of anatomical disturbance, but also of alterations in the conditions in which the brain works.

Freud (Freud, 1891/2016a) uses Charles Bastien's theory on arousal to give a possible explanation about the phenomenon of aphasia: the functional lesions occur in an associative way, i.e., "interconnected" (p.51); if a function of one isolated part is weakened, the response is a disturbance in the function as a whole; which could occur due to either a lesion or damage related to brain arousal. The establishment of this interconnection precedes the concept of association that will further be in the psychoanalytic theory – compelling evidence that comes from the dream analysis. So, the aphasia study gave Freud a theoretical foundation about the imagery and representation processes of the psychic function as far as it was possible for him to support his theory about the somatic symptoms. For this reason, it seems to us that his theory, which includes metapsychology, is rooted in psychobiology, thus overpassing the idea of cause and effect.

In the sequence, Freud clearly introduces the reciprocal [Wechselbeziehung] connection between psychic/imagery [Vorstellung] and the arousal captured by the body: "every time the same state of the cortex is stimulated, the psychic once again comes up as memory image [Erinnerungsbild]" (p.79-80). This reciprocity idea comes from the understanding of the psychophysiological process as being unitary and functional, psyche and body are part of only one object of study<sup>8</sup>:

Sensation and association are two denominations with which we cover different aspects of the same process. However, we know that both are connected to a unique and indivisible process. We cannot have any sensation without associating it with something else at once (p.80).

We can verify the connection of the sensations with the mechanisms of memory representation [Erinnerungsbild] that come from body stimuli through language, because it does not follow a straight path in the periphery of the body (p. 91). Since it is an associative process (the energy that comes from stimuli is associated through images), language is used to understand the psychophysiological processes in general. Once understood, we can see how the body connects itself to arousal and how it connects itself to the psychic images:

The word [Wort] is, therefore, a complex representation [Vorstellung] that consists of the mentioned images, or, said in another way, the word corresponds to an intricate association process [Assoziationsvorgang] for which concurs the aforementioned elements from visual, acoustic and kinesthetic origin (Freud, 1891/2016a, p.102).

So, the associative complex named *Wort*, originated in the impressions that come from the experience of the world, is an association between the word representation [Wortvorstellung]<sup>9</sup> and the object representation [Objektvorstellung], which happens through sound image (Freud, 1891/2016a, p.102). Even though the word gets meaning in a "symbolic relationship" when related to object representations, we suppose it is possible to fully associate the *Wort* with the word representation – as far as it is disconnected from the meaning that comes from reality – such as the cases of schizophrenic language, some cases of aphasia, or even situations in which the speech or thought do not have an object that gives them meaning.<sup>10</sup>

Therefore, it is possible to think about the reason the word is so important in the psychic treatment: well, all types of arousal influence the body throughout the lifespan and originate images; and the words come from such images [Bilder], which are multiple and interconnected. One word can carry within itself a number of arousals, which can be expressed through it. That's why the word is the access to the images of the memories [Erinnerungsbild] and, so, it is accessible to all arousal engraved in the body. In the

<sup>8</sup> To extend the study of the unitary object (monism) in Freud's Psychoanalysis see "Introduction to the Freudian Epistemology" (Assoun, 1983).

<sup>9</sup> "Freud uses to refer to the elements that constitute the word-representation both the term *Bild* (image) and *Vorstellung* (idea or representation), which is always used to refer to the word-representation (*Wortvorstellung*) and the object-representation (*Objektvorstellung*)" (Caropreso, 2010).

<sup>10</sup> In "Totem and Taboo" (Freud, 1913/2018a) the word is born in the presence of the father's death. We should remember that death cannot be represented, which indicates the dissociation of the inherent object representation to the impossibility of one experiencing it in themselves. Besides, Freud postulates at the end of his text that "In the beginning was the Act", thus corroborating the somatic origin of the representations.

psychic treatment, special attention is given to the arousal and words that have an affective connection, being the most important ones for the soul [*Seele*]. When we use language, we make associations; which means that we deal with what is experienced by the senses (by the body as a whole) so that we can go through the associations to revisit the arousal that guided our psychic work. Freud emphasizes that “we also [put into] practice each one of the functions of the language through the same way we acquire them” (Freud, 1891/2016a,

p.101). In addition to being able to understand the reason the word is used as a psychoanalytic tool; we can also infer why it is considered magic: its immateriality – the enigma of the libido that lives in the body. The intervention of the psychoanalyst can restore the “magic of the word” (Freud, 1890/2017a), considering its influence on the patient’s libido, to reconnect it to the representative processes with the purpose of mental health, just like a sorcerer uses magic principles to change reality.

## THE WORD IN THE “PROJECT FOR A SCIENTIFIC PSYCHOLOGY”

In the “Project for a scientific psychology” (1895/1996a), as the title suggests, Freud intends to build a scientific structure for his psychology: “the intention is to provide a psychology that is a natural science: which means to represent the psychic processes as quantitatively determined states of specified material particles, making such processes clear and free of contradictions” (p.347). Therefore, he bases his work on two principles: a material one and an immaterial one. The first one is based on an energy that is subject to Newton’s laws of motion and rest, called Q (*quantum* meaning energy); the second one, the material base of the theory, refers to the neurons. At this point, the matter of materiality (body) and immateriality (*Seele*), to which Freud referred in “Psychical (or mental) treatment” (Freud, 1890/2017a), comes up: the evidence of the material/somatic nature can be found in the neurons; whilst the nature of Q, despite being quantitative, can only be inferred due to its immaterial/energetic nature. Between materiality and energy, the psychic would work like this: Freud proposes laws to explain the clinical phenomena that are pathological, especially the cases that can be easily spotted, such as hysteria and obsession. Thus, “Processes, such as stimuli, substitution, conversion, and discharge that had to be described then [related to those disturbances] directly suggest the concept of neural arousal in state of flow as a quantitative factor” (Freud, 1895/1996a, p.347).

During the clinical observation, the excess as a quantitative factor presents in the ideas (such as in the obsessions) and in the arousal over the body (such as in the conversion hysteria) had become especially clear. Freud uses the law of inertia in his theory as one of the laws responsible for psychophysiological work. Therefore, there is a tendency of Q to be equal to zero, which would explain the need and the obvious tendency of the organism to discharge to keep it healthy. The law of inertia would be, then, a tendency of an organism to avoid unpleasure, thus avoiding both pleasure and the possibility to discharge as well. The fact is that the organism doesn’t reach inertia, thus  $Q=0$ . Freud explains that due to the origin of arousal, in response to external stimuli, the law of inertia would be possible since the organism can get away from the stimuli or discharge it in a reflex as an action. Although related to the internal stimuli of the organism, which is continuous throughout life, the only possibility

would be if the organism partially discharged Q through a “specific action” (Freud, 1895/1996a, p.349), thus making it stable, but never a  $Q=0$ . So, if the organism is “hungry”, thus “hungry” being the stimulus, while seeking for food the organism would make a discharge of the possible stimulus, although it would not be a full and intermittent annulment of the stimulus. The author suggests, then, the principle of constancy, which would be a modification of the principle of inertia but adapted to the conditions of internal arousal, which is permanent in the living organism. The organism would tend to keep the level of internal arousal to a minimum. Both inertia and constancy would behave like this as a tendency to fulfill the need of the organism to discharge in the most efficient way to keep working. The description of these economic principles should be the ground on which metapsychological ideas will further stand in the Freudian works (Freud, 1916/1996f). The psychic pathology comes from a conflictive factor in discharge, which corroborates the identification of an elevated level of arousal due to unpleasure and an equivalent discharge as pleasure.

In order to think about the dynamic between a material element subject to arousal (and, so, a charge-discharge dynamic of this arousal) and the psychic factor, Freud (1895/1996a) describes the neuronal apparatus as the recipient of the stimulus until the psychic element is formed: the representation [*Vorstellung*]. Freud formulates the phi ( $\phi$ ), psi ( $\psi$ ), and omega ( $\omega$ ) systems. Unfortunately, it is not possible to make a more detailed description in this article since our aim is to discuss the word in the psychophysiological dynamic. Then, to summarize, the  $\phi$  system would receive the exogenous stimuli before transmitting it to the  $\psi$  system. The  $\phi$  system divides and conduces the exogenous stimuli through several afferents paths and gives them a direction through a motor discharge. That’s why the  $\psi$  system receives less *quantum* of energy if compared to the quantity that initially enters the organism through the  $\phi$  system. Also, the  $\psi$  system directly captures the endogenous stimuli and it is, therefore, responsible for creating representations [*Vorstellungen*] and keeping them through memory. Freud separates the  $\psi$  system that receives  $\phi$  exogenous stimuli to the  $\psi$  system that receives endogenous stimuli: the first one would be the  $\psi$  peripheral system and the second one would be the  $\psi$  nucleus system.

So far, the systems are related to the quantity received, which means they are sensory means that elaborate this Q used in representations – first when the arousal enters as elements of the representation [*Bild*] and further in the association of these in various representations [*Vorstellung*]. For a full expression of these representations, the Q charge on these systems should add and exceed a specific limit (although it should be inferior to the limit of pain).

In order to understand the complex dynamics of the representations [*Vorstellungen*], it is necessary to mention the third neuronal system,  $\omega$ , “in which arousal states produce several qualities, thus meaning they are conscious sensations” (Freud, 1895/1996a, p.361). Since the three neuronal systems proposed by Freud were acknowledged, it is possible to understand the different types of representation [*Vorstellung*] and its elements [*Bild*] already used in his theories from 1891, representations both in the level of the  $\psi$  system and the  $\omega$  system: in general, “mnemonic representations” [*Erinnerungsbilder*], and more specifically, “the word representation” [*Wortvorstellung*] (sound image [*Klangbild*], kinesthetic of the speech [*Sprachbewegungsbild*], visual letter image [*visuelle Buchstabenbild*], and kinesthetic of the writing [*Schreibbewegungsbild*]); and “object representation” [*Objektvorstellung*] (an associative complex made of different representations [*Bild*] of the things characterized by the stimulation of the senses, such as “movement representation” [*Bewegungsbild*], tactile representation [*Tastbild*], and sound image [*Klangbild*]).

Through Freud’s terminology, it is possible to understand the dynamics of the images: the object representations [*Objektvorstellungen*] are kept in an unconscious level ( $\psi$  system) until the moment they are associated with the word representations [*Wortvorstellungen*], and the images [*Vorstellungen*] are not unconscious as long as they are actions and stimulate the senses in a way that the (internal) representations are unconscious in case they are disconnected to the representations of the words or in case they are not triggered by the current action. Caropreso and Simanke (2011a) discussed this:

Thus, if there were only object representations in *psi*, the processes that occurred there would be unconscious, except those resulted directly from the perceptions, the representations of motor elimination (motion images), and the hallucinations. In all of them, consciousness is immediate (...) With the language, the second form of consciousness would appear: a mediate consciousness, which means intermediated by the linguistic signs. Then, before the

constitution of linguistic associations, a conscious thought would only exist if it were in action. (p. 107).

Given the above, it is possible to think that the theory of the neuronal systems proposed by Freud (1895/1996a) points to opposite sides in the psychophysiological system. On one hand, where the quantity appears: the sensory apparatus makes the perception and the arousal of the organism possible (nucleus systems  $\phi$  and  $\psi$ ), and on the other hand, the consciousness (system  $\omega$ ) that introduces quality to this sensory/quantity experience; between  $\phi$  and  $\omega$  there is  $\psi$ , which carries multiple images [*Vorstellungen*], all of them from the somatic apparatus since the body is the only possible entrance of stimuli. But these multiple images are different due to the quality of the object that causes the arousal: words written or spoken, objects/bodies (animate or inanimate ones), and the body itself (Freud, 1895/1996a). As said by Caropreso and Simanke (2011a), the word, according to the dynamic theorized by Freud, has the purpose to bring the representation [*Vorstellung*] to a conscious level in a mediate way, therefore increasing the possibility of it happening when associated with unpleasant experiences or experiences that are not in movement. Only through the association of object representations [*Objektvorstellungen*] with word representations [*Wortvorstellungen*] it is possible to be conscious of the psychophysiological experiences of extreme arousal (pain) and arousal from the past (Freud 1895/1996a). If there is no connection to the word representation [*Wortvorstellung*], the experiences/images are kept unconscious, although they will continue pressuring the  $\psi$  system as a whole. Besides, the word representation [*Wortvorstellung*] appears in Freud’s text from 1895 as a connection to the images [*Vorstellungen*] of internal and external experiences; images that show the organization of the quantity that entered the body through the sensory apparatus.

If, on one hand, the material element (not only the neurons, but the body as a whole) is clearer since it is made of tissues and it is easily aroused, on the other hand, the quality element of the psychic life is an enigma. However, the interface body-consciousness is as mysterious or even more mysterious since the image [*Vorstellung*] (in  $\psi$ ) connects quantity and quality. The idea of a psychophysiological dynamic might be helpful as long as the nature of this process is being considered. The answer is within what goes through and connects psyche and body: the libidinal energy. This is what makes the continuity from physics to psychology possible: “it is the reduction of the universe to a complex of sensations thus allowing a psychophysical continuum” (Assoun, 1983, p. 85).

## THE WORD IN THE “THE INTERPRETATION OF DREAMS”

In both “The interpretation of dreams” (Freud, 1900/1996b, 1900/1996c) and “Project for a scientific psychology” (Freud, 1895/1996a), the representation [*Vorstellung*] and its dynamic are approached in the same way: as a complex organization of a quantitative fact that

comes from the arousal of sensory organs, a charge that fills the memory with images. The word [*Wort*] as a complex of representations stays an intricate process of associative imagery that comes from arousal and the meanings that may be associated with them. In this text, Freud (1900/1996b,

1900/1996c) describes the psychic dynamic differently. The process of sensory interaction (when the arousal enters) until consciousness (which includes motor functions and the act of speaking) happens differently. Despite the word representation [*Wortvorstellung*] being essential for the establishment of consciousness, it is not the only factor that plays a role, as it was in “Project for a scientific psychology” (Freud, 1895/1996a). In the text, from 1900, two factors are added to make consciousness possible: the intensity of the stimuli, which should reach a certain level, and the need of the content to overcome the censorship, which is acting between the preconscious and the conscious.

Besides, the author sets up in “The interpretation of dreams” (1900/1996b, 1900/1996c) that the psychic apparatus is composed of the interaction between the body [*Körper*], from where the stimulus enters, image [*Vorstellung*], which goes through it, and the motor end, where the word [*Wort*] resides:

All our psychic activity comes from internal or external stimuli and ends in innervations. Therefore, we shall attribute to the apparatus a sensory and a motor end. There is a system that receives the perceptions in the sensory end; and there is another system, in the motor end, which opens the doors of the perceptive activities for it (Freud, 1900/1996c, p.568).

In this apparatus, the unconscious and the preconscious/conscious would be where the images [*Vorstellung*] are represented; although the first one would be found before the *locus* of the preconscious, which precedes the motor end connected to the conscious. The connection of the object representation to the word representation is still a necessary condition for consciousness, and so is to be attentive to what is being represented. Besides,

Freud still supports the idea that from the association between the psychic processes with the words would come a new type of consciousness intermediated specifically by the linguistic associations. Also, before the constitution of the word representations, the psychic processes would be automatically regulated by pleasant and unpleasant sensations (Caropreso, 2008).

The word is responsible to add a new form of consciousness that surpasses the primary process and dismisses the need for the sensory processes to be simultaneous, which occurs in the consciousness coming from a flux of progressive arousal. This form of consciousness is only possible as the word underlies the flux of “regressive” arousal from the motor end to the perceptive/sensory one.

If what allows the thought to be conscious (the recollection of the representation) is its association with words, and if the recollection occurs in a regressive way, the words would be turned into beliefs in this process, and as all perceptions they could reach consciousness and attract attention to

themselves. Therefore, the consciousness of the thought would be possible due to the hallucinatory reactivation of the word representation (Caropreso, 2008).

The dreams also share the regressive way of psychic functioning. We dream with motions that may or may not enter the conscious level. Although our defensive processes are lowered when we sleep, there are defensive forces in conflict with several impulses that tense the organism, so the latter come up in dreams associated in a condensed and distorted form (Freud, 1900/1996b, 1900/1996c). The function of the word is related to the expression of the conflictive game in the dreams as well: as a word representation, it underlies the appearance of oneiric images [*Vorstellungen*] and background thoughts during dreams. Besides, a word may appear as an image that carries elements from associations present in the oneiric content, such as a noun or someone’s name. We generally dream about drives that pressure to resurface and reach the conscious level. But the drive can only show itself as an image [*Vorstellung*] due to its originally quantitative nature. “Once interpreted, we realized the dream is the fulfillment of a wish” (Freud, 1900/1996b, p.155), which means that we dream mainly with those images associated with the motions that are being used in the current context and/or with the most important in our life (especially from childhood). In different parts of the text, Freud refers to the fact that a dream might be connected to the experience of the previous day, which activated important affections: a real experience that impacts the organism with arousal – strong enough – might be the cause of the “cathexis” or the ‘allocation’ of memory as long as they allow themselves to be seeing during dreams. Important to notice that he refers to these arousals as “the real propellants of dreams” but points out that “the multiple origins may cause an element to easily impose itself to the content of the dream” (p.320).

The dreams and hallucinatory processes generally emphasize the function of the words: being access to the representations and, consequently, to the arousal. Therefore, the same way Freud stated the interconnection between soma and psyche in his previous texts, he writes about the oneiric life:

The mechanics of these processes are quite unknown to me; anyone who wished to take these ideas seriously would have to look for physical analogies to them and find a way to represent the movements that accompany the excitation of the neurons (Freud, 1900/1975a, p.595).

Therefore, it is possible to consider that when psychoanalysts use the words – and they are guided by the association process of dreams, jokes, lapses, or speech – they prompt, once again, the associative paths through which the drive has followed between sensation and representation. It is by accessing these paths and looking for a way to redirect them to better destinations that psychotherapy may work.

## THE WORD IN “THE UNCONSCIOUS”

In “The unconscious” (1915/1996e), Freud continues exposing his thoughts about the word and its processes. He refers to cases and his theoretical work on schizophrenia, and he discusses the dynamic of the language, something he hasn’t done explicitly so far: the word representation [*Wortvorstellung*] originates in the body, and since the object representations<sup>11</sup> are disconnected during mental suffering, the word representation ends up in hypercathexis. As far as it is not supported by the images that come from the objects of the world, hypercathexis originates hypochondriac language, organ speech or even narcissistic language (Freud, 1915/1996e): the body supplies the meaning that will be used. Therefore, in the dynamic explanation of the representation [*Vorstellungen*] during schizophrenia, Freud emphasizes the somatic nature of the meaning of the words, as well as the origin of their representations [*Vorstellungen*]:

...the acts of cathexis that are relatively distant from the perception, are themselves deprived of quality and unconsciousness, and they only reach their capacity to become conscious through the connection with the residues of words acknowledged. *But the word presentations [Wortvorstellung] are also originated from the sensory perceptions, [emphasis added] in the same way the thing presentations [Sachvorstellung]<sup>12</sup>; (...) the thought remains in a system that is far from the original perceptive residues since it does not retain any of their qualities, and, to become conscious they need to be reinforced by new qualities [those extracted from the sensation of the organ] (Freud, 1915/1996e, p.207).*

Therefore, this Freudian text about metapsychology is aligned with the hypothesis we wanted to highlight in the other texts aforementioned: the words and their representations are a qualitative addition to the quantitative expression of the psychophysiological unit. They are, let’s say, the last stage in the psychic organization since what used to be quantitative (somatic arousal) might get a qualitative expression (image and word). Despite this hypothesis being present in earlier works, especially in “The unconscious” he reaffirms and solidifies the metapsychological bases of his biological thought, which help us understand the words and their processes.

Also, the permanence since 1890 of the functional conception between soma and psyche is especially clear in “The unconscious” (Freud, 1915/1996e): since “ideas [*Vorstellung*] are cathexes, basically from traces of memory, the affections and emotions correspond to the process of discharge, perceived as sentiments in their last manifestations” (p.183). It is essential to notice how important the psychophysiological basis of Freud’s works are to fully grasp his concept of the word and how to use it as a psychoanalyst once the cathexes used in the psychic treatment are ultimately endogenous and exogenous processes of somatic arousal.

Therefore, it is important to notice the connection between psychophysiology and metapsychology since Freud reaffirms it many times<sup>13</sup>: “The psychoanalytic structure we have created is actually a superstructure that will have to be placed on its organic foundation. Something we haven’t considered yet”<sup>14</sup>. (Freud, S. 1916/1975b, p. 390).

## PLEASURE, REALITY, DEFENSE AND THE WORD

The discussions about the pleasure principle and the reality principle are related to how the libido works (Freud, 1911/2004). Freud’s theory shows the way biological energy goes through the human body. Despite using biology, he inserts the concept of the soul in the organism, which means that the ability to formulate images is attributed to the somatic apparatus as far as it is indissociable to the psychism. As previously mentioned, this use of biology in his theory was only possible since Freud recreates a paradigm to help him

understand it: functionalism. Therefore, among body, soul, and its associations there is psychophysiology. The enigma of the origin of the images is ultimately an analysis of the arousal and the body. This origin, even though not fully understood, does not leave biology aside from the psychic understand, especially due to the somatic origin of the words (Freud, 1915/1996e). They are only incorporated within us since there is a limit to the hallucinatory satisfaction which does not fulfill our necessity. Then, we abstain from the

<sup>11</sup> In this part of the analysis, we’ve kept the ideas of object representation and word representation that can be found in previous Freudian works before “The Unconscious” (Freud, 1915/1996e) to avoid possible misunderstandings. See reference number 12.

<sup>12</sup> Although the concept is not explained by Freud in “The unconscious”, “it is possible to infer that what he calls thing-representation [*Sachvorstellung*], in the metapsychological articles, corresponds to what is called object-presentation [*Objektvorstellung*] in 1891. In “the unconscious”, the word-representation [*Wortvorstellung*] refers to the pair constituted by the word-representation associated with the thing-representation” (Caropreso, 2010, p. 143).

<sup>13</sup> See Caropreso and Simanke (2011b) to find the same ideas in other Freudian works.

<sup>14</sup> The Brazilian Standard edition (1916/1996g, p.389) translates “organic” as “essential”.



univocity of autoerotic pleasure to be in contact with the world and interact with the stimuli of words and things.

The two principles (Freud, 1911/2004) put us before the libido and its destination to pleasure, but also to the impossibility of the omnipotent realization of it. The reality principle has an ambiguous function since it deprives the fulfillment of unlimited pleasure once it is put in contact with the world. Nonetheless, it is precisely the connection with reality that makes pleasure possible. The hallucinatory pleasure gets structures and limits before entering society. These limits are defensive processes that come up from the reality principle and give us possibilities of dealing with what was once deprived in a more (or less) traumatic way. These defenses protect us from the frustrations of reality and drives too intense for psychism (pain-angst) (Freud 1895/1996a). They limit the amount of pleasure we can take and, at the same time, open the possibility for us to really see people around and learn their behavior. Otherwise, the libidinal attention that comes up in dreams, in narcissistic expressions, and through hallucinations, would be continuous and eventually end life; for example, a baby that hallucinates with being breastfed without actually being. The continuous organ sensation of narcissists would not allow a human being to learn how to talk or think. In the first moments of life, the reality principle imposes the need to interact with the world and to survive, to pay attention to something else besides one's own body. The schizophrenic process (Freud, 1915/1996e) shows us what happens when this ability to pay attention besides one's own autoerotic experience is not fully developed during childhood. The words slowly come up during the child's development as a way to interact with reality. The words speak to us before communicating with others since we need to first learn what to do with them, how to create images of the world and of ourselves. They are, therefore, a tool for the learning process of how to think, how to represent feelings, and how to interact with the world besides us.

In "Formulations on the Two Principles of Mental Functioning" (Freud, 1911/2004), Freud discusses the consequence and the tendency of psychic illnesses to make people see reality in a distorted way. Understanding the repression process [*Verdrängung*] allows us to understand this escape from reality as an economic function in the psychic since the role it plays in the illnesses of the soul is creating limits and detours for the libidinal quantity, and it is possible to consider the defense mechanisms as a detour in general. Freud introduces valuable considerations related to defense in the "Letter 52" (Freud, 1896/2016b): first he separates pathogenic defenses from non-pathogenic ones; then, he characterizes the first group and separates the ones that come from non-translated associations [*Verdrängung*] from those that were translated (other defenses). In the

letter, he writes that it is possible to find this separation of reality (as a defense) in an extreme way in cases of hallucinatory psychosis.

Freud's ideas about the senses of organs of schizophrenic language (Freud, 1915/1996e) emphasize that the charge is mostly narcissistic. The economic nature of hallucinations is mainly a resource to narcissism (Freud, 1914/1996d). The unconscious floods into the world around. The psychic defenses, different from the repression [*Verdrängung*], do not push the unconscious away; they, otherwise, express the narcissism in one's own body, that's why in the psychotic expression there is almost always the translation (in words and thoughts) of internal perceptions. On the other hand, the neurotic defenses do not translate the internal perceptions of the affections. The repressed content is expressed through a hallucinatory process of the unconscious. Therefore, these perceptions are not transferred to the world but taken apart from the body and its sensations. These two defense mechanisms have in common the separation of reality (because of the defenses) and the need to discharge certain arousal (either translated or not), which cause repetition. The defense process and its economy explain the repetition: when we defend ourselves, we avoid a discharge or contacting the world. This energy, when not annulled, pressure for a discharge, which remains as a memory. Since it is an experience from a different time, it is now outdated. The defenses work to establish an economy between pleasure and angst. As Freud (1915/1996e) points out, the repression [*Verdrängung*] operates against unpleasant contents that are avoided; then, taken through unconscious paths. But a charge always demands a discharge: once repressed it is expressed through lapses, language, dreams, psychosomatic symptoms, through errands, behavior and ideas – simply a charge that hallucinates to satisfy itself, apart from the world. In the cases of psychosis, the perception of the world is distorted, thus benefiting the narcissism: it hallucinates the world through its sensory apparatus. Anyhow, the defense is narcissistic and, therefore, always shows a characteristic disconnection. The word comes up as an imbricate effect of the drive game between associations and their impossibility. The defense operates as a still motion in the libidinal process since it was prevented. Therefore, to revive "the magic power of the words" (Freud, 1890/2017a) seems to imply an economic reorganization, in which the dynamic between limitations and defenses – necessary ones, not pathologic ones - absorb little energy if we consider the demand for kindness and eroticism of the body that animates them. As Freud restates (1916/1996f), the psychic pathology is an economic matter, which means it depends on how much energy is being absorbed in the conflict between defensive processes and the paths for the fulfillment of the drives.

## THE POWER OF THE LIBIDO

We've decided to work on such an extensive and complex task knowing that this article would not comprehend all there is to it. In order to explain the dynamics of the words, it was necessary to recognize the psychophysiological aspect theorized by Freud. It has become clear to us that, to understand the importance of the word [*Wort*] in his works, it is not possible to detach the unitary dynamic, since doing so would mean a total deconstruction of the very origin of the knowledge about the representations and the associative processes in which the words are included – besides subverting essential concepts. The very concept of drive indicates the psychophysiological aspect, it is a "...concept between the psychic and the somatic. A psychic representation of the stimuli that have been originated in the body and reached the soul, and a demand imposed on the psychic due to its connection to the body" (Freud, 1915/2017b, p.25).

We've discussed the body-soul dynamic as well we have gradually considered the choice of the word as a tool in the psychic treatment: the word [*Wort*] can access the energy that animates the body. If there is something magic in the words, as Freud pointed out (1890/2017a), it seems to be their ability to access images [*Vorstellungen*] since these are quantitative elaborations of the libidinal arousal. The magic of the words referred to by Freud (1890/2017a) seems to lie on the libidinal energy, which like any other magic (not being an analogy) lies on hidden forces. Freud was an intellectual who continuously attempted to present psychoanalysis as a science. Therefore, we only assume he didn't choose the analogy with magic unthoughtfully.

The drive is an enigma, but not in an uncountable way: its economic nature tends to a temporary indetermination (Assoun, 1983, p.211). The idea of the metapsychological sorcerer brought up by Freud (1937/1996h) seems to point in the same direction his *Phantasieren* invokes the magic. The sorcerer might be the theoretical basis of the magic the psychoanalyst must revive through the words.

After all, what made our everyday words nothing but "paled magic" (Freud, 1890/2017a)? Freud might have referred to the use of the words inside the dynamic of psychic illnesses. The "words of our daily speeches are nothing but paled magic" (Freud, 1890/2017a) seems to be what is left to the people who live in a society in malaise if they are far from the magical potential that is inherent to the drive force. When they lose their "magic power" (Freud, 1890/2017a), the words can avoid sensations, representations, consciousness, and to summarize: reality. Freud wanted his science to recover its magic, reason why he attempted to create a treatment for the malaise in which humanity lies since the words lose their enchantment when their energy is transferred to the pathological processes. Despite inhabiting the extremity of the motility, they turn into a transgression: they become meaningless. If the purpose of the psychoanalysts is to reactivate the "magical power of the words" (Freud, 1890/2017a) in their patients and in how words are used, Freud's theory could make us think that it is necessary to reestablish an inseparable operation in which the libido can be experienced in an integrated way among body, image, and word.

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