
It is a difficult enterprise to undertake, within restricted limits, an examination of the enormous problem of aphasia without the omission of any of the essential viewpoints from which that controversial question may be approached. This attempt, none the less, the author has made, and, we may add, with complete success. From the introduction we may gather some of his general contentions, such as the following: aphasia is not a disease, but a symptom; the function of language is an intellectual function, in regard to which the idea of localisation cannot have the spatial significance that belongs to a morphological unit. The author distinguishes thought from language, and follows Hughlings Jackson in maintaining a double symptomatology, negative and positive, for the disorders improperly termed aphasic (if the etymology of the word is considered).

A given aphasic symptom may be envisaged from three points of view: (1) What is the anatomical site of the lesion producing the defect? (2) What are the physiological mechanisms involved? (3) What is the nature of the psychological disorder? No study of the subject can make any pretence at completeness if any of these three aspects is ignored. The first three chapters are devoted to their study. Anatomical considerations can obviously take up only a small part of so restricted a volume, but the essential facts are enumerated. In his physiological considerations the author specially stresses the kinæsthetic element in speech. The psychological considerations include a criticism of the views of Pierre Marie and Moutier, to the effect that in the aphasia of Wernicke there is a combination of a general intellectual defect and a special intellectual defect of speech. A study of intellectual and emotional speech follows, in which connexion the author recalls his very interesting case of apraxia (published in 1908) in which, the lesion being in the right hemisphere, emotional speech was lost and intellectual speech conserved.

Modern observation compels us to abandon the idea of the destruction of engrams or images as being at the basis of aphasic syndromes, and to substitute for it the view that in the light of our present knowledge no adequate use can be made of these conceptions. The last three chapters are concerned with the classification of aphasic disorders, certain clinical types of aphasia, and its treatment. We note the scepticism of the author in regard to classification, in which respect he follows Jacksonian tradition. In no domain of knowledge is it more necessary to be at once neurologist and psychologist, and, we may add, linguist.

It would doubtless be easy enough to indicate omissions in this short monograph, though the criticism is scarcely fair. One would have liked, for instance, an exposition of the theory of chronogenic localisation associated with the name of von Monakow but derived from Jacksonian conceptions. Such as it is, this little book forms an excellent introduction, and the author’s mastery of his subject evokes our admiration.

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