

1. Abstract

This research begins a consideration of how metaphor is perceived and responded to within a person-centred therapeutic approach. It reflects on the extensive theorization of metaphor's features and mechanisms and examines evidence of its manifestation in practice. The core data is a group of interviews conducted with person-centred practitioners and analyzed thematically. This is compared with evidence from archived session transcriptions of the 1950s/60s, the 70s and more recent times.

2. Early Development of the Project

During my work on this project I have, inevitably, read many different accounts of metaphor. In late 2011, I saw for the first time Bachelard's description of how it is in the nature of metaphor that 'the image has touched the depths before it stirs the surface' (1969, in Cox and Theilgaard, 1997: viii) and it affected me quite profoundly. It became an elegant symbol for the distinctive potential of metaphor in therapy – one that has stayed with me ever since. But that first encounter might also be described as an *interactive* learning experience. I clearly remember through my own imagining of an ocean's surface and depth – turbulent aquamarine, storm, foam, then stillness, silence, a dark seabed – being caught in the *process* of potentiation/impact of that particular metaphor and, by extension, metaphor generally, just, as Bachelard asserts, characterizes metaphor's operation. I had *lived*, rather than merely being cognizant of it, the/Bachelard's 'truth' that a level of immediate experiencing, a 'deep enigmatic privacy' (Bollas, 1987: 35 in Barden and Williams, 2006: 18) beneath and, we might say, beyond the