

Metaphorical Iconicity

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to present a comprehensive definition of the self as a basis for the development of an integral model of cognition, which could be used as a new template for the purpose of doing psychotherapy and offering a new direction for psychotherapy research. Using a theoretical format, the subject of the self is traced historically through its philosophical, psychological and neurophysiological antecedents. By viewing and analyzing the strengths and limitations of existing theories, the absence of a metaphorical and iconic perspective to describe the self is demonstrated. The theory of Metaphorical Iconicity (MI) (Sardell, 2003) is proposed as a new model of cognition and psychotherapy method that reflects a bridge between traditional psychological schools and modern neurophysiological research.

The term metaphorical iconicity embraces two concepts: metaphor and icon. These concepts reflect how the brain processes, stores and retrieves information. Since all objects in space are perceived by their attributes, the brain organizes and connects objects according to their attributes-in-common. This is called metaphorical cognition. In addition, the brain organizes the data for effective problem solving iconically and metaphorically. The experience of problem—solving and necessary behavioral response produces the experience of the self through the integration of three neuropsychological components. Through metaphorical cognition of iconic goal—directed behavior, emotion history and subjective experience, successful survival strategies have endured. The experience of the self is postulated to come about when these survival strategies are observed by a fourth component of cognition: the mirror neuron network. It is hypothesized that the integration of the three components and the feedback from the fourth component generates the experience of the self MI proposes a therapeutic method to manipulate the self by influencing the components before they synthesize one's reality.