

Provisional Definitions of Common

Postmodern Terms

from N to Z

naive realism -the view that we can know things in the world directly without taking into account our uncertainties and doubts or the effects of language dividing things into somewhat arbitrary categories. Paul Feyerabend spoke of the "obvious crudity" of the naive realist's philosophical approach in scientific matters. See, for example, p. 8 of his book [Realism, Rationalism and Scientific Method : Philosophical Papers \(Philosophical Papers, Vol 1\)](#). [return](#)

Narrative Therapy - Although the term *narrative therapy* is sometimes used more broadly, among therapists today, it usually refers to a form of therapy introduced by [White](#) and [Epston](#) in their book, [Narrative Means to Therapeutic Ends](#). [return](#)

naturalistic fallacy - attempting to give factual definitions of value-laden terms, or, as it is sometimes put, reasoning from what is the case to what should be the case, or what would be the ideal case. The concept was introduced by G. E. Moore in his book, [Principia Ethica](#), and became the connerstone of his ethical philosophy. [return](#)

negative capability - a term of the poet John Keats. It means the ability to live well within the mystery and ambiguity of the world around us. See [John Keats : The Major Works: Including Endymion, the Odes and Selected Letters \(Oxford World's Classics\)](#), p.370. [return](#)

New Criticism - A fashionable approach to literary criticism in the nineteen forties, fifties and sixties. The idea was that each literary work could be analyzed without reference to the author, his life or his time, or anything outside the text itself. For some new critics, the preferred text was poetry which was not to be violated by paraphrase or similar devices meant to elucidate the text. New criticism was not postmodern because it held that there was one true meaning for each text and ignored the ambiguity of text, nevertheless, postmodernism learned much from New Criticism. See [A Derrida Reader: Between the Blinds](#), p.81, for interesting remarks on the role of New Criticism in postmodern thinking. [return](#)

not-knowing - [Harry Goolishian](#) and [Harlene Anderson](#)'s term for the recommended approach that therapists should have towards their clients. In this approach therapists avoid taking dogmatic postures and try to remain flexible to have their perspectives altered by their clients. In her book, [Conversation Language and Possibilities: A Postmodern Approach to Therapy](#), Anderson says, "The meaning that emerges [in therapy] is influenced by what a therapist bring into conversation and their interactions with each other about it. The issue of new meaning relies on the novelty (*not-knowing*) [\(click here for more on not-knowing.\)](#) [Fred Newman](#) and [Lois Holzman](#) talk about something quite similar when they speak about the "end of knowing." Also consider looking at Fred Newman's concept of non-knowing in his book, [The End of Knowing: A New Developmental Way of Learning](#) [return](#)

nostalgic postmodernism - a general disillusionment with the modern world of unfulfilled promises, or a similar disillusionment in a particular field of without a wholehearted return to past ways of thinking. In her book, [Nostalgic Postmodernism: Postmodern Therapy](#), Shawver says (p.8). "I cannot imagine how a therapist could become a postmodern visionary without first passing through a phase of nostalgic postmodernism. Given our place in western history, this nostalgia is quite natural. If we recognize it for what it is, it can serve as a springboard to our visionary and clinical competence." On the other hand, [Nostalgic Postmodernism: The Victorian Tradition and the Contemporary British Novel \(Postmodern Studies 31\)](#), Christian Gutleben sees nostalgic postmodernism as a new form of postmodernism emerging in the British novel (p.219) Also see ["visionary postmodernism"](#). Nostalgic postmodernism, is not seem restricted to therapists. [return](#)

Oedipus Complex or Oedipal Complex - a sequence of development experiences that Freud argued all human boys went through. It involves the boys romantic feelings for his mother. However, in Freud's theory, if the Oedipal Complex is "properly" resolved, the boy gives up his quest for his mother's romantic affections. Supposedly this happens because he believes, unconsciously and symbolically, that he will otherwise be

This site was developed for a group of therapists who study postmodern thinkers. If you are a therapist visiting this website, or if you're interested in the postmodern movement among therapists, you can read more about it by [clicking here](#).

[Post-Modernism for Psychotherapists: A Critical Reader](#)

A must read for the therapist serious about starting to study postmodernism.

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[Some Stories are Better than Others: Doing What Works in Brief Therapy and Managed Care](#)

Check out chapters like, "Dilemmas of Postmodern Practice under Managed Care"

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[Family Therapy: An Intimate History](#)

One woman's account of her rich history with family therapy showing her fascinating path to a postmodern understanding.

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[Postmodernism, Religion and the Future of Social Work](#)

The authors note that the postmodern perspective has the potential to renew the profession of social work.

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[Conversation Language and Possibilities: A Postmodern Approach to Therapy](#)

One of the most popular postmodern therapy books. It describes a practical way to implement your postmodern therapy.

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[Nostalgic Postmodernism: Postmodern Therapy](#)

How to recognize yourself if you are postmodern, and how to understand it if you are..

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More reading suggestions to come..

castrated. [return](#)

ontology - the philosophy of Being, that is, the study of the metaphysical foundations of the universe, foundations that exist beyond science and can only be discovered through reasoning. [click here for a link on ontology](#) [return](#)

operational definition - a concrete and procedural definition of something that is otherwise difficult to agree about. For example, people can disagree about how creative a particular person is. After all, people are creative in different ways and what one person would consider "creative" another person might consider "off the wall." But an operational definition removes the challenge of differing opinions and ties the definition to a procedure that is precise and, for those using the operational definition, not contestable. A set of questions might be used to "operationally define" creativity, for example so that every time someone answered a question "yes" they were given a point. Their operationally defined creativity might be the sum of all their points -- even if the questions have nothing to do with what you and I ordinarily think of "creativity." Questions about whether the operational definition measures what it says it measures are questions about the "validity" of an operational definition. One can have an operational definition without it being "valid." James Kalat's Introductory text, [Introduction to Psychology, Cloth Edition \(with CD-ROM and InfoTrac\)](#) (p.40), puts it this way, "An operational definition does not try to tell you what something is, it just tells you how to measure it." to [return](#)

ostensive definition - To define something by pointing to it as it is named. For example, if someone were to say, "What's a baboon?" one might point to one (or to a picture of one), and say "That's a baboon." [Ludwig Wittgenstein](#) organizes much of his thinking around the concept of an "ostensive definition". The first section of his book, [Philosophical Investigations](#), begins with a passage from St. Augustine that argued that humans learned language by having adults point to things and name them. Then, Wittgenstein shows how such ostensive training would not be enough because in an actual case thed with no language at all would not know what aspect of the object was being pointed to. When the parent pointed and said "ball", that is, the child would not know if it was the red color of the ball being named, the roundness of the ball, and so forth. This lays the foundation for Wittgenstein explaining his own philosophy of language.

Other - The term "Other" with a capital "O" is used throughout the postmodern literature. It means something quite different from the word "other" with a small "o". Whereas the "other" is just someone else, an other with a capital "O" is a more important figure. For some authors, the Other is an imaginary person whom wants talks with, or debates, perhaps a deposit of authority figures. For other authors, and particularly for Emmanuel Levinas in works such as [Time and the Other](#), the Other is a living person of profound importance in one's life. [return](#)

pagan - [Lyotard](#)'s term. It means to judge without criteria. Lyotard says, "I am not using a concept. It is a name, neither better nor worse than others, for the denomination of a situation in which one judges without criteria." [Just Gaming \(Theory and History of Literature, Vol 20\)](#) (p.16) Pagans for Lyotard are "ones who judge for themselves" [The Lyotard Reader \(Blackwell Readers\)](#) (p.125) without relying on the authority's rules as to what is good or bad.

Be careful to distinguish this [postmodern](#) meaning of the term from both the historical one which means 'non-Christian', as well as the contemporary meaning of western (neo)Paganism, especially [Wicca](#). [return](#)

pagan voice - The pagan voice is the heartfelt voice that expresses an opinion that goes beyond the evidence, beyond the rules, beyond the criteria. [return](#)

pagus - see ["borderzone."](#)[return](#)

Paralogue - a term invented by [Lynn Hoffman](#). A paralogue is a written format that maintains the voices of the individual authors but connects them in such a way that they read each other's contribution and influence each other so as to yield a sense of [paralogical](#) progress. [return](#)

paralogy - Lyotard introduced the term "paralogy" in the last chapter of his influential book, [The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge \(Theory and History of Literature\) \(p.60\)](#). Paralogy is a kind of conversation in which the speakers talk to each other in inventive ways, making conversational moves in an ongoing process. Such paralogical conversation evokes new ideas and stimulates social bonding. In this last chapter of [The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge](#), Lyotard also argues that paralogy can provide a way for conversationalists to evaluate the legitimacy of their ideas and beliefs.. [return](#)

pathologize - to take a particular way of reacting, feeling, or being and treat it as a disease, or the manifestation of a disease. For example, homosexuality was for centuries thought to be an "unethical" action in the western world and then in the early part of the twentieth century it was "pathologized" and treated as a form of *mental illness*. [return](#)

performative utterance - a statement that, in being made, produces a change in the way things are no matter what the response to it. For example, when someone says, "I promise you that I will do X" then results in a changed obligation regardless of whether that person actually does X. This concept was introduced in philosophy by J. L. Austin. See chapter 10 of his book, [Philosophical Papers \(Clarendon Paperbacks\)](#). [return](#)

phenomenology - The study of conscious experience. [return](#)

picture theory of language - a theory of early Wittgenstein (as written about in the [Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus](#).) The theory says that all objects are either simple (without parts) or made up of simples. Language represents the relationship of these simples to each other as a kind of picture, and the atoms of the picture correspond to elements in the world that are pictured. (See the [Philosophical Investigations](#)) [Click here](#) here to look into the relationship between the picture theory of language and artificial intelligence research. [return](#)

play - A term used by Derrida in his book, [Writing and Difference](#). On p.289 of the chapter "Structure, Sign and Play", [Derrida](#) says that "play" is the infinite substitute of meanings. Every term, every phrase, has a certain range of meanings and these substitute for each other indifferent contexts. That is the "play" of language. [return](#)

posit - (as in "de-posit) A common term in modern philosophy. To posit is to treat a situation as being true for the purpose of studying such a situation or reasoning about it [return](#)

positivism - the form of positivism that is most relevant to postmodernism is the positivism of the early twentieth century which is often called "logical positivism" but also includes other branches of positivism. A positivist theory is one that defines its terms precisely and tries to invent ways to talk and think that don't get lost in obscurities in the hopes of discovering a more powerful and accurate language calculus. Traditional social science research, with random samples, operationally defined variables, and statistical analysis, is positivist. Early [Wittgenstein](#) was a positivist. Later [Wittgenstein](#) was a postpositivist. [return](#)

positive connotation - for a term to suggest that the situation it names is a positive state of affairs. In the statement "Jack is easy-going," the term "easy-going" has a positive connotation, suggesting that this attribute of Jack's is a positive state of affairs. The same quality might be described with a term that has negative connotation, as in "Jack is lazy." Milan family therapy, at one time, used a technique of "positive connotation" using language to suggest that everything about the family was positive, and somehow beneficial to the family. Even the symptoms were described as positive. See [Milan Systemic Family Therapy: Conversations in Theory and Practice](#). [return](#)

postpositivism - is a philosophy that rejects the project of positivism (that is, rejects the project of trying to clean up language to make it more logically tight). Postpositivism remains powerfully influenced by positivism, however, in that it sees language as critically important in all philosophical projects. Nevertheless, it studies language as it is and does not engage in the project of making it more logically tight. [return](#)

postmodern - Perhaps the most prominent definition of postmodernism comes from Jean-Francois [Lyotard](#). According to Lyotard, the "postmodern" (see his book [The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge](#), p.xxv) is an incredulity towards [meta-narratives](#). This means the postmodern is one who is skeptical of theories that speak in grand generalities and that universalize their conclusions by pretending there are no exceptions. Translated into therapy theory this often means that the postmodern therapist works to avoid dogmatic posturing and claiming to state the "Truth" of the client's situation. In postmodern discussion forums this means that the common quest is not for consensus to emerge around some grand statement but for [paralogical conversation](#) to emerge.

For many people, especially in postmodern therapy, "postmodern" means disillusionment with the standard way of understanding things. In this case, the therapist tries to offer a less "pathologizing" way of thinking about the client's issues. Some disillusioned postmoderns, however, are [nostalgic](#), and see no path forwards, whereas other postmodern therapists are visionary. Even the most visionary, however, are likely to be tolerant of alternative and multiple points of view on an issue, all a consequence of learning to live without faith in metanarratives, to live with uncertainty and not-knowing. [return](#)

postmodern imagination - Numerous authors have sketched out a philosophy of postmodern imagination including Richard Kearny in [The Wake of Imagination](#), and also [Walter Brueggeman](#). [Texts Under Negotiation: The Bible and Postmodern Imagination](#). If postmodernity deconstructs the modern understandings than what is needed is imaginative innovation to replace and improve on past traditions. How we spark postmodern imagination is a topic worthy of consideration. In [the Postmodern Condition](#), [Lyotard](#) also talks about [paralogy](#) as a source of postmodern imagination. [return](#)

Postmodern therapies - The name for psychotherapies that reject the modernist model and are influenced by Wittgenstein or Lyotard. "Postmodern therapy" is also a phrase sometimes used to characterize [Narrative Therapy](#) (which is more generally seen as poststructural) or other therapies influenced by Foucault. Postmodern therapies is also the full name for the acronym [PMTH](#). Also see, [Postmodern Therapies News](#). [return](#)

Postmodern Therapies News - The Name of the newsletter that reports on the conversation and topics happening in the postmodern therapies online community [PMTH](#). See the latest edition of Postmodern Therapies News by [clicking here](#). Click [here](#) to see past issues of Postmodern Therapies News. [return](#)

post-foundationalism - philosophers who reject [foundationalism](#). [return](#)

poststructuralism - a school of thought that critiques [structuralist](#) thinking, generally such as [Deconstructionism](#). [Derrida](#), the father of deconstructionism, is a key poststructuralist thinker. [return](#)

praxis - the practical or customary application of a branch of learning. [return](#)

premodern - The premodern is what came before [modernism](#). The premodern is one who has unquestioning faith in a revealed truth, a religious truth, a superstitious truth or a truth passed along by word of mouth. [return](#)

PMTH- PMTH an online community composed largely of professional therapists with an interest in postmodern issues as it relates to therapy. PMTH is the acronym name for [Postmodern Therapies](#). [Click here](#) to learn more about PMTH. [return](#)

PMTH council - This is an advisory board for PMTH consisting of [Jonathan Diamond](#), Brent Dean Robbins, [Lynn Hoffman](#), [Val Lewis](#), Helen Douglas, [Katherine Levine](#). This advisory board assists [Lois Shawyer](#) in making decisions about the direction of PMTH. [Leonard Bonahan](#) serves as co-manager of the list as well as a member of this advisory board. [return](#)

punctuation - In postmodern therapies, to punctuate is to treat a certain element in a causal sequence as the originating cause even though it may have, itself, have been caused by something else.

queer - in the nineteen-fifties the term "queer" was a slur, a term of condemnation for people identified as homosexual. Today, the term usually represents stance towards homosexuality that does not fix it within a particular gender identity. A "queer" is a person who, at least in theory, is willing to be lovers with either men or women. [return](#)

queer theory - theorizes that gender and sexual identities are not fixed. [See Butler](#) in ([Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity](#)) [return](#)

reading generously - this is analogous to [listening generously](#). A generous reading tries to make the most sense possible out of what is being read. It is to be distinguished from critical reading. [return](#)

realism - traditional realism is the doctrine that Platonic universals or forms exist independently of language or human thought. That is, there is a correct way to divide the world up into its many objects and this way conforms to the underlying real structure. Socrates famous explanation of this imagery is that the philosopher who sets up a correct taxonomy carves the chicken at the joints and then our concepts reflect the structure of the world independent of our minds. In this version of realism, somehow the forms of things exist apart from the objects that conform to those forms. In more recent version of realism argues that the things we perceive exist apart from our mental representation of them -- so, for example, the tree that fell in the forest with no one around would, according to this view, make a sound, even though no one could hear it. But notice, this recent sense of 'realism' falls short of addressing questions about the structure of the world and how it falls into its inherent categories, but that is the question addressed by traditional realism. [return](#)

receptive voice - the receptive voice is a way of talking that helps us listen. It asks questions, offers paraphrases that reflect [generous listening](#) and works to clarify and make sense of phrases that seem unclear or unconvincing on first hearing. The receptive voice can be opposed to the [pagan voice](#). [return](#)

recursive - A statement such as "This sentence is written in English" is a recursion in that the sentence refers to itself to make its point, or achieve its intended purpose, demonstrates *recursion* or is *recursive*. (See [recursive paradox](#). also see [reflexivity](#).) [return](#)

recursive paradox- a recursive statement is paradoxical when it refers to itself in such a way that it cannot possibly be true. For example, "This statement is false" is a recursive paradox. [return](#)

reductionism - The belief that some identifiable kind of statements can be replaced systematically by statements or expressions of a simpler or more certain kind. For example, some philosophers have held that arithmetic can be reduced to logic, that the mental can be reduced to the physical, or that the life sciences can be reduced to the physical sciences. [return](#)

Reflecting Team - a procedure introduced by Tom Andersen in his book, [The Reflecting Team: Dialogues and Dialogues About the Dialogues](#) . The preferred name by Andersen, however, is "reflecting process." In this procedure, professionals shun their professional voice in order to hold a more personal kind of conversation about a group of clients in therapy in earshot of those clients. After the professionals speak, the clients have an opportunity to comment back. Modified versions of reflecting teams have been introduced by others. The Collaborative Language Systems form of therapy uses reflecting teams, for example, as does Narrative Therapy. For more details [click here](#). [return](#)

reflexivity or self-reflexivity Referring back to itself. Giddens,([The Consequences of Modernity](#) , p.36) speaks of "reflexivity" as a process of self-monitoring. Gergen speaks of this as "self-reflexivity" being postmodern (see [The Saturated Self: Dilemmas of Identity in Contemporary Life](#) , saying, "Once [self-] doubt is released one confront's the awful irony that one's doubts are also subject to doubt". Best and Kellner ([The Postmodern Adventure: Science, Technology, and Cultural Studies at the Third Millennium](#)) speak of self-reflexive narratives or accounts as an important part of "postmodern adventure". [return](#)

reify - to treat an abstraction or a metaphor as if it were with size and location. [return](#)

reification - to treat an abstract or metaphorical concept as if it were an underlying stable unit of reality, for example to treat love-sickness as a disease or to treat the abstract concept of "color" as

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something existing apart from any colored object. [return](#)

relational perspective - a term which is coming to mean "those philosophies that put the relationship of the participants over and above the validity of the content of their mutual contributions to the discussion." Thus, from a relational perspective, the point of the conversation is not to discover truth, but to create a relationship in which the conversation can continue to the satisfaction of the participants. (See McNamee and Gergen, [Relational Responsibility : Resources for Sustainable Dialogue](#)) [return](#)

relativism - theories that values don't exist except in relationship to the mind of an individual who values them, or a culture that values them, or that any property (such as "true," "clean," "big") is partly a property of the object and partly a reflection of the perceiver's point of view. (See [Relativism \(The Problems of Philosophy\)](#) xx). [return](#)

representation - or a representation theory of meaning. According to this philosophy language puts facts in words and, if the worded statements are true, corresponds to states of affairs. [return](#)

revisionist historians - historians who revise an accepted historical accounts. [Robert Faurisson](#) is an example of a revisionist historian. [return](#)

rhizome - a horizontal and usually underground stem that sends out roots and shoots that look like independent plants but have the same root system. Deleuze uses rhizome as a metaphor for contextual and often pragmatic modification of an activity that stems from the same root structure. It means that the activity, or the people, are connected but without pre-given rules, connections that cannot be foreseen. [return](#)

ruse - A word that [Lyotard](#) uses in ([The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge](#)) to talk about the language moves that people make in [paralogical](#) conversations. There has been some deliberation on PMTH as to whether this term carries unfortunate connotation that such moves must be deceptive. Several alternative terms have been suggested including "device," "strategy," "plan," and "tack." [return](#)

seeing as - In the long aphorism xi of the second book of [Wittgenstein's Philosophical Investigations](#) Wittgenstein makes a distinction between "seeing" and "seeing as". To "see as" is something one learns to do. It is based on a technique that one masters. One might look at a map, say, without recognizing it for what it is. But with a bit of training one learns to see the map differently and to use it as a guide around the city. Before one does that, one has to learn to see as, that is to see the scraggly lines as streets. [return](#)

semiology - a term introduced by Ferdinand de [Saussure](#) in [Course in General Linguistics \(Open Court Classics\)](#) . Semiology would be a science that shows what causes signs (words-concepts) to emerge. Today this is usually referred to as "semiotics". Key figures in semiotics include Charles Sanders Peirce, Roland Barthes, and Julia Kristeva. Levi-Strauss and Jacques Lacan also were concerned with semiotics. Modern semiotic theory is also sometimes associated with Marxism. [return](#)

sign - a term used by the classic linguist Saussure in [Course in General Linguistics \(Open Court Classics\)](#). A sign is composed of a [signified](#) and a [signifier](#). For example, a signifier like "table" represents the concept of a table (not the object -table). [return](#)

signified - a term used by the classic linguist Saussure in [Course in General Linguistics \(Open Court Classics\)](#). In that book, what is represented by the [signifier](#). is the "signified" Signified and signifier combine to create a "[sign](#)." [return](#)

signifier - the word or phrase that represents an object (i.e., [signified](#)). Signified and signifier combine to create a "[sign](#)." [return](#)

social constructionism - Some postmodern authors ([Gergen](#), [Shotter](#), [Anderson](#) and [Goolishian](#)) think it is important to distinguish social constructionism from constructivism. Others do not. If the distinction is maintained, social constructionism (or simply "constructionism") is seen to be the study of the social processes (or language processes) we use to create and maintain our beliefs in ordinary concepts such as mental illness, marriage, the difference between men and women. (See Kenneth Gergen, [An Invitation to Social Construction](#)) [return](#)

social poetics - the study and use of metaphor and other figures of speech occurring in ordinary speech and prose. The term is introduced by [John Shotter](#) and his sometimes co-author Arlene Katz. See a [related article by Katz and Shotter](#), [an article by John Shotter](#), and still [another article by Shotter on this topic](#) [return](#)

social therapy - The kind of therapy done by the [Newman](#) and [Holzman](#)'s developmental centers. "[T]he effort in the social therapy group is to transform...the actual conversation into a language-game (a performed conversation) by stripping the conversation of its truth referentiality, not by changing what is said -- having people say different things -- but by changing the truth and referential assumption of what is being said." See Newman & Holzman, [The End of Knowing: A New Developmental Way of Learning](#) , p.117.

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solipsism - The view that all we know is our own consciousness and we cannot be sure that anything exists outside of our own minds. In other words, we might be just imagining that each other, the chairs we sit in, the tea we drink, is real.

[return](#)

SFT- [Solution Focused Therapy](#)[return](#)

Solution Focused Therapy - (SFT) is a form of brief therapy inaugurated by Steve De Shazer. It works to help clients think forward towards solutions rather than become entrenched in reflection on their problems. (see [Clues: Investigating Solutions in Brief Therapy](#))

[return](#)

sophist - Today a sophist is someone who reasons illegitimately. It is a term of condemnation. But the term originally referred to a group of thinkers and tutors in ancient Greece that [Plato](#), Socrates and Aristotle condemned. [Kerford](#), an important historian of the sophistic movement says, "for much of our information we are dependent upon Plato's profoundly hostile treatment of them, presented with all the power of his literary genius and driven home with a philosophical impact that is little short of overwhelming." ([The Sophistic Movement](#) , p.1)

[return](#)

structuralism - The term is used differently in different circles, but in the postmodern circle it generally refers to the theories influenced by [Saussure](#). According to these schools of thought, learning a particular language lays down a firm and resistant way of understanding. Structuralism studies these resistant ways of understanding. [return](#)

subjectivity - private consciousness, inner feelings and thoughts. [return](#)

sublime - That which exists beyond words or beyond our understanding or our ability to understand.

[return](#)

suspended disbelief - a concept first suggested by Samuel Coleridge (see [The Complete Poems \(Penguin Classics\)](#)). It meant a willing abandonment of one's beliefs in order to appreciate a fictional or poetic experience. For therapists, it is a deliberate setting aside of one's own beliefs in order to be able to hear what the other person is saying. It is a form of generous listening. [return](#)

structural coupling - a process in which two originally separate systems coevolve to adapt and coordinate together. The systems can be diverse, for example, the coevolution can be between organism and environment, two different language systems, or between two different systems of myths or values. The idea structural coupling was advanced by Maturana and Varela. Their most significant technical book is: [Autopoiesis and Cognition : The Realization of the Living \(Boston Studies in the Philosophy of Science\)](#), and their most significant popular rendition of this their theory is: [Autopoiesis and Cognition : The Realization of the Living \(Boston Studies in the Philosophy of Science\)](#).

[return](#)

syllogism - a model of reasoning introduced by Aristotle. The usual example is:

All men are moral
Socrates was a man
Therefore, Socrates was moral.

[return](#)

system theory or systemic theory - suggests that changes in individuals and groups can only be understood in the context of the multiple systems (e.g., family, work, school, church) in which they occur, or within systems within systems, such as families within which people take sides. The best book introduction to system theory within the family therapy model is probably Lynn Hoffman's, [Foundations of Family Therapy: A Conceptual Framework for Systems Change](#), although her critique of system theory, [Family Therapy: An Intimate History](#), should be studied as well.

[return](#)

tack - Tack is a metaphor used sometimes on PMTH to replace Lyotard's concept of a "ruse" which is one of the ingredients of [paralogy](#). Tacking is the maneuver that is performed when the boat changes from one tack to the other. This involves the boat turning through about 90-100°, with the wind passing around the bows (front) of the boat. Normally this is done repeatedly, say once every 5 minutes in a dinghy race in order to progress to windward. For instance if one wishes to reach a buoy that is directly in the discretion in which the wind is coming from, the boat is sailed close hauled on one tack, and then close hauled on the other tack. [return](#)

Taos Institute - [Click here to go to a related website](#) [return](#)

tempered pagan voice - The tempered pagan voice expresses a heart felt point of view (as does any [pagan voice](#)) but frames the expression in ways that respect the listener. [return](#)

The text stands alone - When the "text stands alone" it is like discovering a post-it in a book in the library that contains an interesting but ambiguous note. Picture this as a difficult book on statistics. Read in a certain way the post-it makes the book more intelligible, but the post-it is itself scribbled so that it is not clear that the author meant. Still, interpreting the post-it as we do, we can make a kind of

sense of the statistical text that is very hard to understand.

If we say, "Forget the author's real intentions. Understanding it this way helped me and that's all I care about," then we are letting the text of the post it "stand alone." [return](#)

totalize- to generalize so grandly as to make room for no exceptions, and to defend the generalization, if need be, by reshaping the propositions or changing the definitions of terms in unlikely ways when confronted with instances or exceptions that counter the generalization. [return](#)

tiotol - a popularly coined term on [PMTH](#) that means "talking in order to listen". This is listening with a difference. In tiotoling, the listener talks, for the express purpose of assisting the talker to elaborate on his or her ideas. Therapists often tiotolize their clients so that their clients can explore aspects of their issues that might otherwise remain unsaid. This term was inspired by [Lyotard](#), who speaks of "talking in order to listen" on p.71 of his book [Just Gaming \(Theory and History of Literature, Vol 20\)](#).. [return](#)

transference - a psychoanalytic term. It refers to the feelings that the patient (i.e., [analysand](#)) has for the psychoanalyst that reflect the patient's personal history more than they are a reaction to the behavior or character of the psychoanalyst. [return](#)

[transvaluation](#) - a reframing that changes the value perspective. See [notes on transvaluation](#). . [return](#)

typifying - [Schutz](#)'s term. Scultz says language is *typifying* because although every state of affairs is unique, this fact is not reflected in our vocabulary. [return](#)

Tractatus - The shorthand name for [Wittgenstein](#)'s influential first book, [Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus](#). [return](#)

Truth (or TRUTH) - A spelling of the word "truth" that is capitalized in part are in full is shorthand way of calling attention to the over-simplification of the concept of "truth" in [naive realism](#). (also see [realism](#).) [return](#)

under erasure - This is [Derrida](#)'s term. To paraphrase, (Derrida in [Of Grammatology](#), p. 61): In traditional naive realism, we might speak of a subject, such as "love" while presuming that love exists in a simple and factual, without fuzzy borders, without even an iota of concern about being parsed by language into categories that distinguish it from objects which resemble love, such as "care". However, if one were to write with awareness of the status of "love" as being a kind of linguistic construction, then we might say that the word "love" is being used "under erasure".[return](#)

underdetermined - rival hypotheses to explain the facts are "underdetermined" when they are equally consistent with the available evidence. There is a question if every scientific theory must always remain underdetermined. [return](#)

validity of [operational definition](#) - tells us if the operational test measures what it was intended to measure.[click here](#). There are many different ways that researchers attempt to establish "validity." The simplest of these is "face validity." The most meaningful is probably "construct validity." [return](#)

Vienna Circle - A group of philosophers in Vienna during the early part of the twentieth century. They took the position that all that could not be verified was nonsense. [return](#)

Verstehen - a kind empathic intuition of what other people are thinking and feeling. [return](#)

visionary postmodernism - the flowering of new dreams after a period of disillusionment with the dreams of prior generations and their promises. See [Nostalgic Postmodernism: Postmodern Therapy](#)

will to power - [Nietzsche's](#) term from his book, [The Will to Power \(Vintage\)](#). It means determination to construct the world and the things in it as one desires it to be. [return](#)

writing - [Derrida](#)'s term for any human production that stays around after the "author" has left to continue to influence the way in which we think or act even though we cannot interact with the author about the written work. See, especially [Of Grammatology](#), p. 11. [return](#)

zone of proximal development (or "zpd") - [Vygotsky's](#) term (see [Thought and Language - Rev'd Edition](#)) for an environment that supports learning by requiring the learner to know a bit more than s/he knows, but not requiring the learner to know too much more than that. The ZPD is the zone beyond what one knows, that one can learn. In the zpd of infancy, for example, adults speak to the child before the child is able to understand saying things like, "It's chilly here. That's why we have to bundle up," even though the infant does not yet know these phrases. Nevertheless, hearing things like this over and over assists the development of the child's ability to speak. [return](#)