

# From Modern Paradigms to Postmodern Paradigms: Therapeutic Interventions on a Journey of Change and Transformation

## *Modern Paradigmaldan Postmodern Paradigmalara: Değişim ve Dönüşüm Yolculuğunda Terapötik Uygulamalar*

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### ABSTRACT

The transition from a hierarchy-based approach to therapy, in which the therapist is seen as an objective observer of the client's life; to an egalitarian therapist-client relationship-based therapy approach, which holds the client in their strengths, focuses on what the solution is, and sees the client as an expert, is a radical paradigm shift in the field of psychology. The background of this change in psychology's perspective, based on the questioning of modernism's belief that truth, knowledge and reality are universal and valid beyond all times and places. These inquiries have given birth to the postmodernist paradigm, which argues that knowledge and truth are multiple, complex and relative, that knowledge is interpreted and constructed between people. Postmodernism, which has effects in many fields such as art, architecture, cinema and literature; has led to radical changes psychology's view on human nature, the therapist-client relationship and the therapy process. This study aims to examine modernism and postmodernism from a historical perspective, and then to discuss the reflections of postmodernism on the field of psychology. In order to achieve this aim, first of all, the emergence of modernism, its epistemology, its basic assumptions and the reflections of modernism on psychology are discussed. Afterwards, the social and epistemological changes which occurred in the transition from modernism to postmodernism were examined. After examining the epistemology and assumptions of postmodernism in comparison with modernism; the general characteristics of postmodern therapies and their perspective on human nature, therapy process and therapist-client relationship are discussed. The study further provides recommendation for future directions in Turkish counseling and therapy contexts.

**Keywords:** Modernism, postmodernism, psychology, therapy

### ÖZ

Danışanı problemleri ve zayıf yanlarından tutan, bozuk ve eksik yönlerinin neler olduğunu tespit etmeye odaklanan, terapistin danışanın hayatının nesnel bir gözlemcisi olarak görüldüğü hiyerarşiye dayalı bir terapi anlayışından; danışanı güçlü yönlerinden tutan, çözümün ne olduğuna odaklanan, danışanın uzman olarak görüldüğü eşitlikçi bir danışan-terapist ilişkisine dayalı terapi anlayışına geçiş, psikoloji alanında yaşanan köklü bir paradigma değişimidir. Psikolojinin bakış açısındaki bu değişiminin arka planında en temelde, modernizmin, doğrunun, bilginin ve gerçekliğin evrensel ve tek olduğuna ilişkin inancının sorgulanması bulunmaktadır. Bu sorgulamalar, bilginin ve doğrunun çoklu, karmaşık ve göreceli olduğunu, bilginin yorumlandığını ve insanlar arasında inşa edildiğini savunan postmodernist paradigmayı doğurmuştur. Sanat, mimari, sinema ve edebiyat gibi birçok alanda etkileri olan postmodernizm; psikoloji biliminin insan doğasına, danışan-terapist ilişkisine ve terapi sürecine bakışında köklü değişimlere yol açmıştır. Bu çalışmada, modernizm ve postmodernizmi tarihsel bir bakış açısıyla incelemek, sonrasında postmodernizmin psikoloji alanına olan yansımalarını ele almak amaçlanmaktadır. Bu amacı gerçekleştirmek için, ilk olarak modernizmin ortaya çıkışı, epistemolojisi, temel varsayımları ve modernizmin psikolojiye yansımaları ele alınmıştır. Sonrasında, modernizmden postmodernizme geçiş sürecinde yaşanan toplumsal ve epistemolojik değişim incelenmiştir. Postmodernizmin epistemolojisi ve varsayımları modernizmle karşılaştırmalı olarak incelendikten sonra; postmodern terapilerin genel özellikleri ve insan doğasına, terapi sürecine ve danışan-terapist ilişkisine bakış açısı ele alınmış, Türkiye bağlamında tartışılmıştır.

**Anahtar sözcükler:** Modernizm, postmodernizm, psikoloji, terapi

## Introduction

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Psychological science's approach to therapeutic methods has undergone major changes as a result of the shift from modernity-based to postmodernity-based paradigms. Traditional therapy methods frequently adopted a hierarchical structure in which the client was analyzed and their weaknesses were highlighted, and the therapist took on the role of an expert supervising the client's life. But modernism's quest for universal truths led to a reassessment that resulted in the rise of a postmodernist viewpoint that views reality and knowledge as relative (Hick 2004).

Therapeutic approaches have undergone a profound adjustment as a result of this paradigm shift. There has been a noticeable trend change toward solution-focused therapies, which place more emphasis on finding solutions than on problems, highlight the client's assets rather than their weaknesses, and promote an egalitarian rather than hierarchical client-therapist relationship. The understanding that knowledge is multiple and complex, as opposed to modernism's belief in a single, universal truth, has shaped the influence of postmodernism on psychology (Anderson 2003, Tarragona 2008). In order to comprehend psychological theories, it is important to understand the paradigm on which these theories are based. This study is expected to contribute to the literature by providing a comprehensive review of the paradigm shift underlying therapeutic practices.

This review paper aims to examine the historical roots of modernism and postmodernism, as well as the transition from modernist paradigms to postmodernist paradigms and their impact on therapeutic practices. Additionally, it attempts to provide an in-depth analysis of how the new perspective introduced by postmodernism influences the nature of therapeutic practices. The implementation of this paradigm shift in the context of Turkey has also been addressed.

## Modernism

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Around the middle of the 18th century, modernism began to take hold in the West and continued to grow in influence throughout the 19th and early 20th centuries (Arkonaç 2015). Modernist thought has its roots in the Renaissance and Enlightenment, periods when the medieval system—which was defined by blind obedience to authority and doctrinaire knowledge—came under critical examination. The medieval idea that humans are innately inadequate was contested by Enlightenment philosophers like Bacon, Descartes, and Locke, who claimed that people are rational, logical, and capable of making their own decisions. Newton's discovery of the Law of Universal Gravitation, which postulated the possibility of using causal linkages to explain natural events, further sparked a paradigm change. This focus on logic and reason brought science to the fore and supported humankind's capacity to understand and manipulate nature (Hicks 2004).

Modernist philosophy, which is based on positivism, rationalism, and Enlightenment ideas, holds that science seeks to understand a fundamental, understandable, and universally applicable reality. According to modernist theory, the human mind is superior because it can use reason and logic to understand nature and reality, making the supernatural meaningless. It is thought that by using rigorous methodologies and observable cause-and-effect links, nature can be understood and controlled. This viewpoint promotes a linear understanding of scientific advancement, in which efforts are focused on discovering unique, unchanging realities and truths. It is believed that these facts, which are liberating, can be attained by using scientific procedures correctly. Thus, the social sciences seek to imitate the techniques of the natural sciences in their pursuit of scientific legitimacy, hoping to discover universal principles, causal relationships, and objective truths by means of experimentation, measurement, and observation (Gergen 1990, Hicks 2004, Arkonaç 2008, Burr 2012). Psychology, conceived within the paradigm of modernism, emerges as a product of this intellectual milieu (Kvale 1992).

## Modernist Psychology

Modernist theory had a significant impact on behavioral science, psychological counseling theories and the research methods used in psychology. Rationalism and empiricism became the main schools of thought in psychology because they were consistent with the positivist-empiricist principles of modernism, which hold that truth is both individual and universal and that knowledge is based on objectivity. The classical, objectivist definition of psychological knowledge was stressed in the seminal ideas that emerged within the discipline of psychology during this era (Karairmak and Siviş 2018). Humans were considered as organisms in psychology, and their behaviors were examined through statistical analysis, reflecting the positivist-empiricist ethos of modernity. A degree of control over human activities was suggested to be possible with a knowledge of mental processes (Arkonaç 2015).

Cartesian psychology placed the human mind at the center of the modernist framework, leaving the body, environment, culture, and interaction to secondary roles. This concept, which has its roots in Cartesian philosophy, prioritizes the thinking individual, emphasizing internal mental processes. Individuals are conceptualized as autonomous, self-sufficient entities with intrinsic essences. In Cartesian-influenced psychology, individualism takes precedence, with a focus on understanding people and their interactions through the lens of individual lives. This Cartesian emphasis on individualism is a fundamental component of modern psychology (Arkonaç 2008, Burr 2012).

The main goals of modernist psychotherapy theories, underlined by Freud's psychoanalysis, are to pinpoint and treat clients' weaknesses and pathologies. Per these views, there are always important, underlying causes for the symptoms that a client experiences. The purpose of therapy is not to completely eliminate symptoms, as this is seen with skepticism, but rather to comprehend these causes, raise consciousness, and develop insight to lessen or change the symptoms. Although the theories emphasize that true transformation requires a prolonged timeframe, clients are perceived as ambivalent about change and resistive to therapy (O'Hanlon and Weiner-Davis 1989 as cited in Murdock 2018). However, the Cartesian perspective adopted by psychology for scientific inquiry within modernity drew rigorous criticism for inadequately representing subjective meanings and social relations created by individuals.

### **Questions Regarding Modernism**

The promises made by modernism, which claimed to advance humanity via knowledge and reason, transcend human problems, and usher in a period of freedom, happiness, and prosperity, were severely tested in the 20th century. Modernism's technological advancements and the accumulation of knowledge caused great destruction, which in turn caused an existential crisis inside the modernist paradigm. Faith in the effectiveness of science and modernist ideals was undermined by the application of scientific discoveries in the context of two world wars, the development of the Hiroshima bomb, the Holocaust, the rise of fascist regimes, and the recognition of cruel practices carried out by colonial powers. Modernist scientific ideas have been closely examined and questioned ever since the late 1960s (Powell 1998).

The questioning of the universality of knowledge and truth inherent in modernist thought, along with its pursuit of absolute truth, became particularly pronounced in the 1960s. Still, these investigations into the philosophy of knowing have their origins in previous times. Immanuel Kant, a pivotal figure in the transition from objectivity to subjectivity during the 19th century, while initially aligned with Enlightenment philosophy, diverged significantly from its assumptions. Kant used a skeptical approach to scientific investigation, arguing against the idea of a single, unchanging truth and in favor of the inherent uncertainty and impossibility of truth. Kant made a distinction between reality and reason, as well as subject and object. He maintained that the object itself cannot be the only thing that makes knowledge possible because the knowing subject is not an empty, impersonal vessel. Similarly, Hegel, influenced by Kant's philosophy yet finding it inadequate, developed a philosophy completely opposed to Enlightenment principles, positing that reality is subjective, context-dependent, and full of contradictions. Hegel argued that people are molded by their cultural environment and placed more emphasis on the social formation of the mind than on its individual function. Schleiermacher, Kierkegaard, Schopenhauer, and Nietzsche were among the irrationalists who questioned the dominance of reason, contending that it was artificial and had limitations. Instead, they advocated for the abandonment of reason in favor of alternate paths to truth. These philosophers, like Kant, maintained that reason was not necessary to understand truth; they also echoed Hegel's view that reality is inherently contradictory and ludicrous. They contend that the non-rational and irrational aspects of human experience offer insights that transcend the limitations of rationality and logic, providing profound truths about the nature of reality (Hick 2004). Philosophers of the Enlightenment therefore offered profound and thought-provoking perspectives on the nature of reality and the paths leading to its understanding.

The questioning of Enlightenment philosophy and modernism's empirical-positivist paradigm about the universality of truth and knowledge continued throughout the 19th century. Throughout the 20th century, amid the turmoil of war and the misapplication of scientific knowledge, this scrutiny grew more intense. Drawing on Hegel's theory, Martin Heidegger, drawing from Hegel's philosophy, embarked on a personal and phenomenological exploration, arriving at conclusions that would later be embraced by the mainstream of postmodernism with slight modifications.

1. Conflict and inconsistency represent the fundamental truths of reality.
2. Reason is subjective and lacks the capacity to unveil the truth about reality.

3. Mental constructions like words and concepts are barriers that need to be removed or demolished.
4. Logical contradiction holds neither failure nor significant importance.
5. Emotions provide richer insights than logic, especially strong emotions like fear and anxiety.
6. The law of non-contradiction and the subject/object duality, which define the entire Western philosophical heritage, are seen as enemies that must be overcome, regardless of whether they are Platonic, Aristotelian, Lockean, or Cartesian (Hick 2004).

Significant scientific advances occurred in the 1990s, such as Planck's hypothesis of the existence of the quantum, Poincaré's theory that chaos could be intrinsic to solar system motion, Einstein's first paper on relativity, and Heisenberg's formulation of the uncertainty principle, which asserts that there is always some degree of uncertainty in any measurement of an electron's speed. These scientific breakthroughs prompted a reexamination of the foundational assumptions of modernism.

The attempt to define the standards by which scientific information is differentiated from non-scientific knowledge has taken place in that age. The verifiability principle was the cornerstone of modernism's logical positivist approach in this discussion. According to modernist tenets, information needed to be verified to attain meaning. However, Karl Popper challenged modernism's methodological stance by proposing the concept of falsifiability. Popper argued that rationality is characterized by the potential for falsification rather than verification. Scientific progress, he contended, occurs not through the accumulation of truths but through the elimination of errors. Since every piece of information carries the possibility of being erroneous, absolute certainty in truth cannot be attained. Popper's theory of falsifiability cast doubt on the assurance of logical positivism and empiricism—the scientific methods of modernism—in achieving verifiable and accurate information. Thomas Kuhn also questioned positivist modernism's belief in the linear advancement of scientific knowledge. According to Kuhn, the development of science historically occurs in phases: pre-paradigm science, paradigmatic framework establishment, and "normal science," which is defined by conformity to the dominant paradigm. But Kuhn noted that anomalies or aberrant outcomes set off crises in the scientific community, which in turn leads to a paradigm change. This process is cyclical rather than linear, with periods of conventional science interspersed with the advent of new paradigms. Kuhn described these transitions as scientific revolutions (Arkonaç 2015).

A new paradigm known as postmodernism arises in reaction to the critique of the Enlightenment and modernism's approaches to reason, truth, and scientific advancement. Postmodernism's strong subjectivity, skepticism, and relativity are the result of a two-century-long struggle over epistemology (Hick 2004).

### **Inquiries in Modernist Psychology: First Half of the 20th Century**

Despite the fact that Freud's theories and models influenced every model and theory that came after him, a lot changed in the 20th century to move away from modernism and toward postmodernism (Derringer 2001). Post-World War II, scholars across disciplines initiated a critique of the prevailing modern emphasis on reason and science, contending that the pursuit of a singular, universally valid, and objective reality was unattainable, which prompted a shift toward subjectivity and locality within psychology (Applegate 2000). During the shift in psychology from objectivism and rationalism to subjectivism and personal meaning, Winnicott and Kohut played a significant role. Winnicott redirected the focus of psychology away from impulses, defense mechanisms, and ego functions toward the internalization of interpersonal relationships. He viewed relationships as integral to the therapeutic process, emphasizing their healing potential over interpretation. Similarly, Kohut, initially rooted in the modern paradigm, diverged from traditional therapies' emphasis on psychic determinism and the therapist as an expert. He redefined Freudian concepts such as narcissism, self-love and the need for interpretation and emphasized empathy. Kohut's theory emphasized care rather than treatment. The contributions of Winnicott and Kohut transformed the modern approach to psychotherapy, challenging the notion of objective truth and advocating for the acceptance of multiple perspectives in psychotherapeutic practice (Derringer 2001).

Sullivan made a major contribution to the revolution in psychology by stating that people cannot be comprehended apart from their social interactions. He contended that personality and self do not reside solely within the individual but emerge through interactions with others. Sullivan promoted a change from Freudian ideas of autonomous persons driven by inner impulses to a perspective of humans shaped by their interactions with the environment, emphasizing communication as the cornerstone of human connections. For Sullivan, language served as a tool for achieving mutual understanding and as an indicator of subjective meanings

(Derringer 2001, Geçtan 2017). This redefinition of language function and emphasis on interpersonal relations signaled a departure from modernist perspectives and a movement toward postmodernism.

Stern's theory—that identity is a dynamic process molded by interactions with others rather than a static thing inside an isolated individual waiting to be unearthed through subconscious excavation—aligns closely with postmodernist principles. Similarly, Erik Erikson's psychosocial development theory redirected attention from internal psychosexual impulses to the social functionality inherent in relationships with others and the external world (Derringer 2001). The change in the understanding of human behavior towards social and relational variables is further highlighted by Horney's contributions. She suggested that family relationship problems are the root cause of disordered conduct, emphasizing the role of social and cultural variables. Horney put biological factors into the background in behavior formation by emphasizing the interaction between the individual and society as well as parent-child connections (Geçtan 2017).

Winnicott, Kohut, Stern, Sullivan, Horney, and Erikson emerged as pioneering figures in psychotherapy and psychology, transcending the limitations of their time by challenging the assumptions and practices of modernist psychology that dominated the period prior to the second half of the 20th century, which signaled the emergence of postmodernism. These people challenged the dominant ideas in modern psychology about psychic structures, internal motivations, and objectivity. They argued that connections and the social environment have a significant impact on human psychology. Their enduring contributions extended far beyond their era, shaping the evolution of psychology and fostering a deeper understanding of human experience within the context of social and relational interactions.

The crisis of the modernist paradigm in the second half of the 20th century affected many fields, including politics, science, art, and intellectual discourse, compounding problems that the scientific community was already facing. The constraints imposed by the modernist paradigm gave rise to disputes, uprisings, and disruptions in various domains. By the 1970s, this crisis became notably pronounced within psychology, particularly in social psychology. Social psychology, which has its roots in modernist ideas, has historically treated people as cognitive-mental entities removed from their social environment, examining behavior through the prism of each person's subjective and internal processes. However, this approach failed to adequately explain social phenomena, leading to conceptual problems and a crisis within the field. Tafel (1972) argued that modernist social psychology ignored the social component of human behavior and instead he focused on the significance of interpersonal interactions in determining social behavior. Similarly, in his landmark paper "Social Psychology as History," Gergen (1973) emphasized how social psychology is ingrained in culture and history, indicating a critical change in the field's viewpoint (quoted in Arkonaç 2015).

During this period, discussions in social psychology centered on the tension between locality and universality within the social sciences. While the predominant understanding in social sciences and psychology until the 1970s reflected the perspectives of North America and Continental Europe, there emerged a groundbreaking questioning of the universal validity and applicability of research findings. For the first time in Western science, scholars began to challenge the notion that research findings were inherently culture-specific and local, prompting a shift in focus from rationality to relativity, context, historicity, and culture within psychology (Arkonaç 2015). In summary, the questioning of the absolute reality inherent in modernist psychology since the early 20th century has led to a significant reevaluation within psychology. This reevaluation has seen an emphasis on locality and a transition from rationalism and objectivism toward subjectivism and personal meaning.

## **Postmodernism**

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Postmodernism is essentially opposed to the tenets of modernism, especially the idea that "grand narratives" may provide a full explanation of the universe and ultimate reality (Lyotard 1979). The modernist ideas of universality, objectivity, and the presence of an objective, immediately observable reality that can be attained by reason and intelligence are rejected by postmodernism. Instead, postmodernism asserts that knowledge is not derived from an individual's mind but is constantly co-created through interpersonal interactions and spoken language. Each individual's unique perspectives and experiences contribute to the multiplicity of knowledge, rendering the idea of a singular, universal truth inadequate in explaining this subjective and diverse reality (Hic, 2004, Işık et al. 2019).

Postmodernism undoubtedly represents a substantial divergence from modernism's tenets in a number of areas. It represents a change from the idea of an objectively observed world to one that is socially produced, as well as a move from individual reason to social rhetoric. Language, which modernism saw as a tool of reason and truth,

is recognized as an essential tool for constructing reality through cultural processes and human interactions (Gergen 2001). In the realm of knowledge construction, postmodernism challenges the notion that knowledge discovered in modernism is objective and instead argues that it is socially constructed through language. The perspective on human nature also undergoes a shift, from individualism to collectivism. This is especially true in the social sciences, where the importance of subjectivity and personal meanings is highlighted, replacing objectivity (Hicks 2004, Kararmak and Siviş 2018). Postmodernism posits that reality is relative and structured by people and society through social relations, history, and culture. Instead of accepting the notion of a single, generally accepted truth, it adopts a contextual, dynamic, and evolving epistemology. Postmodernism highlights the richness and diversity of the world by stressing uncertainty, fragmentation, eclecticism, heterogeneity, multiculturalism, location, and narrative knowledge (Carchesio and Green 2011, Burr 2012, Işık et al. 2019). In postmodern thought, qualitative measurement methods, the social and cultural environment, and subjectivity gain importance over the objective reality and individual-oriented quantitative measurement methods of the modernist era (Neimeyer 1993). The characteristics of pre-modernism, modernism, and postmodernism paradigms summarized by Hicks (2004) provide a valuable framework for understanding the shifts in epistemological perspectives and approaches to knowledge construction.

**Table 1. Pre-modernism, modernism and postmodernism**

	<b>Pre-modernism</b>	<b>Modernism</b>	<b>Postmodernism</b>
Epistemology	Mysticism/belief	Objectivism: Experience and reason	Social subjectivism
Human Nature	Innate sin and submission to God's will	Blank Slate and autonomy	Social construction and conflict
Ethics	Collectivism: Altruism	Individualism	Collectivism: Equality

It is clear from looking at Hicks' summary table that modernism is based on the search for objective knowledge and emphasizes the importance of reason and experience in gaining it. Postmodernism, on the other hand, essentially believes that knowledge is subjective and socially produced. Individuals are conceptualized by modernist ideology as independent beings who are essentially blank slates at birth. On the other hand, postmodernism views people as the results of complex social interactions and disputes. Furthermore, postmodernism promotes collectivist values that are emphasized by egalitarian ideals, whereas modernism is the embodiment of an individualistic viewpoint.

In academic discourse, there is disagreement about whether postmodernism should be viewed as a historical continuum or as modernism's antithesis. The transition from supernaturalism to reason, and subsequently from reason to subjectivity and locality, can be interpreted as a natural progression within the development of science itself. Scientist, historian, and philosopher of science Thomas Kuhn (1922–1996) maintained that scientific knowledge is inevitably dependent on the historical and cultural circumstance in which it is produced. A more sophisticated interpretation of the relationship between modernism and postmodernism in the development of scientific thought is suggested by Kuhn's assertion that each scientific paradigm is internally consistent and legitimate within its own historical context.

### **Towards Psychology's Acceptance of the Postmodernist Paradigm**

The intellectual contributions of scientists from diverse disciplines have played a significant role in the formation of the postmodernist paradigm in psychology. The way that postmodernism is conceptualized and applied to psychology has been greatly affected by people like Maturana, Foucault, Gergen, Heisenberg, Kelly, Derrida, and Bateson (Derringer 2001). Through their studies of language and emotions, Bateson and Maturana established the foundation for our knowledge of the biological foundations of the social sciences. According to the results of their research, language changes as a result of interactions with the outside world, showing people to be actively involved in creating meaning through language (Dell 1985, Ruiz 1996). These insights have informed the therapeutic perspective, emphasizing language as a collaborative tool for meaning-making in interpersonal interactions. Such interdisciplinary findings underscore the biological dimension of language and its role in shaping psychological processes within social contexts. These cross-disciplinary discoveries highlight the biological aspect of language and its influence on psychological processes in social settings.

Kenneth J. Gergen (born 1935), a prominent figure in social constructivist theory, emphasized the relationship between psychology, culture, and history, arguing for an interpretation of psychological phenomena in the framework of social interactions on a daily basis (Gergen, 1973, 2001). His contributions, which emphasized the contextual nature of knowledge and the co-creation of meaning in social exchanges, had a considerable impact on the social constructivist approach. Philosopher, author, and political activist Michel Foucault (1926–1984) concentrated on historical analysis's discourse dynamics and the relationship between knowledge and power. According to Foucault, language is a crucial tool that authority uses to maintain its hold on the creation and

transmission of knowledge (Hare-Mustin 1988, Gergen 1990). According to Foucault, language is a crucial factor in determining how people perceive the world and is used by those in positions of authority to establish their control. His investigation of power relations shed light on the manner in which language creates subjective meanings and demonstrated the importance of language in therapeutic and interpersonal settings. Because they highlight the therapist's significant influence in influencing the client's reality through language interactions, Foucault's discoveries into the relationship between power and meaning have significance for therapy. Therapists can enable clients to critically engage with their interpretations and navigate power imbalances within the therapy interaction by acknowledging the power dynamics inherent in language use.

Werner Karl Heisenberg (1901-1976), renowned for his contributions to quantum physics theory, proposed the uncertainty principle, which posits that the act of measuring a quantum entity inevitably alters its properties. He argued that because reality and the observer are inherently entangled, the scientific method is intrinsically limited in its capacity to portray reality. Heisenberg asserted the applicability of the uncertainty principle to psychological research, highlighting the complexity of interventions in psychological inquiries and the resulting difficulty in precisely measuring variables (London 1945). Heisenberg's uncertainty principle facilitated a paradigm shift in psychology, transitioning from a universal, objective perspective on human behavior to a more localized, subjective outlook. This shift prompted a move from quantitative, generalization-based measurement methods to qualitative, meaning-based approaches. The foundation of personal constructions theory, a powerful constructivist framework that questioned dominant behaviorist ideas, is attributed to George Alexander Kelly (1905–1967). The idea of personal constructions, which Kelly defined as the cognitive frameworks people use to analyze and give meaning to their experiences, is fundamental to his theory. Kelly (Kelly 1970, Karairmak and Aydın 2007) highlighted the dynamic aspect of meaning-making, claiming that many interpretations might arise from the same life event, with no interpretation being inherently superior to another. Kelly's focus on the subjectivity of sense-making has influenced social constructivism and therapeutic objectives that revolve around generating new meanings.

Jacques Derrida (1930-2004), a pioneering figure in poststructuralist philosophy, conducted analyses of language through the lens of deconstruction theory, emphasizing the significance of textuality. He believes that textual strategy is a method by which we create a social world based on text. Derrida likens the world to a text expressed with concepts and language structures. He sees this action as textual interaction. The process of description and/or interpretation is governed by writing rules. However, since interpretation is always involved, it is not possible to reach a single truth; multiple truths emerge (Gergen 1990, Hicks 2004). Derrida's reconstructionism thesis is based on the central tenet that texts can convey meanings that diverge greatly from what is explicitly stated. A word's meaning is determined by how it relates to and differs from other words. Deconstruction is typically used with literary materials, but it can also be used with scientific texts and therapeutic texts. Derrida's deconstruction studies led to the revelation of a number of hierarchical oppositions, including those between man and woman, good and bad, existence and non-existence, truth and value, and reason and emotion (Hare-Mustin 1988). Derrida's aim is to rewrite, re-interpret, and re-evaluate by deconstructing the history of metaphysics, phonology, and mind-centered Western thought, which favors men over women and logical thinking above all else (Huttunen 2007). Derrida's deconstruction principle—which is predicated on the goal of dissecting the true meaning that is attempted to be represented beneath the words—is particularly utilized in narrative therapy, a postmodern therapeutic approach that centers on the creation of new stories. Postmodernism in psychology today encompasses a wide range of ideas and theories, including constructivism, social constructivism, narrative therapy, solution-focused treatment, and collaborative language systems therapy (Derringer 2001). The features of postmodernist therapies will be covered in this part after constructivism and social constructivism are mentioned.

### **Constructivism and Social Constructivism**

Constructivism posits that rather than discovering reality, we actively create it. It suggests that our experiences do not simply reflect an external reality as it exists but are instead structured and organized by the meanings we construct. In line with the tenets of postmodernism, constructivism asserts that scientific knowledge, like all forms of knowledge, is inherently subjective and cannot be entirely objective (Hare-Mustin 1988). In psychology, the influence of constructivism, particularly shaped by the ideas of Bateson and Maturana, has been evident in the epistemological developments within family system theories (Dell 1985). Moreover, constructivist perspectives have underpinned the emergence of social constructivism in social psychology (Gergen 1985). Social constructivism highlights the importance of social and interactional dynamics, whereas constructivism concentrates on the structural elements of meaning-making. Social constructivism, which has its roots in

postmodernism, questions the central tenets of both Cartesian and modernist psychology. Gergen's 1973 article "Social Psychology as History" is credited with launching the social constructivism movement. In it, he argued that psychological knowledge, like all other knowledge, is influenced by historical and cultural contexts and that research should shift from the individual to the social realm (Burr 2012).

Social constructivism contends that knowledge is inevitably affected by historical and cultural contexts, challenging the idea of objective and absolute knowledge. It argues that various worldviews are dependent on certain historical and cultural contexts, resulting in the social construction of meaning and knowledge via interactions. Historical changes in the way that some activities, like alcohol drinking, are treated are examples of how different interpretations of meaning lead to different actions (Arkonaç 2006, Burr 2012). The social constructivist method departs from modernist psychology's tenets by rejecting the notion that people have an innate essence. It asserts that knowledge is dependent on history, culture, and context rather than directly derived from reality. Social constructivism views language as a dynamic medium through which people participate in social action and create meaning as they communicate, as opposed to just a passive means of thought transmission. Social constructivism places more emphasis on social interactions and activities than does traditional psychology, which stresses internal mental processes (Burr, 2012).

### **Reflections of Postmodernism on Therapy Practices**

Postmodernist therapy represents a critical reevaluation of several key aspects in therapeutic practice, including a) the perception of the therapist as an unbiased observer of the client, b) the identification of ideological and cultural biases within theoretical frameworks, c) the examination of underlying metaphors guiding therapeutic approaches, and d) the questioning of the fixed and unified nature of the self. Through the lens of postmodernism, concepts pertaining to human nature, psychological issues, and therapeutic relationships undergo profound reconsideration, leading to the formulation of new assumptions and practices in therapy (Anderson 2003, Tarragona 2008).

In the second half of the 20th century, a shift from the modernist to the postmodernist paradigm gave rise to a variety of therapeutic philosophies, including narrative, interactive, postmodern, poststructuralist, collaborative, and social constructivist therapies. All of these methods highlight various aspects of the postmodernist paradigm, even though they are all based on its presumptions. The term "social constructivist" refers to the idea that knowledge, meaning, and identity are constructed through interactions with other people; poststructuralist approaches support therapy that does not pathologize clients' difficulties as originating from deep or underlying structures; collaborative therapists prioritize a client-therapist relationship based on mutual effort and cooperation; discursive and interactive therapies emphasize therapy as an interactive and linguistic process. These various but connected schools of thought are together referred to as postmodern therapy discourse (Anderson 2003, Tarragona 2008).

### **General Characteristics of Postmodern Therapies**

Postmodern therapies diverge from modern therapies in several fundamental aspects. Postmodern therapists accept their own subjectivity and the fact that, like others, they have unique perspectives, in contrast to modernist therapists who see themselves as objective observers of the client. While postmodernism views therapy as an arena for creating new meanings and alternatives rather than as a treatment setting, modernist psychotherapies follow the medical paradigm that is based on the doctor-patient interaction. In postmodern therapy, the client identifies their own problems and the emphasis switches to using the client's strengths to work toward solutions. In modern therapy, the therapist is assumed to have expert understanding of the client's troubles and human nature. Modern therapies typically entail a hierarchical relationship between therapist and client, with the therapist assuming a position of authority and expertise; in contrast, postmodern therapies eschew hierarchy, viewing the client as the expert of their own life (Anderson 2003, Tarragona 2008).

Psychological diagnostic is usually the first step of modernist therapy in order to define the goals and course of treatment. The therapist takes on the responsibility of planning therapies to meet therapy objectives, directing the therapeutic journey, and determining when to end therapy. In contrast, in postmodernist therapies, the client has agency in choosing the goals of therapy and when to end it (Anderson 2003, Tarragona 2008). In postmodern therapy, the therapist takes on a position of "not knowing." They engage in a cooperative process of discovery and meaning-making, listening to the client's story with true curiosity and trusting the client's explanations. As a result, the relationship between the therapist and the client becomes collaborative, creating a therapeutic setting in which the clients feel accepted and prepared for communication (Anderson and Goolishian 1992). Postmodernist therapies prioritize relationships above techniques, deviating from the



paradigms of Freudian and modernist psychotherapy. Empathy, compassion, self-regulation, and empowerment are fundamental principles of these therapies that respect and embrace the client's reality and individuality (Derringer 2001, Işık et al. 2019). Although it may be arbitrary and simplistic to clearly distinguish between postmodernism and modernism, defining underlying presuppositions facilitates understanding. The table below provides a summary of the differences between therapies based on modernity and those based on postmodernity.

Tarragona (2008) compiled the shared elements of solution-focused therapy, story therapy, and collaborative therapy in order to comprehend the characteristics of postmodern therapies:

1. Various disciplines, including philosophy, anthropology, history, linguistics, and literature, form the foundation of postmodernist therapeutic schools.
2. In these therapies, individuals are considered within the context of their cultures and interaction systems with others.
3. Individuals are taken into account in the framework of their cultures and social interaction systems in these therapies.
4. Language plays a key role in therapy and is thought to be the main means of understanding both the spoken and unspoken worlds.
5. The client and the therapist view therapy as a cooperative effort. Therapy is not something that is done to someone, but rather something that is done with someone; it is not something that is spoken at someone. Together, the client and the therapist converse, come up with solutions, and construct new identities and narratives.
6. Diverse viewpoints and ideas are valued as richness in therapy.
7. The therapist incorporates the client's goals, stories, issues, and knowledge into the treatment process, valuing it all.
8. Clients are the experts and the stars in their own lives. The goal of therapy and its termination are decided by the client.
9. The therapist is not an impartial observer of the client; therapists have opinions and viewpoints just like everyone else. It is important for therapists to make every effort to put aside their prejudices when speaking with clients. It is impossible to be without personal preferences, beliefs, or values, though. Consequently, when these views are pertinent to treatment, the therapist ought to be forthright and honest about them.
10. Rather of concentrating on the deficit-disorder model, pay attention to what is beneficial and effective in people's lives.
11. They have placed clients in control of their own lives and have not looked for the deep, underlying structures of the self, preferring to listen to what clients have to say.

In fact, there are many commonalities between solution-focused therapy, narrative therapy, and collaborative therapy, including the emphasis on strengths-based perspectives, the client's active participation in creating their own life, and the therapist's role in addressing contextual factors.

<b>Table 2. Differences between modernist and postmodernist therapies</b>	
<b>Modernist Therapies</b>	<b>Postmodernist Therapies</b>
Therapist as objective observer	Therapist stands in a certain place
Medical model	Meaning and alternative created environment
Focused on weaknesses	Focused on strengths
Therapist is in the position of knowing	Client is in the position of knowing

### **A Look at Human Nature in Postmodern Therapies**

Postmodernist therapies take a very different ontological approach from modernist therapies. Postmodernist treatments embrace a worldview marked by collectivism, relativism, and a stress on human agency and ability for change, whereas modernist therapies are based on the ideas of individualism, objectivity, and determinism. In the perspective of postmodernism, people are understood to be naturally located in social contexts where subjective interpretations are dominant and people are naturally able to bring about change in their own lives.

As previously explained, postmodernism essentially reframes the person in relation to their social environment, physical surroundings, and cultural context. Within the field of psychotherapy, this paradigm shift enables individuals to be understood in connection with their relational dynamics, social environment, and cultural milieu. Traditional modernist psychotherapeutic approaches, which were characterized by an objective treatment of individuals and a standardized framework, have given way to perspectives that emphasize subjectivity, personal meanings, and relativity with the advent of postmodernist principles that emphasize subjectivity and individualized meanings. Localized understandings of human nature, personal stories, and unique meanings have consequently gained prominence in therapeutic settings. Postmodernism posits that knowledge is constructed and underscores the potential for transformative change in individuals. This ethos is echoed in therapeutic settings through a belief in the client's inherent capacity for change.

### **Process and the Therapeutic Relationship in Postmodernist Therapies**

The emphasis of therapy has changed from problem-solving to empowerment as postmodernism has taken hold. Postmodernist therapies highlight positive accomplishments and competencies in order to foster individual strengths. They contend that individuals possess latent competencies, resources, and capacities that can be developed through therapy. Therapists collaborate with clients to enhance existing strengths and uncover new ones (Şahin 2001). Therapy, in this paradigm, is not construed as treatment but as a collaborative endeavor between therapist and client to construct meaning and explore alternatives. The process begins with delineating the client's situation and concerns, followed by efforts to elucidate strengths and uncover the client's subjective narrative through mutual interaction. In this process, the client autonomously sets therapy goals and collaborates on strategies to achieve them, with the client also determining when therapy concludes (Tarragona 2008). The therapeutic process and relationship in postmodern therapies are underpinned by core values reflective of this ethos. Anderson (2003) summarizes the core values embraced by postmodernist psychotherapists as follows:

1. Maintaining a non-pathological, non-categorical, and non-judgmental perspective.
2. Respecting and leveraging the client's reality and uniqueness.
3. Employing stories and narrative metaphors as therapeutic tools.
4. Engaging in a collaborative therapeutic process.
5. Refraining from labeling and blaming individuals, their families, or their behaviors.
6. Emphasizing transparency in communication and acknowledging personal biases.

Friedman (1996) delineates the characteristics of a postmodern therapist as follows:

1. Embraces the notion of socially constructed reality.
2. Values the therapeutic relationship, emphasizing dialogue and interaction in meaning-making.
3. Shows empathy and respect for the client's struggles, trusting that the therapy process can reveal stories that have been ignored or repressed.
4. Favors a more egalitarian exchange of ideas, minimizing hierarchical distinctions.
5. Determines therapeutic goals and direction collaboratively, giving clients the power to take charge of their problems.
6. Avoids the pursuit of pathology and strict diagnostic frameworks in favor of recognizing and utilizing clients' abilities, resources, and talents.
7. Prefers colloquial language to words that carry negative connotations or suggest malfunction.
8. Retains a positive, forward-looking perspective on the possibility of change.

In modernist therapies, therapists take on the role as knowledgeable helpers, and clients are often seen as persons in need of assistance for their difficulties. In these kinds of situations, the therapeutic alliance is typically marked by a certain amount of detachment, with therapists being seen as the agents of change in their patients. On the other hand, postmodern therapies aim to create connections based on equality by reducing the hierarchical dynamics between clients and therapists. In this context, therapy is seen as a supporting tool, and the client is considered the major authority in resolving their own concerns. Within this approach, therapists take on a supportive role, helping clients find their own resources and potential and create a variety of meanings

and viewpoints. Therapists are professionals in communication and therapeutic approaches; clients are acknowledged as experts in their own lives. In addition, postmodern therapists continue to be conscious of their own prejudices in the therapeutic alliance and, when needed, be open and honest with their clients. Client self-disclosure has also increased as a result of postmodern therapies. These therapeutic philosophies provide unique viewpoints on the roles that therapists and clients play, as well as the main themes and goals of treatment. As a result, they have gained international traction as models for therapeutic practices. Therefore, it would be useful to investigate studies on postmodern therapies carried out in Turkey in order to gain a deeper understanding of their applicability within this particular cultural context.

## **Therapeutic Services in Turkey**

Research on therapeutic services offered in Turkey has examined these services in terms of theoretical orientation (Demir and İşmen Gazioğlu 2017, Savcı et al. 2018), therapist's role (Güneri-Minton 2006), therapy modality (Bilican and Soygüt 2015), therapy awareness and perception (Voltan et al. 1996a, Coşan 2015), access to therapy (Voltan et al. 1996b), belief systems (Voltan et al. 1996b, Rogers-Sirin et al. 2017), and help-seeking behavior (Bilican 2013).

When therapeutic services offered in Turkey are considered in terms of theoretical orientation, therapist role, and therapy modalities, it seems that there is no culturally specific therapy or counseling approach. These services are conducted within the framework of Western-based approaches. However, there are review studies that discuss the compatibility of certain approaches developed in the West with Turkish culture at the theoretical level. The cultural appropriateness of various therapeutic modalities in the Turkish context has been discussed, including Solution-Focused Therapy, Person-Centered Therapy, Gestalt Therapy, Transactional Analysis, Reality Therapy, Logotherapy, Positive Psychotherapy, Adlerian Therapy, Relational Cultural Therapy, and Emotion-Focused Therapy. Nevertheless, there is a lack of empirical study on the cultural sensitivity of therapeutic techniques in Turkey, suggesting a disconnect between discussions in theory and real-world applications. It is noteworthy that cultural differences are frequently ignored in developmental psychology textbooks, which could undermine culturally sensitive methods. There are differences between theoretical ideas and practical applications, even in spite of advice for culturally sensitive techniques, according to studies. Multicultural therapy, for example, is the least popular theoretical orientation among Turkish mental health practitioners, according to research by Sözcü et al. (2018). Comparably, research on psychological counseling students conducted by Demir and İşmen Gazioğlu (2016) shows that less focus is placed on feminist and multicultural approaches in their curriculum.

The theoretical emphasis in psychological counseling education in Turkey differs throughout institutions, with the most common orientations being humanistic, cognitive-behavioral, and solution-oriented methods. Although cognitive approach training is highly valued in many therapeutic programs, therapists in practice tend to integrate many orientations rather than simply following one theoretical framework. According to their occupations, mental health practitioners in Turkey have different fundamental theoretical preferences, according to research by Sözcü et al. (2018). It is the preference of psychologists and psychiatrists to use cognitive-behavioral treatment, whereas counselors typically use postmodern constructivist methods. Conversely, social workers tend to favor the system/family system approach. In a study by Öz Soysal et al. (2016) that focused on school psychological counselors, the preferences of 16 counselors revealed that the solution-oriented approach and cognitive behavioral therapy are the most popular approaches in school settings. These results demonstrate the range of theoretical philosophies that are accepted in Turkish psychological therapy, combining postmodern, cognitive, and systemic methods in various professional settings.

Therapists in Turkey predominantly offer individual counseling sessions, with couple, group, and family therapy services also available, albeit to a lesser extent (Bilican and Soygüt 2015). Contrary to their American counterparts, therapists in Turkey perceive themselves as more directive in their approach, regardless of their theoretical orientation. However, they perceive themselves as less challenging, determined, protective, friendly, and cunning (Güneri-Minton 2006). This more directive view of therapists in Turkey seems to be in line with what Turkish clients are used to. Turkish clients typically anticipate direction and guidance in therapy, according to studies (Türküm Kızıldağ and Sarıyer 2004, Lüleci et al. 2015, Koçyiğit and Pamukçu 2018).

According to Voltan et al. (1996a), women, people from higher socioeconomic backgrounds, and university graduates are more likely to be familiar with psychotherapy in Turkey. Additionally, people who seek therapy services typically have greater levels of education and socioeconomic status (Voltan et al. 1996b). Dinar (2022) emphasized how important it is to consider the financial burden of psychotherapy costs while deciding whether

to start, continue, or end therapy. Regarding attitudes toward psychological help-seeking, studies suggest that women exhibit more favorable attitudes compared to men (Türküm 2005, Özbay Terzi et al. 2011). However, Coşan's (2015) qualitative inquiry revealed a general lack of public understanding regarding the meaning and benefits of psychotherapy in Turkey. Access to mental health services remains limited, and individuals receiving such services often conceal this information due to the fear of stigma (Taşkın 2007). Another factor is religious orientation; treatment use is comparatively more common among moderately religious or non-religious people but less common among religious people (Voltan et al. 1996b). Traditional treatments like healers and herbal treatments are still popular, even if people are becoming more open to using therapy services (Güleç et al. 2011). Kızılhan (2014) highlighted the significance of integrating religion into therapy within ethical frameworks, especially in societies with an Islamic orientation. However, Rogers-Sirin et al.'s (2017) study suggested that psychological service perceptions are more influenced by cultural values than religiosity. Sümer and Rassmussen (2012) advocate for culturally sensitive approaches and adaptations of Western-based psychotherapy ideas to better suit Muslim families in Turkey. What kind of action should scholars or professionals who wish to give this call should take? Where should we begin the process of adaptation of Western-based theories to Turkish culture? It is important to answer these queries in the context of theoretical and empirical research.

## Conclusion

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The discourse of postmodernism initially found its focus in the arts and humanities before extending to encompass social sciences like anthropology, education, political science, and sociology. Psychology came into the spotlight of postmodern discourse following these fields. Stemming from reactions and interrogations against dogmatic beliefs, supernaturalism, and the perceived insignificance of the medieval period, the modernist paradigm emerged with an opposing view. It asserted the absence of anything supernatural, advocating for the explanation of all phenomena through reason and the pursuit of a universal reality. Despite contributing to the advancement of science, modernism fell short of fulfilling its promises of universal truths and ultimate human happiness. Particularly in understanding human beings, who exist as social entities, modernism's reliance on a singular, objective truth faced significant criticism. In response, the postmodernist paradigm emerged, contesting the existence of an objective and universal truth, asserting instead that knowledge is shaped through mutual interactions and interpretations rather than discovered, and highlighting the localized, cultural, and time-specific subjectivity inherent in knowledge—a stark departure from modernist assumptions.

Insoo Kim Berg's statement, "This is one way to see it. And there is another way to see it," beautifully encapsulates the subjective and pluralistic understanding of postmodernism. Postmodernism has brought about significant transformations in the perception of the world, knowledge, and humanity by asserting that we cannot know universal truths and falsehoods, but only interpretations and narratives about truths and falsehoods. It further contends that knowledge possesses a subjective structure, specific to culture and time (Arkonaç 2015). With the advent of postmodernism, there has been a shift in psychology from an understanding that views individuals merely as singular organisms, attempting to explain phenomena through simple cause-and-effect relationships, identifying what is lacking, and focusing on individuals through subjective and internal processes. Instead, psychology has transitioned to an understanding that embraces the uniqueness of each individual, the existence of different interpretations, and the notion that none of these interpretations are inherently better or worse than others. It emphasizes that individuals exist within their environment, culture, and social relationships. With the postmodernist paradigm, psychology has emphasized subjectivity, locality, and sociality. This emphasis has led to a foregrounding of subjectivity, locality, and sociality in research and psychotherapy theories in recent years.

Psychotherapy theories and their associated practices are inherently shaped by the cultural and historical contexts in which they originate (Rogers-Sirin et al. 2017). Corey (2013) underscores that many psychotherapeutic approaches stem from European-American cultural frameworks and warns against universalizing these as absolute truths. This underscores the need for making psychotherapeutic theories more culturally sensitive, particularly in non-Western contexts. The cognitive-behavioral and humanistic frameworks are the most commonly used ones in Turkey for therapeutic services (Dogan 2000, Mocan-Aydın 2000, Poyrazlı, 2003, Demir and İşmen Gazioglu 2012, 2013). Though they provide a solid basis, conventional counseling techniques like cognitive-behavioral and humanistic theories might not fully address cultural factors in therapy. Counselors may benefit from using social constructionist analysis to examine cultural concerns in order to gain therapeutic tools. Gülücan (2016) identifies language, diverse value systems, and family dynamics as the three primary cultural elements challenging when working with clients from diverse cultural backgrounds. Postmodern therapies, by uncovering overlooked possibilities in clients' experiences and enriching

multiculturalism, can help therapists appreciate the cultural landscape and strengths inherent in their clients' environments (Semmler and William 2000). Multicultural counseling processes entail helping clients recognize how societal structures shape their identities and the challenges they face (Lee 1997). Guiding clients to rediscover their competencies and strengths can be empowering, while deconstructing dominant cultural paradigms and separating problems from people can liberate clients from negative social constructs (Semmler and William 2000). This approach supports the culturally sensitive practice of therapy in non-Western cultures.

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