Chapter Three

The Philosophy of Friedrich Nietzsche and Post-Structuralist Theories: From Critical Philosophy to Applied Theories

Introductory Remarks

The purpose of this chapter is to put finger on those hidden but sharp influences of the thought of Friedrich Nietzsche on some salient Post-Structuralist thinkers. In other words, here attempt is made to find, classify and give comment on those elements and doctrines in Nietzsche’s framework of thought that have been manifested in the works of Post-Structuralist philosophers and thinkers. Going through such a detailed and academic process, one can be informed of not only the authenticity and originality of the thought of Friedrich Nietzsche but also the backgrounds of one of the dominant philosophical discourses of the contemporary western thought known as Post-Structuralism.

One of the main features of Friedrich Nietzsche’s multidimensional framework of thought, presented in a systematic method in the first chapter of the present research, is a harsh criticism of modernity and its belief in the rational mind of man. Nietzsche’s critique here is mostly a re-reading of modern western man’s rationality and his attempts to dominate the ‘object’ world by the means of such a belief in rationalism. Moreover, rationalism acted as a background for the emergence of Enlightenment in the eighteenth century.
If one considers Renes Descartes as one of the leading figures in contributing to the western man’s obsession with rationalism – especially in his *A Discourse on the Method* (1) and *Meditations on First Philosophy* (2), it can be said that Friedrich Nietzsche’s philosophical path criticizes, in one of its stations, the philosophy of Renes Descartes. Furthermore, if one considers Immanuel Kant as the major philosopher of the movement called Enlightenment – especially in his frequently-quoted essay “What is Enlightenment?” one can see Friedrich Nietzsche’s criticism of Kant and the other philosophers who try to separate man from the holy, pure, stormy and creative nature.

Modern man’s attempts to de-mythologize the objectified world and to ignore and refuse the tradition led to his reliance on the extreme power of reason, which was regarded as the only substantial capability of man. Friedrich Nietzsche, on the other hand, especially in his *Thus Spake Zarathustra*, calls for another man with other capabilities not pointed to in the works of modern philosophers. Thus, Nietzsche becomes one of the foremost philosophers in criticizing those principles on which modernity was founded.

Having in mind the above-mentioned examples of Nietzsche’s criticism of modern philosophers, one finds similar treatment of them in Post-Structuralist philosophy – to be more elaborated later in the present chapter. On the other hand, Friedrich Nietzsche’s criticism of Socrates, as explained in the first chapter of this thesis, is one of the main current tendencies in Post-Structuralism. Thus, in the present chapter attempt is made to show those aspects in the works of the main Post-Structuralist thinkers that are similar to, and under the direct influence of, those critical attitudes of Friedrich Nietzsche concerning some of the modern concepts and philosophers.
In the last decades of twentieth century there was a current tendency in the works of Post-Structuralist philosophers to re-read, re-consider, and ultimately to criticize modernity. This attempt led to re-evaluating the consequences of modernity, and finally came up with a radical attitude towards the principles of modernity by pointing to its negative aspects and consequences. The universalized and absolutistic truths that modernity propagated for are harshly criticized and sharply repudiated in the works of such Post-Structuralist philosophers as Jacques Derrida and Michel Foucault, to name only a few.

Friedrich Nietzsche’s radical treatment of modernity, on the other hand, makes him an inspirational source for Post-Structuralism. If one considers the controversial relationship between Post-Structuralism and Post-Modernism as fully discussed in the second chapter of the present study, it becomes clear why Nietzsche has been referred to as ‘the prophet of the Post-Modern’ in the different cultural and philosophical works of recent years. Accordingly, regarding our discussion in the previous chapter about the close affinity between Post-Structuralism and Post-Modernism, we want to show if Friedrich Nietzsche can be labeled as a forerunner of the Post-Structuralist thought. This is precisely what we want to demonstrate and prove in the present chapter by bringing several examples in the works of Friedrich Nietzsche, on one side, and Jacques Derrida and Michel Foucault, on the other side.

Although Nietzsche’s influence on Post-Modernism has been the subject of a bunch of books published in the last decades of the previous century, his direct influence on Post-Structuralism and especially its methodology of philosophizing, its way of treatment of the history of the western philosophy and even its style of writing has remained widely untouched. In other words, the contemporary writers
usually tend to ignore Nietzsche’s influence on Post-Structuralism and consider him only as the inspirational source behind Post-Modernism. Such an ignorance, which is mostly found in popular intellectual books and less observed in the academic researches, might have been the result of the common misconception that neglects the Post-Structural in fond of the more familiar idea of the Post-Modern.

A. The Influence of Nietzsche on Derrida

a. Stylistics and Mode of Argumentation

Before discussing the influence of Friedrich Nietzsche’s framework of thought and way of treatment on Jacques Derrida it is better to demonstrate, first of all, the influence of Nietzsche’s style of writing and way of argumentation on Derrida. Although this feature might seem to most of the readers a non-philosophical issue, it should be said that there is a close relationship between Nietzsche’s style of writing and his philosophy. The same characteristic is also applicable concerning Derrida’s style of writing and philosophy.

Both philosophers do not use the familiar method of writing that was common and frequently-adopted in the rationalist tradition of the philosophy of modernity in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Moreover, both are against the dominant realist style of writing in the nineteenth century. In other words, not only Nietzsche’s thought but also his style and mode of writing are different from, and sometimes opposite to, those works that he criticizes. Derrida’s style of writing, too, has been under such an influence, and it is interesting to mention
that he has written a book on Nietzsche’s style, which will be mentioned later in the present chapter.

Friedrich Nietzsche’s radical, irrational and anti-realist framework of thought is the main cause behind his unique stylistics and mode of philosophical writing. Nietzsche’s subjective style is in sharp distinction with the objective manner of realism of the nineteenth century. Nietzsche’s emotional phrases and ecstatic utterances could find no way in the detached and scientific manner of realistic style of writing. Furthermore, his personal attitudes, which were mostly opposite to the common sense of the nineteenth century, could not be bound within the limits of the impersonal and self-effacing style of writing that was dominant in the works of his contemporary realist writers.

Nietzsche’s abundant use of metaphors, aphorisms and coinages were not common in the philosophical tradition of the centuries prior to him. He never uses a simple, monotone and straightforward style of writing as it was adopted by the other philosophers. Moreover, he is the first philosopher of the modern world that his works are classified as novel, memoir, notes and sometimes poetry rather philosophy.

Although the usage of dialogues in philosophical works is not a new characteristic and some philosophers—for example, Plato’s works are in the form of dialogues—Nietzsche’s dialogues are new in the sense that they are revolutionary in theme, idiomatic and poetic in language, and finally ecstatic in mood. There are some critics that consider *Thus Spake Zarathustra* as a novel and not as a philosophical work because it has a narrator, some characters, setting, and even a plot. That is why there has always been a controversy regarding Nietzsche’s correct position in the history of philosophy.
On the other hand, his fragmentary style, which is always divided into smaller and independent sections, is a good example of organic unity that was first mentioned in Aristotle’s *Poetics* as the characteristic of a good literary text. These independent and seemingly non-relevant sections and paragraphs in the works of Nietzsche have caused some readers to think of no relationship between and among them at the first glance. It is after a close reading of his works that it becomes clear that there is a thematic relationship between and among these sections that was not grasped in the first reading. Furthermore, it is after such a reading that we can recognize Nietzsche’s close attention to the relationship among the parts and between the parts and the whole in his works. In other words, if one takes each section as a part and the work itself as a whole, he can find how coherent and sustained Nietzsche’s style of writing is.

There are, however, some other characteristics that clearly Dionysian, and not Apollonian, in temper. The most important feature in this regard is Nietzsche’s enthusiastic and stimulating tone of Dionysian temper that is full of ups and downs and in sharp discrepancy with the monotonous and logical tone of the Apollonian temper. Another characteristic here is the decentralization of the subject matter. That is to say that Nietzsche’s works are not confined to deal with one specific subject matter, and there are always some marginal discussions in his works about other issues.

Most of the above-mentioned characteristic features are also found in Derrida’s works. Summarizing, one can evaluate Derrida’s style of writing and way of discussion as fragmentary in argumentation, metaphoric and idiomatic in language and laden with coinages and jargons. Hence, most of Derrida’s works begin with some aphorisms and quotations from other writers. These aphorisms might seem not
relevant to each other or to the theme of the text at the first glance, but it will ultimately be clear that there is a relationship between these aphorisms. Therefore, the text is not just about one subject matter, and the different aphorisms point to different subject matters that have thematic affinity among themselves. In other words, the text is considered as a ‘battlefield’ in Nietzsche and Derrida’s works since it is the place where different subject matters, ideologies, and styles meet each other.

The mentioned characteristics can be clearly in Nietzsche’s mature works. For example, the following quotation is from the penultimate chapter of Thus Spake Zarathustra, in which a mixture of prose and poetry as long as moments of joy, ecstasy, and an energetic tone are obvious:

Have ye learned my song? Have ye divined what it would say? Well! Cheer up! Ye higher men, sing now my roundelay! Sing now yourselves the song, the name of which is ‘Once more’, the signification of which is ‘Unto all eternity!’ Sing, ye higher men, Zarathustra’s roundelay! O man! Take heed!

What saith deep midnight’s voice indeed?
‘I slept my sleep –
From deepest dream I’ve woke, and plead:
The world is deep,
And deeper than the day could read.
Deep is its woe –
Joy – deeper still than grief can be:
Woe saith: Hence! Go!
But joys all want eternity –
Want deep, profound eternity!’(Bolds mine)(5)

If one has a glance at the above quotation, he/she will immediately recognize its idiosyncratic style that is rather new and even bizarre to a philosophical work. For example, the archaic words such as ‘ye’ and
'saith' as well as the usage of such words as 'joy', 'woe', and 'eternity' all transfer an energetic and enthusiastic tone that is particularly characteristic of Nietzsche’s temper.

The following sentences are from the first chapter of his *Twilight of the Idols*. It is interesting to note that the title of this chapter is **Maxims and Arrows**:

3

To live alone one must be a beast or a god, says Aristotle. Leaving out the third case: one must be both – a philosopher.

24

By searching out origins, one becomes a crab. The historian looks backward; eventually he also *believes* backward.

38

Are we genuine? Or merely an actor? A representative? Or that which is represented? In the end, perhaps you are merely a copy of an actor. *Second* question of conscience. (6)

An ironical tone towards the readers and a sarcastic eye on the philosophers and historian are the explicit characteristics of the above maxims. Moreover, brevity that is a more literary and less philosophical technique dominates the above extract. Thus, it now becomes clear that how Nietzsche plays with language and how his style of writing and mode of philosophical discussions are different from other philosophers.

The following passage from *The Anti-Christ* is not only typical of Nietzsche’s sense of humor but also a good example of his persona and subjective mode of writing. Here Nietzsche, all of a sudden,
changes the subjective style into a sophisticated reading of the current methods, and finally come up with a radical and frank criticism of those who condemned such methods. That is to say that he shifts the style, tone and subject matter of his writing three times in the following short paragraph:

Let us not underestimate this: we ourselves, we free spirits, are nothing less than a “revaluation of all values,” an incarnate declaration of war and triumph over all the ancient conception of “true” and “untrue.” The most valuable insights are discovered last; but the most valuable insights are the methods. All the methods, all the presuppositions of our current scientific outlook, were opposed for thousands of years with the most profound contempt. For their sake, men were excluded from the company of “decent” people and considered “enemies of God,” despisers of truth, and “possessed.” Anyone with a scientific bent was a Chandala. (7)

Jacques Derrida, too, has a style of writing very similar to that of Nietzsche and different from most his contemporary philosophers. The stylistic features of his works are like those of Nietzsche. That is to say that Derrida’s style of writing is ironic, fragmentary, and full of coinage. Nicholas Royle, commenting on Derrida’s style, writes:

He is a very funny writer: this is one of the things that some people evidently find infuriating about him. It is difficult not to feel that he is doing something strange with words: language can come to seem like very funny stuff. We may rightly feel that, to borrow a haunting formulation from one of his essays on psychoanalysis, ‘a certain foreign body is here working over our household words’.” (8)

Furthermore, His mode of philosophical argumentation is different from other philosophical works. For example, the mode of discussions in one of his most influential books, *The Postcard: From Socrates to*
Freud and Beyond, is a new attempt at writing philosophical works. The style of this book is epistolary. That is to say that the content of this book includes letters written by the author on several occasions. But, it should be noted that such letters differ highly from ordinary letters.

The letters of written in this book contain biographical, familial, philosophical, scientific and critical propositions each one of which full of different ironies. Sometimes the tone is satiric and sometimes it is serious. The subject matter of the letters shifts abruptly from this one to that one. The letters begin with a brief daily and domestic issue that is personal and subjective, and further on continues by putting firth some serious issues in philosophy and other fields of humanities. Here is an extract from one of the letters in the mentioned book with the same stylistic and critical mode discussed above:

I am writing to you in the train that’s taking me back from Strassbourg (I almost missed it […]

Just now, when we almost missed the train, I remembered the only time when that happened to us, late at night, guess where. […]

Here Freud and Heidegger, I conjoin them within me like the two great ghosts of the “great epoch.” The two surviving grandfathers. They did not know each other, but according to me they form a couple, and in fact just because of that, this singular anachrony. They are bound to each other without reading each other and without corresponding. I have often spoken to you about this situation. […] two thinkers whose glances never crossed and who, without ever receiving a word from one another, say the same. (9)
Just ironically, this book, the title of which might seem misleading to the naïve reader, contains some of the most important philosophical contemplations and analysis ever penned by Derrida. Such a mode of argumentation is obviously different from that of most philosophical works.

There is no absolutism in the thought of Derrida. As a result, his works avoid being absolutistic by making use of irony, fragmentariness, and even jokes. Derrida’s works, like those of Nietzsche, cannot be limited within a specific genre. Sometimes, they are like novels, memoirs, notes and letters, and sometimes they contain serious philosophical discussions and serious criticisms of other well-known thinkers.

It should, however, be mentioned that Derrida himself is aware of such a similarity of style between him and Nietzsche, and has also written a book called *Spurs: Nietzsche’s Styles* (English translation, 1979). Although the title might seem misleading again because the book is mainly about how Nietzsche looked at women and how he knew them and their internality. The phrase “styles of Nietzsche” means not only his style of writing but also his style of thinking, both revolutionary. This book is based one of Derrida’s lectures. He acknowledges his debt for Nietzsche’s works at the beginning of the lecture:

> I owe these readings a great debt and it is neither through omission nor in a spirit of presumptuous independence that I do not refer to them individually (not even to *Versions du soleil* which provided the title for this text). But, because they have opened up that problematic field to the very margins in which (aside from those moments when I deviate from it) I shall remain, that debt itself should not be fragmented here, but at each moment presupposed in its totality. (10)
b. Reversal of Binary Oppositions
I. Friedrich Nietzsche: A Critical Philosophy on Christ/Anti-Christ

The philosophy of reversal of binary oppositions is a philosophy in which the traditionally-accepted superiority of an element over its opposite, in a specific culture, is critically rejected and, therefore, reversed. This definition is the result of our discussions in the second chapter of this research study where a long and detailed account of the ‘binary oppositions’ was presented based on a Post-Structuralist perspective. Although the terms ‘binary oppositions’ and ‘Post-Structuralism’ are technical jargons of contemporary philosophy and, thus, not mentioned and employed by Nietzsche, one can observe the same treatment of different subjects and concepts in Nietzsche’s works. Hence, one of the main objectives of this thesis is to demonstrate how Nietzsche’s philosophy influenced the Post-Structuralist thought of the last decades of twentieth century.

One of the main binary oppositions in Nietzsche’s framework of thought, especially in his last works, is Christ/Anti-Christ. This dual pair is so significant in Nietzsche’s thought that he chose the title of The Anti-Christ for one of his books. The Anti-Christ is a work in which the reader faces a radical and revolutionary idea on Christ and Christianity.

Nietzsche’s preface here begins with a sentence that is demonstrative of the content of the book:

This book belongs to the very few. Perhaps not one of them is even living yet. Maybe they will be the readers who understand my Zarathustra: how could I mistake myself for one of those for whom there are ears even now? Only the day after tomorrow belongs to me. Some are born posthumously. (11)
The above quotation from The Anti-Christ indicates that Nietzsche’s discussion here is not generally accepted by his contemporary cultural system. Thus, it is a revolutionary as well as radical discussion. But why Nietzsche did not find his readers present at that time and why did he say he belong to ‘tomorrow’? The answer is found in his spectacular encountering with such names as Christ and Anti-Christ.

In other words, Nietzsche rejects the traditionally accepted superiority of Christ over any Anti-Christ figures. Consequently, Nietzsche here reverses the Christ/Anti-Christ binary opposition and comes up with a new binary opposition that is Anti-Christ/Christ. This new dual pair is so radical and revolutionary that is not accepted by his contemporary ‘ears.’ That is why he says there are no ‘ears’ to hear this new binary opposition. Nietzsche’s idea here is so radical that he omits the second element of the older binary opposition that is Christ, and, ultimately, comes up with the Anti-Christ.

Thus, Nietzsche rejected and reversed one of the fundamental and widely-accepted binary oppositions of the cultural system in which he lived. Such a cultural system, Nietzsche believed, was the result of the teachings of the church that had presented a wrong picture of Jesus Christ. In his view, the true Jesus was different from the Jesus shown by the church:

This ‘bringer of glad things’ died as he had lived, as he had taught—*not* to ‘redeem men’ but to show how one must live. This practice is his legacy to mankind: his behavior before the judges, before the catchpoles, before the accusers and all kinds of slander and scorn—his behavior on the *cross*. (12)

The true Jesus was not bound to such concepts as guilt, punishment and reward. The true Jesus, Nietzsche argued, was a man of actions. Nietzsche admires the way Jesus acted, responded, and faced his
death. Therefore, there is a difference between the true Christ and the Christ shown by the church. Nietzsche’s Anti-Christ is a figure against the Christ shown by the church. It was this figure of Christ that was dominant in the nineteenth century.

Accordingly, Nietzsche’s *The Anti-Christ* is an attempt to reverse the accepted hierarchy that considers Christ (the Christ as shown by the church) superior to any other figure. On the other hand, Nietzsche presents an Anti-Christ that is superior to the widely and traditionally accepted figure of Christ. As a result, he criticizes the ‘theologists’ radically:

> Against this theologians’ instinct I wage war: I have found its traces elsewhere. Whoever has theologians’ blood in his veins sees all things in a distorted and dishonest perspective to begin with. The pathos which develops out of this condition calls itself faith: closing one’s eyes to oneself once and for all, lest one suffer the sight of incurable falsehood. (13)

In order to discuss Nietzsche’s ideas on theology it sounds almost inevitable to work also on his attitudes towards Buddhism. It should be mentioned that Christianity/Buddhism was another binary opposition current in the western society of the nineteenth century that had been imposed on the society by the Christian church. Although the western man was already familiar with the religions of the East (especially from sixteenth century onwards), Nineteenth century was the first century when a direct contact with the East and especially India took place. Meanwhile, different ideas arose about the authenticity or non-validity of the religions of the East.

Arthur Schopenhauer was one of the first western philosophers to respond to this issue. He was also one of the first western philosophers who expressed his admiration for the Eastern wisdom
and Buddhism. Schopenhauer’s affirmation of the main principles of Buddhism was actually a rebel against those traditional ideas that tended to ignore the eastern wisdom. (14)

Friedrich Nietzsche was another philosopher who expressed his ideas on Buddhism in nineteenth century. But here, like his other standpoints, Nietzsche’s idea was radical and revolutionary. Nietzsche criticized Christianity radically in fond of his admiration for Buddhism.

Although he criticizes Christianity in such works as Beyond Good and Evil and The Genealogies of Morals, this radical criticism of Christianity is followed by his admiration for Buddhism in is his The Anti-Christ. Here we present another example of his criticism of Christianity, followed by his approval of Buddhism instead:

Christianity should not be beautified and embellished: it has waged deadly war against this higher type of man; it has placed all the basic instincts of this type under the ban; and out of these instincts it has distilled evil and the Evil One: the strong man as the typically reprehensible man, the “reprobate.” Christianity has sided with all that is weak and base, with all failures; it has made an ideal of whatever contradicts the instinct of the strong life to preserve itself. (15)

Buddhism presupposes a very mild climate, customs of great gentleness and liberality, and the absence of militarism; moreover, the movement had to originate among the higher, and even the scholarly, classes. Cheerfulness, calm, and freedom from desire are the highest goal, and the goal is attained. Buddhism is not a religion in which one merely aspires to perfection: perfection is the normal case. (16)

These two quotations from Nietzsche’s The Anti-Christ, a criticism of Christianity and an admiration for Buddhism, show his rejection of the binary opposition Christianity/Buddhism that was one of the results of the centralistic mind of the modern western man.
Nietzsche’s reversal of the above dual pair led to other more radical discussions in *The Anti-Christ*.

Thus, Nietzsche’s criticism of Christianity and his admiration for Buddhism should be seen as a major part of his critical philosophy. His critical philosophy is parallel to his reversal of such main and traditional binary oppositions as Christ/Anti-Christ. His treatment of other main binary oppositions, however, should be discussed here.

If Nietzsche rejects the traditionally-accepted figure of Christ as shown by the church, what are the characteristics of his anti-Christ figure? The answer lies both in his preface to *The Anti-Christ*, where he points to ‘Zarathstra’ (mentioned above), and his attitude toward the ‘Superman’. His idea on the character of Buddha, too, can help his readers in understanding the reasons behind his rejection of such a figure of Christ. Therefore, based on our discussions in the first chapter of the present study, one might come to this conclusion that Zarathustra, Superman and Buddha, though not exactly the same, have some similarities with each other.

Moreover, if one points to the characteristics of Superman, earlier discussed in details in this research, he/she can explicitly observe the differences between Nietzsche’s concept of Superman and his ideas on the common man. The same formula can be seen in Nietzsche’s differentiation between the personality of Zarathutra and the people to whom he speaks. Finally, if one considers his attitudes towards Jesus Christ as shown by the church and his admiration for Buddhism, it would be interesting to note that the same binary opposition felt in Christ/Anti-Christ pair can also be seen in the other examples:
1. The Superman/ The Common Man
2. Zarathstra/Zarathstra’s Audience
3. Buddha/Christ

According to him, only those readers know his concept of Anti-Christ who “understand” his description of “Zarathustra” in his earlier book, *Thus Spake Zarathustra*. The first step towards understanding Zarathustra is to know Nietzsche’s concept of man. Moreover, in order to understand Nietzsche’s concept of man one is supposed first to know his concept of ‘Superman’ and ‘will to power.’ It is also necessary to know his ideas admiration for the character of Buddha. A full account of Nietzsche’s concept of man and his concept of Superman as long as a detailed discussion of his term ‘will to power’ and also a discussion on his attitude toward Buddha were all presented in the first chapter of this study, and some conclusions about them were made in the present.

Thus, Friedrich Nietzsche’s critical philosophy can be called the philosophy of reversal of binary oppositions. He reverses the hierarchy of one of the most fundamental and widely-accepted binary oppositions in the western traditions that is Christ/Anti-Christ binary opposition, and ultimately comes up with a new hierarchy of this binary opposition that is Anti-Christ/Christ. Such a critical attitude is also observed in his treatment of the other binary oppositions that gives result in a new set of binary oppositions that are Superman/Common Man, Zarathustra/Zarathustra’s Listeners and Buddha/Christ.

Nietzsche’s critical philosophy had an inevitable impact of a major part of the thought of the last decades of twentieth century usually referred to as Post-Structuralism. The Post-Structuralists are in fond of
any philosophical tradition that has attempted to criticize the generally-accepted hierarchies of the different binary oppositions. Nietzsche’s philosophy is a highlight in this regard since it presents a critical view towards most of the widely-accepted thoughts and even norms of the western philosophical tradition. Nietzsche’s critical philosophy is influential in the invention of those applied theories in contemporary philosophy that were introduced by such Post-Structuralist thinkers as Jacques Derrida.

II. Jacques Derrida: An Applied Theory on Speech/Writing

Jacques Derrida’s Post-Structuralist theory introduces a critical and radical reading of the long and traditional believes on speech/writing binary opposition that is in parallel with and under the influence of Nietzsche’s critical reading of Christ/Anti-Christ. In the present chapter attempt is made, first of all, to introduce Derrida’s theory on speech/writing binary opposition. Then, an investigation of how the critical philosophy of Nietzsche influenced Derrida’s Post-Structural theory is presented. Finally, using Derrida’s terminology and his new set of jargons in reading Nietzsche’s critical philosophy constitute the last part of this section. This chapter mostly includes those conclusions the present thesis has come to of discussions presented in chapters one and two, where a detailed explanation of such discussions as along as references to the original texts of these thinkers are included.
Derrida believes that speech/writing is one of the major binary oppositions that has played a main role in the history of western thought. Although this argument does not seem so clearly-cut as Christ/Anti-Christ and good/evil binary oppositions in Nietzsche’s framework of thought, further investigations would demonstrate how the reversal of speech/writing pair has acted as a base for Derrida’s deconstructive method according to which other binary oppositions can become subject to reverse as well.

In his *Of Grammatology (1967)*, Derrida argues that speech has been always seen as more important than writing. For example, in traditional linguistic theories speech is considered as the primary form of language, and writing merely as the transcription of speech. In other words, speech has always been regarded as subject to and dependent on writing. Mary Klages has described Derrida’s attitudes in the following way:

Derrida looks specifically at the binary opposition ‘speech/writing.’ He argues that, in western philosophy, speech has always been thought of as primary, or original, while writing is just a transcription of speech, or a copy of it. Derrida says that speech gets privileged over writing because speech gets associated with presence—for there to be spoken language, somebody has to be present and speaking. (17)

Emphasizing speech and neglecting writing, or making writing ‘privileged’ and speech ‘unprivileged’, is called phonocentrism by Derrida. That is to say that the speaker’s words and speech are taken as more important than his writing because the spoken words imply presence, and writing, “a copy of speech,” implies absence. As a result, speech has always been centered as in comparison with writing that is de-centered.
To have a center is a main characteristic of all the systems. The systems are also thought of as having a structure. The word structure, too, brings to the mind the concept of the center. According to one of Derrida’s frequently-mentioned quotations, referred to earlier in the present thesis (18), Structuralism, which is based on the idea of the existing center in the structure, presupposes the idea of the center like the previous systems of thought.

That is to say that one of the elements of the binary opposition of each structure is always privileged and centered, whereas the other element is unprivileged and de-centered. Speech, for Derrida, has not, and must not have, superiority over writing. He gathers both speech and writing under the umbrella term of arch-writing. Consequently, here it is the ‘writing’ that becomes comprehensive and, therefore, acquires superiority over speech.

Derrida, thus, reverses the traditional idea in western philosophy that considers speech superior to writing. Accordingly, the superiority of presence is rejected and, instead, absence becomes the centered. The method to reverse a binary opposition, first manifested in Nietzsche’s critical philosophy, is called deconstruction when applied by the Post-Structuralists. Deconstruction has ever since been regarded as a theory applied in different fields of human sciences.

The reversal of speech/writing dual pair leads to two theoretical implications. First, another new binary opposition, which is presence/absence, is added to the argument. Presence is always regarded as superior to, and more tangible than, absence.

Derrida criticizes such a traditional approach and reverses this belief. Here he uses the term Metaphysics of Presence, which shows his debt for Heidegger. Derrida believes that Nietzsche, Freud and Heidegger are those thinkers who attempted to deconstruct our
attitudes toward such concepts as “truth,” “consciousness,” and “being” respectively. According to Derrida, if we want to name some thinkers who presented such a “radical formulation” of the centers, we doubtless would have to cite the Nietzschean critique of metaphysics, the critique of the concepts of Being and truth, for which were substituted the concepts of play, interpretation, and sign (sign without present truth); the Freudian critique of self-presence, that is, the critique of consciousness, of the subject, of self-identity and self-proximity or self-possession; and, more radically, the Heideggerean destruction of metaphysics, onto-theology, and the determination of Being as presence. (19)

Secondly, phocentrism, that is the superiority of speech over writing, is subject to another characteristic of western philosophy that is logocentrism, which has been defined by Derrida as the desire of the western philosophy for the center. In other words, there are some centers based on which western philosophy works. Sometimes the centers are changed in the different traditions of western thought. These centers found in western philosophy are in deed the privileged element of different binary oppositions such as:

1. **The idea** in the idea/the real binary opposition of Plato’s philosophy
2. The **other world** in other world/this world binary opposition of the theology of the Middle Ages
3. The **heaven** in heaven/hell binary opposition of Christianity
4. The **mind** in mind/body binary opposition of Descartes’ philosophy
5. The **reason** in reason/emotion binary opposition of rationalist philosophy
The existence of the centers and their superiority to the other de-centered element of the different binary opposition is the cause of considering their meaning as unchangeable and fixed. Therefore, there are always some essential and fundamental entities in the history of western philosophy. But the creation of these centers is the result of the idea of the structure:

The structure of the binary opposition, and the fact that one side of a binary only has meaning in relation to the other side, to its opposition, means that every system posits a center, a place from which the whole system comes and which regulates the system. … Western philosophy has a great collection of terms that serve as centers to various metaphysical systems: being, essence, substance, truth, form, consciousness, human being, God, unconscious. (20)

As a conclusion to this part, western philosophy, in Derrida’s idea, is based on the mechanism and function of different binary oppositions. Each binary opposition consists of two elements, a centered element and a de-centered one. The centered part of each binary opposition is called transcendental signified by Derrida. It means that each center is only a signified that has been created transcendentally. The centers are found in language and not in reality. They are the inventions of the mind of man of man. (21)

Moreover, these transcendental signifieds are always defined by words. The words are signifiers, and to define and characterize each signifier one uses other signifiers. Hence, the meaning is nothing but the “free play of signifiers,” to use one of Derrida’s phrases. That is why Derrida believes that the meaning is not fixed and it is subject to change.
Thus, Derrida, like Nietzsche, presents another meaning for the concepts, and criticizes the meanings provided by the western philosophy. He argues that the transcendental signified is only found in language. He states his frequently-quoted proposition, “there is nothing outside of the text,” in the following extract from his *Of Grammatology*:

Reading … cannot legitimately transgress the text toward something other than it … or toward a signified outside the text whose content could take place, could have taken place, outside of language, that is to say, in the sense that we give here to word, outside of writing in general. That is why methodological considerations that we risk applying here to an example are closely dependent on general propositions that we have elaborated above; as regards the absence of the referent or the transcendental signified. There is nothing outside of the text. (22)

The speech/writing binary opposition, in the revolutionary hands of Derrida, is ultimately transformed into a new binary opposition that is writing/speech. There is no room for any transcendental signified in reality. They exist in the language and they are conventional. Therefore, Derrida feels convenient when he reverses the speech/writing binary opposition.

This deconstructive theory, which is applied in different fields of humanities, is exactly what Nietzsche does in his *The Anti-Christ* by rejecting and thus reversing Christ/Anti-Christ binary opposition. In other words, Nietzsche’s critical philosophy is transformed into an applied theory by Derrida. But we should note that Derrida’s deconstructive method is includes almost all binary oppositions found in language and western philosophy.
It is interesting to note that both Christ and Socrates privileged speech and marginalized writing. They did not pay attention to writing and, instead, were men of speech. The Bible was not written by Christ and it was written by Christ’s apostles. And, Socrates did not write his ethical philosophy and, and it was written by his apostle, Plato. Hence, both Christ and Socrates are the subjects of criticism for Nietzsche and Derrida.

On the other hand, by rejecting the superiority of Christ over any Anti-Christ figure Friedrich Nietzsche introduced his new concept of the Anti-Christ. The same approach is seen in Derrida when he reversed the speech/writing binary opposition of the western philosophy, and introduced his new concept of arch-writing. Thus, it is the Anti-Christ that becomes privileged and centered for Nietzsche not the Christ as shown by the church. Correspondingly, it is arch-writing that becomes privileged and centered for Derrida not the speech.

Both Nietzsche and Derrida discuss and approach their argument in a similar approach and manner. That is why the influence of the critical philosophy of Nietzsche is found in the Post-Structuralist thought in general and in Derrida in particular. They are the two sides of a coin, where there is Nietzsche’s critical philosophy on one side and Derrida’s applied theory on the other side. Furthermore, they have the same approach towards such figures and concepts as Socrates, rationalism, and Modernity.

On the other hand, it will be both convenient and interesting to read and paraphrase Nietzsche’s critical Philosophy by the help of Derrida’s theoretical terminology. Although Derrida’s new set of philosophical terms seem intangible and difficult to most of his readers, they become more tangible when used to re-read Nietzsche’s
philosophy. The reason behind such a convergence is the thematic and even stylistic closeness of Nietzsche’s critical philosophy and Derrida’s philosophical theory.

Hence, in Nietzsche’s works it is the Anti-Christ that becomes centered and privileged not the Christ as shown by the church. The Christ as shown by the church, for Nietzsche, is a transcendental signified that is subject to change, and thus did not exist in reality. The real Christ had some other characteristics appreciated by Nietzsche, and mentioned above.

Moreover, one can put forth this proposition that Nietzsche rejected the logocentrism of the western philosophy because he went beyond Good and Evil. Good/Evil is a main binary opposition rejected radically in Nietzsche’s framework of thought. Nietzsche’s ideas are here radical and deconstructive.

One can also propose this point the Nietzsche was against phonocentrism because all his life, especially in the last years of his life, he avoided himself being in oral controversies, and dedicated his time to writing philosophical books. That is to say that Nietzsche paid attention to writing and marginalized speech. In his last years of life Nietzsche was an embittered figure who lived a life of solitude and busy writing his contemplations.

Nietzsche presented a new meaning for good and evil because he knew that the fixed meaning of theses concepts could change. He had no belief in fixed meanings otherwise he could not have been able to criticize some concepts and figures so radically. Nietzsche criticized the history of western philosophy radically.

In this section Jacques Derrida’s theory on speech/writing was firstly presented. Then, the influence of Friedrich Nietzsche’s critical philosophy on Jacques Derrida’s mentioned theory was elaborated.
And finally, Nietzsche’s critical philosophy was read by the help of Derrida’s new set of philosophical terminology in order to show that they are both the two sides of one coin.

B. The Influence of Nietzsche on Foucault

a. Rejecting Epistemes and De-centering Institutions

‘Episteme’ is one of the controversial terms of the modern fields of different human science including philosophy. This term was coined by Michel Foucault and has been used by several major thinkers ever since. Most of the readers, whenever face this term, think of its possible relationship with the more familiar term, epistemology. Although the term ‘episteme,’ as employed in contemporary critical and philosophical works, has no direct relation to epistemology, it can be useful in a better understanding of recent epistemological works.

Michel Foucault, who invented the term episteme, argues that there is an affinity between this term and discourse. In Foucault’s idea, “all discursive practices” are united by “the totality of relations and laws of transformation,” which can also be called the episteme. However, episteme is also used to show that specific time when such “relations and laws” are present. Therefore, episteme here has two different definitions: a set of rules that unite discursive practices and a “historical period during which these laws are stable”. (23)

Thus, episteme is a set or totality of relations among man kind and a set of laws of transformation in the society. The other meaning, a given historical phase when these rules are present, is not used in this research study. Therefore, to put it in a less difficult way, episteme is that rule, behavior, idea, or social norm that is followed, respected and
present in the society in a certain historical time and might be rejected, avoided or even ridiculed in another historical phase.

The epistemes are the constituent parts of the discourses, or “discursive formation,” as Foucault names them. Episteme can also be defined as the smallest meaningful part of a discourse. Subsequently, it is the combination of several epistemes that would ultimately create a discourse. Discussing the relationship between different parts of a discourse, Foucault argues that:

Lastly … discourse is constituted by a group of sequences of signs, in so far as they are statements, that is, in so far as they can be assigned particular modalities of existence. And if I succeed in showing … that the law of such a series is precisely what I have so far called a discursive formation, if I succeed in showing that discursive formation really is the principle of dispersion and redistribution, not of formulations,… the term discourse can be defined as a group of statements that belong to a single system of formation. (24)

Thus, there is direct relationship between episteme and discourse. The relationship between discourse, both discursive formation and discursive practice, and episteme is expressive of the mechanism and the function of the episteme. Put in such a context, episteme produces, reproduces and serves the discourse to which it belongs. Moreover, each discourse has its own especial set of epistemes that are easily recognizable from the epistemes of another discourse.

Friedrich Nietzsche was a philosopher who rejected most of the epistemes of his time. He felt no respect for some of the epistemes of his time, criticized and rejected some of them, and even ridiculed some other. The epistemes that were present and functioning at Nietzsche’s time were of different discourses:
1. **Academic discourse**: Nietzsche was for some time a member of the academic discourse from which he resigned. He had a job as a professor of historical linguistics and classics at Basel University in 1969, but stopped teaching in 1876.

2. **Intellectual discourse**: He had also affinity with German intellectual discourse of the nineteenth century with which he was in constant conflict. His arguments, especially those against Wagner, show such a conflict.

3. **Religious discourse**: Nietzsche’s critique of religion and religiosity, that is Christianity, is more obvious than his other criticisms. Such books as *The Anti-Christ* demonstrate his opposition to religious discourse.

4. **Social discourse**: He did not follow the common social discourse of his time. His way of life, especially towards the end of his life, indicates that he had a life of solitude and far from the people and social discourses. The fact that he never got married is also regarded as another example of Nietzsche’s opposition to the common social discourses.

5. **Poetic discourse**: He was aware of the poetic discourse of his time and tried to use a different poetic discourse. The dominant poetic discourse of his time was that of Realism against which he employed another poetic discourse. That is why Nietzsche is sometimes called an anti-realist.

6. **Philosophical discourse**: although he rejected western philosophical discourse, it is the main category under which his works are classified. The irony is that almost every body considers Nietzsche as a great philosopher in the history of the western philosophy whereas he himself was radically against such a philosophical tradition.
7. **Scientific discourse:** Nietzsche is against those scientific discourses that believe they have found the answer to man’s long and historical questions. Although he condemns the church for creating obstacles on the way of the progress of man and science, he is suspicious of some of the scientific developments of his time.

If we consider each discourse to be constituted of different epistemes, it can be concluded that Nietzsche criticized most of the dominant discourses of his time throughout rejecting their constituent epistemes. One of the books that is much more expressive of Nietzsche’s criticism of the discourses of his time and shows his rejection of the present epistemes of the society in which he lived is *The Twilight of the Idols*. The first part of the book, which is called Maxims and Arrows, is really a collection of maxims and arrows against the different discourses of Nietzsche’s time.

Nietzsche’s criticism of the discourses that leads to his rejection of their constituent epistemes is here more obvious than any other one of his works. For example, the first maxim of the book is: “Idleness is the beginning of all psychology. What? Should psychology be a vise?” (25) This is expressive of Nietzsche’s criticism of one of the dominant and popular scientific discourses of his time that is the discourse of psychology. His criticism here seems more biting when one is reminded of this point that this maxim has been written based on a German proverb that is: “Idleness is the beginning of all vices.” Nietzsche’s rejection of such an episteme here is followed by another criticism:
There are cases in which we are like horses, we psychologists, and become restless: we see our own shadow wavering up and down before us. A psychologist must turn his eyes from himself to eye anything at all. (26)

Another example of Nietzsche’s rejection of some of the scientific epistemes dominant in those days is his satirical comment on Charles Darwin who is called by Nietzsche “Anti-Darwin.” Nietzsche believes that:

Assuming, however, that there is such a struggle for existence—and, indeed, it occurs—its result is unfortunately the opposite of what Darwin’s school desires, and of what one might perhaps desire with them. … Darwin forgot the spirit (that is English!); the weak have more spirit. … it will be noted that by “spirit” I mean care, patience, cunning, simulation, great self-control, and everything that is mimicry. (27)

Another discourse criticized by Nietzsche in *The Twilight of the Idols* is the poetic discourse called “l’art pour l’art” (Art for Art’s Sake). This discourse was one of the dominant poetic discourses of the western society of late nineteenth century. The movement called art for art’s sake focused on only the form and the beauty of the artistic work and ignored the content and any commitment by the artistic work.

Nietzsche, however, expressed his opposition to this poetic discourse that aimed at depriving art from any commitment. It should be noted that this discourse was mostly made of some new and bizarre epistemes in behavior, speaking and even dressing. These epistemes were usually followed by the bohemian writers and artists of those days. Nietzsche rejected these episteme both in his way of life and his writing:
The fight against purpose in art is always a fight against the moralizing tendency in art, against its subordination to morality. L’art pour l’art means: “The devil take morality!” But even this hostility still betrays the overpowering force of the prejudice. When the purpose of moral preaching and of improving man has been excluded from art, it still does not follow by any means that art is altogether purposeless, aimless, senseless—in short, l’art pour l’art, a worm chewing its tail. (28)

Other discourses and their constituent epistemes, such as medical, literary and social discourses are radically criticized in the following pages of The Twilight of the Idols. Other discourses such as the philosophical discourse of Socrates, discussed in the previous section of the present chapter, are also criticized in the preceding pages of this book. As a result, Nietzsche’s The Twilight of the Idols is indeed the twilight of those discourses and epistemes that Nietzsche approached critically, radically, and sometimes satirically.

Although Nietzsche expresses his criticism for his contemporary discourses and epistemes in most of his works, The Twilight of the Idols is a highlight in this respect. Those discourses that have become “idols” for the society are, for Nietzsche, subject to perish. Nietzsche’s criticism of such discourses is vivid, sharp and most of the times radical and ironic.

But the main discourse Nietzsche criticized was the discourse of the church. The church was one of the dominant institutions of the western society of the nineteenth century. The discourse produced by this institution had ultimately come up with some epistemes such as the praying rituals on Sunday mornings and the burial and funeral rituals governed by the church. Nietzsche rejected these religious epistemes produced by the church both in his works, especially in The Anti-Christ, and in his way of life. Therefore, Nietzsche, by rejecting
these epistemes, de-centered the central institution of his time that was the church.

Thus, Friedrich Nietzsche attempted to come out of the different sets of epistemes dominant in his time. He wanted to make himself free from the restricting epistemes of different discourses of his time. Consequently, his framework of thought differed sharply from most of his contemporary men, and his philosophy became at times critical.

Such a critical philosophy that attempted to reject the epistemes of different discourses was highly influential on Michel Foucault’s applied theories. It is also interesting to mention that the term ‘episteme’ was coined by Foucault, who, as David Lodge has argued, remained a “Nietzschean” in his theories. Although the following quotation from Lodge’s *Modern Criticism and Theory* is usually applicable to Foucault’s influences on contemporary political discourses, it shows explicitly Nietzsche’s influence on Foucault:

> Though Foucault’s focus on the historical and institutional contexts of discourse has inspired many critics on the intellectual left, his Nietzschean insistence on the struggle for the power as the ultimate determinant of all human action is not encouraging to progressive political philosophies. (29)

Nietzsche’s influence on Foucault has been mentioned by other critics too. Simon Malpas and Paul Wake, in their edition of *The Routledge Companion to Critical Theory* (2006), argue that “heavily influenced by Nietzsche, Foucault turned to analyze the practices and technologies of power, subjection and subjectification.” (30) Such an influence becomes more obvious if one compares Nietzsche’s rejection of epistemes and Foucault’s de-centering of modern institutions.
Nietzsche’s rejection of the present epistemes of his time is indeed based on his criticism of the different discourses of the society where he lived. If we focus on the relationship between the discourse and institution, it becomes clear that each institution produces, reproduces, and preserves its own discourse. As a result, the rejection of epistemes means the criticism of that institution that has produced that set of epistemes.

Concerning our previous discussions on the Post-Structuralist method of de-centering the privileged and centered element of different binary oppositions, we can come to this conclusion that Nietzsche, by rejecting present epistemes, de-centralized those institutions that created these epistemes. But why the word ‘institution’ is added to our discussion here? What is the relationship between the ‘episteme’ and ‘institution’?

The answer to the above questions is exactly the place where Nietzsche and Foucault meet: discourse and its ‘power/knowledge’. In other words, an institution by the means of its discourse, produced through its power, ultimately creates a new set of epistemes that are really those items of knowledge that the audience of that institution have. Foucault writes:

Indeed, it is in discourse that power and knowledge are joined together. And for that very reason, we must conceive discourse as a series of discontinuous segments whose tactical function is neither uniform nor stable. We must not imagine a world of discourse divided between accepted discourse and excluded discourse … but as a multiplicity of discursive elements … It is this distribution that we must reconstruct … with the variants and different effects—according to who is speaking, his position of power, the institutional context in happens to be situated—that it implies. (31)
Therefore, in discussing discourses one is supposed to take into consideration other elements such as power, knowledge and institution. This is the main part of Foucault’s theories that are thematically under the influence of Nietzsche.

Rejecting discourses and their constituent epistemes and de-centering institutions are two side of one coin. The first one, rejecting epistemes, appeared in Friedrich Nietzsche’s critical philosophy, and the second one, de-centering institutions, is what one faces in Michel Foucault’s theory of analyzing discourses. Foucault is mainly concerned with the criticism of those discourses that ignored the other smaller discourses. However, he mostly attempts to theorize how an institution produces its discourse.

Foucault tried to criticize some of the modern institutions in his works. That is why he wrote histories of different discourses of modern west. He wrote about the modern discourses in a way no body had done before. That is to say that he wrote about the history of modern discourses based on the power/knowledge of those institutions that had produced those discourses. Thus, by criticizing those discourses he de-centralized their producing institution. Foucault’s criticism of modern discourses based on his argument on the relationship between power and knowledge will be explained in details in the last section of the present thesis.
b. Criticizing Modernity and Its Discourses

I. Friedrich Nietzsche: Criticism of the Philosophy of Modernity

Friedrich Nietzsche was one of the first western philosophers that criticized the philosophy of modernity and its principles. The principles and characteristics of Modernity are found in the works of two different traditions of modern western philosophy: the Anglo-Saxon tradition of philosophy and the continental tradition of philosophy.

By Anglo-Saxon tradition we mean the English empirical philosophy established and developed by John Locke, David Hume, George Berkeley and John Stuart Mill that was to be continued under the title of analytical philosophy with such philosophers and logicians as Frege and Russell. On the other hand, the continental philosophy designates the works of Rene Descartes, Gottfried Leibniz, Fichte and Hegel. Nietzsche and Heidegger are also classified as the philosophers of the continental tradition.

The origin of the philosophy of modernity is usually thought of being found in the philosophy of Rene Descartes in the beginning of the seventeenth century. The philosophy of modernity was under the impact of the Descartes’ dualistic vision on man. In other words, Descartes’ split of man into the ‘mind’ and the ‘body’ had several more implications for the other philosophers of modern period. Subsequently, other binary oppositions were to be born out of the original mind/body binary opposition that Descartes proposed firmly in his books.
In his *Meditations on First Philosophy* Descartes explained his famous “cogito ergo sum” proposition followed by “sum res cogitans.” “Cogito ergo sum”, or “I am thinking, therefore I exist,” is a proposition that considers the thinking self both as the prerequisite for being and as the centre of being. Hence the idea of the self and the other and the superiority of the self over the other play a major role in his philosophy:

I may not, for example, make the inference ‘I am walking, therefore I exist,’ except in so far as the awareness of walking is a thought. The inference is certain only if applied to this awareness, and not to the movement of the body which sometimes—in the case of dreams—is not occurring at all, despite the fact that I seem to myself to be walking. Hence from the fact that I think I am I walking I can very well infer the existence of a mind which has this thought, but not the existence of the body that walks. And the same applies in other cases. (32)

On the other hand, “sum res cogitans,” or “I am a thinking thing,” paved the way both for the instrumentality of mind and later misunderstandings. By instrumentality of the mind I mean a mind that is considered only as an instrument for man’s reason. Accordingly the mind, in Cartesian concept, is a reasoning and rational mind. Hence there would be no room for emotions in mind, and the heart (a part of the body), instead, becomes the centre for emotions. Therefore, the superiority of the mind over the body actually means the superiority of the reason over emotion:

When I said ‘that is, I am a mind, or intelligence, or intellect or reason’, what I meant by these terms was not mere faculties, but things endowed with the faculty of thought. This is what the first two terms are commonly taken to mean by everyone; and the second two are often understood in this sense. I stated this point so explicably, and in so many places, that it seems to me there was no room for doubt. (33)
Hence, Descartes’ division of man into mind and body was followed by several other binary oppositions that played a main role in the philosophy of modernity. Some of these dual pairs, found in modernity and the result of the philosophy of Descartes, are center/margin, subject/object and human beings/animals. The first part of these oppositions is considered to be superior than the second one in Modernity.

On the other hand, the philosophy of modernity is also in close affinity with the Enlightenment of the second half of the eighteenth century. Immanuel Kant, mostly attributed to the continental tradition but with some similarities with the Anglo-Saxon tradition, is considered to be the pioneer and theoretician of Enlightenment. He relied on human reason and believed that it could both solve the crucial problems and establish the essential norms in life.

In his famous essay written in 1784 and called “What is Enlightenment?” he defined Enlightenment as “the liberation of man kind of his self-caused state of minority.” Enlightenment, in Kant’s idea, is the achievement of “maturity” is what Enlightenment stands for. Such a maturity is illustrated in man’s “determination and courage to use [his understanding] without the assistance of another.” (34)

Enlightenment developed the attitude that the application of man’s reason is the main factor in the disappearance of superstition and barbarity. The followers of this movement believed that human reason could free him from his earlier reliance on unexamined traditions. Therefore, Enlightenment paved the way for the acceptance of the idea of “progress” of man, and refused the idea of primitivism.

The philosophy of modernity, pioneered by Descartes’ rationalism and developed by Kant’s Enlightenment, was instrumental in developing ideas on the superiority of one of the elements in different
binary oppositions like mind/body, center/margin, subject/object, human/animal, reason/emotion, progress/primitivism and consequently the superiority of (western) intellect over (eastern) wisdom. (35)

Having both positive and negative consequences, modernity focused on some aspects of man’s mind and life and ignored some other. One of the fundamental premises of modernity, criticized by Nietzsche, was the separation of man from nature that was mainly the result of both Descartes and Kant’s insistence on the mind, reason and order, and their ignorance of emotions and naturalness of man. About these characteristics of modernity Mary Klages argues that:

Modernity is fundamentally about order: about rationality and rationalism, creating order out of chaos. The assumption is that creating more rationality is conductive to creating more order, and that the more ordered a society is, the better it will function (the more rationally it will function). (36)

Friedrich Nietzsche was one of the first philosophers that responded critically to this principle of modernity according to which man was deprived of nature as a result of modernity’ too much attention to order and rationalism. Nature, in Nietzsche’s idea, is one of the sources of inspiration. Thus Spake Zarathustra, is a work full of references to nature and its “invisible hands”:

As he walked alone one evening over the hills surrounding the town called ‘The Pied Cow’, behold, there found he the youth sitting leaning against a tree, and gazing with wearied look into the valley. Zarathustra thereupon laid hold of the tree beside which the youth sat, and spake thus:

If I wished to shake this tree with my hands, I should not be able to do so.

But the wind, which we see not, troubleth and bendeth it as it listeh. We art sorest bent and troubled by invisible hands. (37)
Nature, for Nietzsche, is the source of power, inspiration, and naturalness. Descartes, on the other hand, regarded man as subject and nature as object. Such a separation of man from nature was more emphasized in the eighteenth century, when people of those days took interest in the life of the city, and the process of the enlargement of the cities began.

Man, in Nietzsche’s attitude, is and should be powerful and creative like nature. Whereas modernity called for the domination of man over nature, Nietzsche believed there should be a unity between man and nature. That is why the setting of most events of his *Thus Spake Zarathustra* is nature.

Nature is wild, productive and full of ups and downs. Nature is rebellious. It is untamable. Man should learn from nature, not attempt to dominate it.

Hence, Nietzsche’s tone in his works has the characteristics of nature. His tone is so startling and energetic that the reader of his works can feel the speaker’s enthusiastic temper and ecstatic mood. Nietzsche’s character, Zarathustra, reaches this ecstasy in nature and by the inspirational power of nature.

The philosophy of modernity, on the other hand, is a context in which one feels none of the characteristics mentioned above. It is a rationalist philosophy that tries to be moderate, calm and ordered. Thus, Nietzsche’s approach, worldview, tone, and even the setting and thematic implications of some of his works stand opposite to the philosophy of modernity.
The Twilight of the Idols is one of those works that Nietzsche presents his criticism of modernity. This book is mainly about the weak points of the different philosophers, writers, and even scientists of modernity. The third section of this book includes a harsh and satirical criticism of ‘reason’, which, in modernity, is considered as an instrument to rely on. (38)

In another part of the same book Nietzsche presents his radical disapproval of modernity. Here his “critique of modernity,” is parallel to his criticism of some of the concepts and terms that are widely used in the philosophy of modernity. The concepts criticized here by Nietzsche include “modern spirit,” “modern democracy” and “freedom” that is used frequently in modern discourses:

The whole of the West no longer possesses the instincts out of which institutions grow, out of which a future grows: perhaps nothing antagonizes its “modern spirit” so much. One lives for the day, one lives very fast, one lives very irresponsibly: precisely this is called “freedom.”… one fears the danger of a new slavery the moment the word “authority” is even spoken out loud. (39)

The above quotation is illuminating in two regards: first, it includes Nietzsche’s criticism of modernity, and secondly, it reveals his dislike of the word “authority.” Authority is one of those words that Nietzsche finds fault with in the discourse of modernity. As it is clear from the quotation, Nietzsche believes that the idea of authority is a restricting one and it is one of the results of the philosophy of modernity.

It is interesting to note that Michel Foucault not only criticized modernity but also revealed some of its deficiencies such as the idea of “authority” and the ignorance of minor discourses. Foucault’s criticism of modernity that tends to ignore and even suppress the
minority discourses is under the influence of Nietzsche’s criticism of the philosophy of modernity. Such an influence will be more obvious in the next chapter where attempt is made to present Foucault’s applied theories as long as the influence of Nietzsche’s critical philosophy on these theories.

II. Michel Foucault: A Theory on Modernity Discourses

Modernity, in its general sense, produced different discourses, and came up with different institutions. The mechanism of the institutions and the function of the discourses and their relationship with other concepts such as power, knowledge and episteme are what Michel Foucault’s both theoretical and historical works are about. But why are these works considered as a criticism of modernity?

Foucault criticizes modernity on the basis of this fact that the discourses of modernity functioned in way that gave result in the ignorance and marginalizing of almost all other minority discourse. The main discourses of modernity, throughout a special mechanism, were thought of as the centered discourses. The minority discourses, on the other hand, were considered as marginal and secondary.

Thus, in discussing Foucault’s theories one should focus on two kinds of modernity discourses: the main and centered discourses, and the secondary and minority discourses. By analyzing the central discourses of modernity and their mechanism Foucault come up with a criticism of such discourses because they functioned in a way that the minority discourses of modernity were forgotten, ignored and marginalized.
Hence, in the present section of this chapter attempt is made to explain Foucault’s attitudes on the mechanism of the main discourses of modernity, and, then, to discuss his criticism of modernity because of its ignorance of minority discourses. Although the manner of such a criticism is different from Friedrich Nietzsche’s critique of modernity, Foucault’s theoretical approach is similar to and under the influence of Nietzsche’s critical philosophy.

Foucault uses the term discourse in a particular way that is different from its general usage. (39) Here, discourse is not simply considered as ‘language,’ ‘speech’ or ‘utterance.’ As Julian Wolfreys points out:

The work of Michel Foucault has drawn out the structural and historical processes of discursive activity. Foucault has taken the idea of discourse further than the identification of a language practice arising as a result of organizational or institutional forms in society, in his analysis of the ways in which discursive formations are active in the production, replication, and dissemination of the power intrinsic to the various ‘ideological state apparatuses.’ (40)

The term discourse in Foucault’s works refers to systems of values, statements and texts that form a kind of official language. Thus, there are medical, literary, philosophical, religious and political discourses. Each one of these discourses are functioning either as a primary or a secondary discourse in the philosophy of modernity. For example, if we take the philosophy of modernity as the primary and central philosophical discourse of the west from the beginning of the seventeenth to the end of nineteenth century, the philosophical discourse of Friedrich Nietzsche was, at that time, thought of as a secondary discourse. Therefore, there are both main and minority discourses in modernity.
Each discursive practice is produce by the “organizational” and “institutional” forms of society. That is why discourse is in direct relationship with institution in the works of Foucault. Foucault is interested in the way that a modern institution produced and reproduces its discourse. In other words, Foucault is concerned with discussing those mechanisms that create and enforce modern man’s obedience to different discourses. Put it in another way, we can say that Foucault is mainly involved in how modern man becomes subject to different rules and how some institutions become authoritative.

In order to explore the above questions Foucault attempted to deal with those concepts that are acting as an instrument between institution and discourse. The two concepts, knowledge and power, here seem more influential and important that the other terms. Accordingly, Foucault focuses on the role of knowledge and power in making the discourse of an institution effective.

Foucault’s approach to power in his critical theories is different from Marxist attitudes on this term. Several thinkers have welcomed such a departure from Marxist perspectives:

His exploration of the ways in which power exists as a historically situated relationship, is exercised rather than possessed, and can be viewed as productive as well as oppressive, constituted an extremely useful departure from dominant Marxist models. (41)

While the Marxists historians believe that the repressions in a society in a specific modern historical phase are conducted in the interests of the bourgeois order and class, Foucault argues that the production and influence of power is more complicated than such an attitude. He states that in the modern society no one individual man or class or group is responsible for the repressions within a society. Power,
however, should be evaluated in the context of different discursive networks because they have their own specific way of creating and preserving power.

Moreover, power, in Foucault’s idea, operates like ideology in its Althusserian sense. Louis Althusser was the teacher of Foucault, and had already presented his revolutionary definition of ideology. (42) While Althusser worked on the concept of **ideology**, Foucault, his pupil, was more interested in the concept of **power**.

Therefore, power here is productive and not repressive. Power here is considered to produce relationships and shape discourses. The ultimate objective behind the power here is to create human subjects who behave legally and in a civilized way without the control of any governmental force such as police. It is the discourse that has such a power and ultimately creates and controls modern man’s way of behavior, his choices and even his believes. That is why Foucault argues that power “traverses and produces things, includes pleasure, forms, knowledge, produces discourse.” (43)

Therefore, discourse produce power, and power produces discourse. This dialectic takes place by the help of another item that is **knowledge**. Knowledge here is believed to be that specialized discursive form of knowledge that becomes the basis for modern man’s behavior.

Foucault’s theoretical works are an attempt to explore the role of discourse in producing and forming the relationship between power and knowledge. It should be mentioned that power/knowledge is not a binary opposition. It is rather a unified and inseparable concept. That is to say that there is a mutual influence and relation between power and knowledge.
Discourse acts as both the producer and the governor of power. On the other hand, knowledge is what the discourse makes use of both to insert its power on people and to make people become ‘subject’ to that power. Thus, there is a dialectical relationship between power and knowledge.

The best example—to show what is meant by knowledge and its consequent power—is those health and medical news on TV, Radio, and in the newspapers that are produced by experts of medical sciences. Their studies show that, for example, a specific kind of their medical product is useful to remove the wrinkles of the face. Here the TV channel or Radio station that broadcasts this program is institution, and the result of such news is discourse. The content of the researches done by the experts is knowledge. Consequently, people, who have already been brought up by that institution as good subjects and citizens, go and buy that product. Attempts and actions to go, find, and buy that specific medical product is called the discourse. The institution that presents such knowledge gains power to insert and impose its other pieces of knowledge on its audience, and finally to dominate its discourse among other discourses.

Thus, the institution produces knowledge, and this knowledge results in discourse because of the power of the institution. This power is, or, has already been, achieved by producing knowledge and creating discourses. The aim of the discourse is both to insert its own favorite kind of knowledge and to produce and reproduce power.

The ultimate goal of this mechanism is not, as the institution declares, to keep up people modernized, civilized, or healthy. The factual objective behind such a mechanism is rather to create good citizens that are subject to the aims and discourses of that institute. Therefore, modern man becomes an instrument not a goal for the
modernity discourses. Hence, Edward Said, influenced by Foucault, argues that:

The will to exercise dominant control in society and history has discovered a way to clothe, disguise, rarefy, and wrap itself systematically in the language of truth, discipline, rationality, utilitarian value, and knowledge. And this language, in its naturalness, authority, professionalism, assertiveness, and antitheoretical directness, Foucault has called discourse … The power of discourse is that it is at once the object of struggle and the tool by which the struggle is conducted. (44)

In other words, modern institutions not only centralize themselves but also deprive modern man of his individuality. They are present whenever he wants to think about his choices, job, fashion, way of thinking and behavior. That is why modern individual is referred to as ‘subject.’ It means that he is subject to modern discourses that decide for him, determine his choices and create his thought.

Having analyzed the mechanism and function of modernity discourses, Foucault criticized modernity for centralizing some discourses and marginalizing some other. The marginalized discourses, that are minority discourses, were not regarded as important discourses. Even historians of modernity did not mention them in their histories on modernity.

Hence Foucault not only criticized modernity but also attempted to re-write the history of modernity by de-centering the mains institutions of modernity and returning to the minority discourses that were almost forgotten by modernity’s different discourses. A glance at the title of his books would be illuminating here: The history of sexuality (1978), Madness and Civilization: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason (1967), Discipline and Punishment: The Birth of the Prison (1977).
Therefore, as the titles demonstrate, there is difference between the above books and any other books on history. Foucault’s histories of modernity are innovative in the sense they have been written based on the minority discourses. Different minority discourses, marginalized in modernity and centralized in Foucault’s works, are the discourses of the mad, the insane, the punished, the imprisoned, and the sexually heterogeneous men. As a result, Michel Foucault looked at modernity from a very different point of view. He looked at modernity from the view of minority groups, or, better to say, he wrote the history of modernity by centralizing the marginalized groups of modernity.

Minority groups of different social, medical, religious, and philosophical discourses of modernity have been forgotten in the historiography of the west. Foucault, on the contrary, tried to re-write the history of modernity based on a new methodology that, as he argued, gave birth to a “new history” (45). It is interesting to mention this “new history” is not based on other historical books. It is, however, based on a close reading of the power relations and discursive formation and practice of that historical phase that were usually manifested in non-historical books of that specific time.

Foucault’s works were influential in the emergence of a new critical school called New Historicism. This school attempts to re-write the history of the west not based on the facts provided by historians and modernity’s main and privileged discourses. It rather aims at creating a true history of modernity based on the discourse of minority groups. New Historicism looks for historical facts every where except historical books.

Having compared Michel Foucault’s theories on modernity discourses with Friedrich Nietzsche’s critical philosophy on modernity and its principles, one can come to this conclusion that
Michel Foucault, as mentioned above by David Lodge, remained a “Nietzschean” in his theoretical criticism of modernity. They both rejected the principles of modernity based on which man was deprived of his individuality and independence. Nietzsche was one of the first philosophers that expressed his critical approach to modernity, and Foucault was one of the first thinkers that theorized modernity’s shortcomings.

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, modern “freedom” meant for Nietzsche the opposite, that is to say, something that limited man. Nietzsche believed that modernity had brought negative consequences for modern man. Foucault, too, argues that modernity discourses have complete control over man. They decide for man, determine his way of life, and even influence his understanding.

It would be interesting to mention that both Nietzsche and Foucault were members of minority groups in their life. Not only in their ideas but also in their personal life they avoid being influenced by and considered as modernity’s dominant and central discourse. A quick glance at their biography will show such a characteristic explicitly.
Notes:

3. See the first chapter of the present thesis, pp. 54-9.
4. Nietzsche’s attitudes towards nature and its characteristics are sharply different from those of philosophers of Modernity. While there is always an attempt to separate man from the natural and ‘wild’ nature in the works of the philosophers of the seventeenth and eighteenth century, Friedrich Nietzsche is rather interested and involved in the creative and mystical power of nature.
13. Ibid., p.575.
14. Arthur Schopenhauer’s concept of ‘will’, Nietzsche’s criticism of it and Schopenhauer’s ideas on Buddhism have been mentioned in the first chapter of this thesis.
16. Ibid., p.588.
19. Ibid., p.91.
21. See Claude Levi-Strauss’ ideas on the mechanism of the function of the mind of man, discussed in the second chapter. Levi-Strauss believes that the mind of man, as a system with a structure, is based on the binary oppositions.
26. Ibid., p.471.
27. Ibid., pp. 522-3.
28. Ibid., p. 529.
33. Ibid., p.70.
35. Thus, Nietzsche’s criticism of Christianity and his admiration for Buddhism, discussed in the previous section of this study, should be seen in the context of Nietzsche’s criticism of Modernity that considers the western intellect as superior to eastern wisdom.
38. Nietzsche’s satirical and critical words concerning reason as thought of in modernity have been mentioned in the first chapter of this thesis.
39. See note 32 in the first chapter.
42. I have already discussed a detailed account of ideology in its Althusserian sense in my M.A. thesis presented to Tehran University in 2000. The thesis was awarded A level (96 from 100). According to Althusser’s definition ideology is divided into two kinds: ISA (Ideological State Apparatuses) and RSA (Repressive State Apparatuses). Power, in Foucault’s viewpoint, is like the first kind of ideology, which is ISA. It means power is here regarded to be productive not repressive.