Chapter Two:

The Limits of the Postmodern

Challenge to Mainstream Epistemology

This chapter begins my discussion of epistemology, and has three main objectives. The first is to offer an account of the epistemological justification seen in both of the competing epistemological positions in IR theory. Such accounts will satisfy the second objective, which is to provide a framework that can be carried over to chapter three, where the normative aspects of these accounts are examined to point out another contradiction in postmodernist positions. Finally, the third objective is to demonstrate that the postmodern challenge to mainstream epistemology is not justified on the grounds that the reasons offered do not actually refute mainstream epistemology. In the process of arguing this, I hope to show that another self-contradiction can be attributed to the postmodernists. This third objective is linked to the overall thesis project in three ways. First, it is the primary source of the thesis's broad objective of showing how postmodernism relies on mainstream assumptions, which is a self-contradiction. Second, it supports sub-hypothesis two, which is that the postmodern justification of knowledge rejects mainstream epistemology but ignores important epistemic principles such as cognitive functioning and deductive and inductive reasoning. Rather, it views knowledge as a discursive construct created in the interest of a powerful source. But the reliance on this assumption creates a self-contradiction in that it is itself an empirical statement. Finally, it offers direct support to the thesis's main hypothesis that the postmodern position's arguments imply contradictions.

In section one I will demonstrate that the mainstream epistemology in IR theory is best characterized as foundationalist. Foundationalism is a position that assumes an unspecified number of basic beliefs that provide the foundations for further beliefs. Logical principles provide the means to work from one belief to another. It will be recalled from the introduction of the thesis that these are the epistemic principles; here I integrate these into a conception of foundationalism that will give a fuller picture of mainstream epistemology.

A presentation of the power/knowledge argument of the postmodernists comprises section two. This argument follows the same general lines as seen in the previous chapter: its appearance in IR theory will be backed up by arguments taken from the wider body of postmodern philosophy. I contend that underlying (mainstream) knowledge claims is a power position used to construct these claims, in that an act of knowledge is an act of power. The next step is to turn against this power by showing that knowledge is contingent, limited, or framed—a method known variously as discourse analysis or deconstruction. Finally, discourse analysis will expose the reality covered by power, which is a liberating act that is all the time motivated by the politics of inclusion. Sections one and two will serve as groundwork for chapter three.

Section three contains the central arguments of this chapter. This first is a response to the postmodernists' power/knowledge argument. I will argue that, to begin with, power/knowledge assumes an argument already shown to be invalid. Once this is understood, there is a particular hole in the postmodernists' argument that may be addressed by this question: How *do* we know? In accounting for this, we soon see that the epistemic principles which make up justification are left untouched by postmodernist

arguments. In the course of arguing this it will be shown that discourse-creation arguments are rather employed to challenge mainstream justification, but these rely implicitly on a sort of mainstream epistemology—creating another self-contradiction for postmodern positions. Demonstrating this will allow us to move forward on several areas important to the thesis, which will be detailed in the conclusions to this chapter.

1. Mainstream IR Theory and Foundational Epistemology

In arguing that the mainstream epistemological position in IR theory is foundationalist, it seems that more postmodernists would agree with me than mainstreamers. IR postmodernists are fond of calling mainstream IR theory foundationalist. Jim George, for instance, claims foundationalist assumptions to be the core of mainstream IR.[1] These assumptions include "that there must be an objective reality 'out there,' that exists independently of us and has an essential quality that we can know via rational means."[2] While crude, these assumptions capture the sense of the epistemological position of the mainstream. Mainstreamers, on the other hand, rarely take the time to reflect upon these issues, and do not refer to themselves as foundationalist. Again, the postmodernists have pointed out a good reason why: foundationalist assumptions are simply taken for granted across the board. George Pappas has identified these assumptions as the basic minimum of any empiricist epistemology, which certainly includes mainstream IR.[3]

But accepting the postmodernists' points this far does not necessarily constitute a good reason for believing that the mainstream epistemological position actually *is*

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[1] Jim George, *Discourses of Global Politics: A Critical (Re)Introduction to International Relations* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 1994), 49.
[2] George, *Discourses of Global Politics,* 49.
[3] George Pappas, "Problem of the External World," in *A Companion to Epistemology*, eds. Jonathan Dancy and Ernest Sosa (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1993), 381.

foundationalist. For one thing, the assumptions listed above are often attributed to the mainstream in order to point out the flaws inherent in doing so. Also, just because the assumptions are simply taken for granted is no proof that they are right (or wrong), and such a characterization is correct (or incorrect). These reasons lead me to believe that in order for a good case to be made for the mainstream being foundationalist, the basic assumptions of a foundationalist position from contemporary epistemology must be compared to a number of general epistemological assumptions taken from the mainstream. In this section I attempt to do just this.

The first main assumption in a foundationalist position is that there is type of justification for beliefs (or knowledge) to be inferentially drawn from other beliefs (or knowledge): i.e., the justified status confers justification upon further beliefs. This assumption is akin to the similar principle for inferences from good premises to sound conclusions—garbage in, garbage out, truth in, and truth out—and there is (apparently) little to say against it.[4] It may be pointed out that it does beg the question of what is justification, and that objection is valid. This assumption's main purpose is to establish that there exists a type of inferential justification, which is worked into the next main assumption of foundationalism: that there are a certain beliefs that are non-inferentially justified that serve as a foundation for *all* epistemic justification.[5] To put all of this another way, foundationalists begin from the observation that we can justify beliefs from other justified beliefs in order to make the argument that the majority of our beliefs come from *un*justified beliefs. It seems like there is something wrong with this position.

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[4] Richard Fumerton, *Epistemology* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing Ltd., 2006), 38-9.
[5] Fumerton, *Epistemology,* 37.

The oddness is due mainly to the nature of philosophical problems. That is, if the foundationalist's position was simply the first main assumption, it could be asked how the first belief was justified. Another justified belief could be brought forth as evidence, but it is obvious that the same challenge could be put to this one, *ad infinitum*. In other words, there is an epistemic regress involved in this assumption, in that for *every* belief brought forth as evidence for the previous one, *its justification could possibly be demanded.* The foundationalist recognizes this, and answers that the regress is mainly a formal possibility argument and that within this regress there is a point where it plausibly stops: the non-inferential beliefs.[6] A non-controversial definition of this category of belief is one that "is sufficiently secure from error that its claim to be justified is very plausible, yet it seems clear that such a belief is not supported by other beliefs."[7] So the non-inferential beliefs that form the foundation are the most important starting points for a foundationalist position, and it would be worth looking at them with a little more detail before showing how these are represented in the mainstream epistemological position.

In the introduction of the thesis I mentioned an epistemic principle called the "generation principle," which is when "a justified belief [is generated] on the basis of something that is not itself a belief but rather a perceptual state."[8] I can now connect this perceptual state to the non-inferential foundation of beliefs in the sense that a perceptual state involves a "'built-in'…awareness of its own distinctive sort of content, viz. sensory or experiential content."[9] To clarify this, foundationalists count the awareness of perceptual states with sensory or experiential content (under ideal conditions, e.g.,

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[6] Fumerton, *Epistemology,* 42.
[7] Michael R. Depaul, "Preface," in *Resurrecting Old-Fashioned Foundationalism,* ed. Michael R. Depaul (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2001), ix.
[8] Paul Boghossian, *Fear of Knowledge: Against Relativism and Constructivism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 65.
[9] Laurence BonJour, "Foundationalism and the External World," *Noûs* 33, S13 (October 1999): 233.

sufficient light, no drugs or evil genies involved) as providing the most primary source of justification. That is, given a perceptual experience, conscious awareness of the experiential content is enough to provide a foundation to justify beliefs without the need to refer to other beliefs. Very roughly, this is a statement of the empiricism that says, "that basic or foundational beliefs are justified by appeal to *experience*."[10] In a basic sense, this is what the foundationalist has in mind when speaking of non-inferential beliefs.

In IR theory, a precise account of non-inferential beliefs is not generally offered, but this is not to say that it is not accounted for. On the contrary, in a recent discussion involving foundational beliefs, Vasquez defends a view of non-inferential beliefs similar to the one just sketched. He argues that although concepts influence the beliefs and theories we have of the world, "this does not mean that no observations…existed before the theory. Theories and concepts often follow observations and are meant to explain or account for a pattern."[11] Vasquez's view here implies that there is a specific sort of perceptual experience—observation—which is prior to further beliefs, theories, or concepts. This priority is necessary in the sense that observation can exist independently of concepts and beliefs, but not vice versa.

Similarly, Michael Nicholson has recently defended an account of non-inferential beliefs based on observation. He defends "the centrality of empirical propositions, that is, propositions where the reasons for believing them are grounded in observation."[12] These observations may include many existing social "things" which are the content of those

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[10] BonJour, "Foundationalism and the External World," 230.
[11] John A. Vasquez, "The Post-Positivist Debate: Reconstructing Scientific Enquiry and International Relations Theory after Enlightenment's Fall," in *International Relations Theory Today,* eds. Ken Booth and Steve Smith (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1995), 226.
[12] Michael Nicholson, "The Continued Significance of Positivism?" in *International Theory: Positivism and Beyond,* eds. Steve Smith, Ken Booth, and Marysia Zalewski (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 131.

experiences, the "common understanding" of which may be understood inter-subjectively.[13] His point in arguing for this is that, while many of the things IR theorists observe may be social constructs, which does not force the act of observation to be guided by these constructs. Like Vasquez, Nicholson places a priority of a non-inferential basis for further theory and belief formation. How does this relate to the second assumption, that of inferential justification? I will now take a closer look at this concept before showing how each IR theorist understands it.

Inferential justification was also mentioned in the introduction to the thesis under the epistemic principle of "belief transmission." This was understood as "principles that prescribe how to move from some justified beliefs to other justified beliefs."[14] *Prima facie* this would seem to not fit with the view of foundationalism I have been describing, since foundationalism's main assumption is that our most basic beliefs are, in a sense, unjustified. Nevertheless, it should by now be clear that those basic beliefs imply a different sort of justification, and that belief transmission principles are intended to provide justification to *non-foundational* beliefs. So what are these principles? The way forward is to return to the experiential content of the foundational belief, and to observe that because it has content, it is possible to *describe that content with a proposition.*[15] This is known as a belief's propositional content, and serves to make it possible that that belief can now stand in logical relations to other, further beliefs. That is to say, given its propositional content, deductive and inductive inferences can be drawn, and if the inferences are valid, they are justified. Again, this appeals to basic principles of logical

[13] Nicholson, "The Continued Significance of Positivism," 131.
[14] Boghossian, *Fear of Knowledge,* 65.
[15] BonJour, "Foundationalism and the External World," 232.

inference, and makes this assumption of foundationalism one that is accepted more easily than the first.

This assumption is also taken up by the mainstream epistemological position. Vasquez's views above are coupled with his belief that theorists are interested in relations between facts where observation is guided by rules and norms that "are applied to make appraisals in a rigorous manner that limits the intrusion of personal preferences."[16] These rules and norms are taken to be the deductive inferences common to science. Nicholson is more explicit, and argues that if theory is to be true, "all propositions are confirmed either by direct observation or by logical deduction from those which are so confirmed."[17] In the brief way I have been treating it, Nicholson has summed up foundationalism. Furthermore, it must be mentioned that both Vasquez and Nicholson write from a broad, mainstream position. Each of their views is derived from articles defending the mainstream from various challenges, so I believe that is a good reason to assume that the foundationalist assumptions they defend are generalizable to any mainstream view that implies empiricism. With this sketch of the mainstream completed, I will now turn to postmodernism and the power/knowledge challenge.

2. Postmodernism and Power/Knowledge.

This section offers an account of the power/knowledge argument used by postmodernist IR theorists. This argument is particular to those who write from "subversive" postmodern positions. Also, it is necessary to point out that this argument comprises the part of the postmodern challenge which deals with knowledge.

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[16] Vasquez, "The Post-Positivist Debate," 226.
[17] Nicholson, "The Continued Significance of Positivism," 132-3.

Unlike the mainstream epistemological position, the postmodernists are explicit in putting forward the power/knowledge argument: i.e., there is no difference between their position and that taken from (subversive) postmodernism as a whole. Their position should be seen, then, in direct opposition to the mainstream. Indeed, the two main assumptions of foundationalist epistemology are suspect from the start: postmodernists are "suspicious" of the logic used in inferential justification, and any foundations with which to start are "philosophical illusions."[18] The reasons behind these should become clearer as we go along. With that in mind, I will begin by reviewing the two major concepts involved, and then continue with additional concepts, and the application of these to mainstream epistemology.

The two main concepts at the base of power/knowledge were discussed in chapter one, and these are power and discourse. These concepts can be wielded in either a repressive or liberating sense, which will become obvious as I proceed. I will begin with the repressive sense. Power, it was argued, is that which controls a discourse. This had discursive control implications, meaning that power regulates the discourse in a given area; this also implied bio-power, in the sense of control over individuals, because individuals are discursively created. Here I would like to expand upon this view of power to include power as the *creator* of discourses. Following Foucault, who says of the creation of the Western soul, "on this reality reference, various concepts have been constructed and domains of analysis carved out…on it have been built scientific techniques and discourses."[19] What Foucault is pointing out adds another dimension to the previous discussions of discursive control and bio-power, although I will only focus

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[18] George, *Discourses of Global Politics,* 31.
[19] Michel Foucault, "The Body of the Condemned," in *The Foucault Reader,* ed. Paul Rabinow (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984)*,* 175.

on the former. In terms of discursive control, the range of creation is only limited by the needs of the power holder. Discourse, understood as discussed before, then becomes more widespread. As Foucault notes, it becomes,

> [a] multiplicity of often minor processes, of different origin and scattered location, which overlap, repeat, or imitate one another, support one another, distinguish themselves from one another according to their domain of application, converge, and gradually produce the blueprint of a general method.[20]

This is directly related "to who is speaking, his position of power, [and] the institutional context in which he happens to be situated."[21] Discourse takes on the added property of being even more available to the working of power, and it is to this new understanding that I will begin discussing Foucault's idea of knowledge.

Foucault believes knowledge to be inseparable from power—explained by his coined concept of power/knowledge. To begin with, discourse becomes the medium of knowledge and power in that knowledge is *produced* by a discourse, and within a discourse, subject to the same rules of discursive control by power.

> There is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time power relations…it is not the activity of the subject of knowledge that produces a corpus of knowledge…but power/ knowledge, the processes and struggles that traverse it and of which it is made up, that determines the forms and possible domains of knowledge.[22]

This addition of knowledge throws new light on previous examples this thesis has borrowed from Foucault in that we can begin to see their development as *knowable*

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[20] Michel Foucault, "Docile Bodies," in *The Foucault Reader,* ed. Paul Rabinow (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984)*,* 182.
[21] Foucault, *A Postmodern Reader,* 340.
[22] Foucault, "The Body of the Condemned," 175.

concepts as the discursive control progressed around them. Furthermore, as Foucault makes obvious, there is a very strong resemblance between power/knowledge and reality. Case in point, he goes so far as to say, "[i]n fact, power produces…the individual and the knowledge that may be gained of him belong to this production."[23] This may be taken as referring to the reality-creating argument covered in chapter one, *and* to the fact that power/knowledge is created in the same way. Knowledge, like reality, is created, and this is always understood as an act of power.

Foucault's power/knowledge arguments have become the basis of widespread challenges to mainstream IR, in two senses. In the first sense, what can best be called "common knowledge" is seen as a "fiction which has been elevated to a privileged truth in the Western discourse," because there is a "scepticism of monological answers, totalizing theories, and disciplinary ideologies posing as natural, self-evident truths."[24] For example, the common social entities that Nicholson takes for granted above are problematized as being just another fiction. This example can be multiplied time and again until the entire store of facts, whatever they may be, is depleted. While this is alarming enough, it is the second sense which strikes a harder blow to mainstream IR theory, especially the mainstream epistemological position.

Beginning from Foucault's discourse creation argument, IR postmodernists extend it to include the practices which grow out of a discourse, viz. mainstream foundational justification. George argues that this (including its assumptions) is derived from a power position and as a consequence has,

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[23] Michel Foucault, "The Means of Correct Training," in *The Foucault Reader,* ed. Paul Rabinow (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984)*,* 205.
[24] James Der Derian, "Introducing Philosophical Traditions in International Relations," *Millenium: Journal of International Studies* 17 (June 1988): 192.

often brutally, invoked its strategies of control, its discipline, its unified frame of reference about the good life, its singular reality, its insistence on sovereignty…It is in this quest—to impose a singular, foundational reality upon miscreants and unbelievers—that the post-Enlightenment "will to knowledge" has quite literally become the "will to power."[25]

Put in this light, foundationalism seems repressive indeed. Similarly, the discourse creation argument is used to dismiss important assumptions out of hand. In this vein, Smith has recently said,

there is no view from nowhere…no neutral policy analysis, no "truth" to speak to power. Equally there is no neutral academia, no secure space protected by the castle walls of epistemological foundationalism. Instead, all academic activity involves working within the context of power, at the nexus of the power/knowledge relationship.[26]

Smith's condemnations rely on the reasoning that because these important mainstream concepts have grown from a power position, their validity is suspect. It is this sense that the power/knowledge argument has the greatest impact on the mainstream epistemological position. Taking on board just a few concepts, the postmodernists have dealt a damaging blow to their most cherished assumptions.

Now it was mentioned above that discourse and power are repressive as well as liberating. Up to this point we have seen how knowledge is created, maintained, and imposed. However, as will be recalled from the last chapter, the discourse and power can be turned around to be used against power. Foucault observes that "[d]iscourse transmits and produces power; it reinforces it, but also undermines and exposes it, renders it fragile

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[25] George, *Discourses of Global Politics,* 31.
[26] Steve Smith, "International Relations and International Relations: The Links between Theory and Practice in World Politics," 237.

and makes it possible to thwart it."[27] In other words, if one is repressed by power, power can be turned on the repressor. In other cases, power and power practices are to be abandoned. Foucault says that "perhaps…we should abandon a whole tradition that allows us to imagine that knowledge can exist only where the power relations are suspended and that knowledge can develop only outside its injunctions, its demands, and its interests."[28] Such an attitude is clearly seen in Smith's work. This is a liberating action, and is motivated by the politics of inclusion, mentioned in the last chapter as being "marked by a view of the human world as irreducibly and irrevocably pluralistic, split into a multiple of sovereign units and sites of authority, with no horizontal or vertical order."[29] So, the rationale goes that if a particular discourse becomes too exclusionary, or perhaps oppressive, this must be exposed by the same means, because it is just by this means that it has been constructed and extended.

This idea has not gone unnoticed in IR postmodernism. George calls the above practice 'discourse analysis' and says that

> [a] major task for postmodernist scholars…is to interrogate the conditions of knowledge *as* power. Discourse analysis seeks, in this way, to explain how power is constituted and how its premises and givens are replicated at all levels of society and to reveal its exclusionary practices in order to create space for critical thought and action.[30]

Work in this vein is, in the rather lofty words of Der Derian, meant to "revalorise a dialogical approach, recognizing the polyvalent, multicultural, and stratified nature of international relations."[31] This becomes possible due to the fact of the increasingly

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[27] Foucault, *A Postmodern Reader,* 340.
[28] Foucault, "The Body of the Condemned," 175.
[29] Jarvis, *International Relations and the Challenge of Postmodernism,* 75.
[30] George, *Discourses of Global Politics,* 30.
[31] Der Derian, "Introducing Philosophical Traditions in International Relations," 192.

strengthened discursive power this position enjoys, as well as the subsequent weakening of the mainstream position. Furthermore, it is implied that the situation of a strengthened postmodernism and weakened mainstream will reverse the disciplinary hold the mainstream employs, George's goal that much more attainable. In any case, postmodernism seeks to liberate the many caught within the mainstream's discursive control.

Now sections one and two of this chapter have provided the groundwork for this chapter's main arguments. We have seen that the postmodernists challenge mainstream knowledge *and* justification. I can now argue that the arguments given do not justify such a challenge, and imply a contradiction.

3. The Limits of Power/Knowledge

It is now time to take a closer look at the power/knowledge argument to demonstrate that it does not accomplish what postmodern IR theorists claim that it does: that "its central tenet is one which seeks nothing less that the overthrow of virtually all preceding positions on epistemology."[32] Since the foundationalist epistemology I (and the postmodernists themselves) have attributed to the mainstream is clearly implied here, that would mean that for the mainstream position to overthrown, the assumptions it rests on would have to be shown to be completely invalid. Here I intend to show that they do not achieve this task, although the illusion is created that they do.

The first step in this argument is to identify what the postmodernists achieve with their argument. The most important aspect of what the postmodernists argue is that discourses and knowledge are created by power interests. It must be immediately noticed

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[32] Steve Smith, "Positivism and Beyond," in *International Theory: Positivism and Beyond,* eds. Steve Smith, Ken Booth, and Marysia Zalewski (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 29.

that this presupposes an argument already shown to be invalid. The way knowledge is used by the postmodernists implies that it is created in much the same way reality is. In fact, when Foucault argues that it is "power/ knowledge, the processes and struggles that traverse it and of which it is made up, that determines the forms and possible domains of knowledge,"[33] it is hard to separate this argument from the one developed in the last chapter. He makes it seem as if to be known is to be created to be known, which then runs into the same sort of challenge: if one can create X to be known, it is possible that not-X can be created simultaneously, which is a contradiction. The doubt of X's provenance pushes us beyond discourse to confront this fact. In the sense that power/knowledge challenges the common knowledge of IR, that threat is neutralized because we can see that it supposes an invalid argument for its basis.

Next, the fact that discourse is created in the repressive sense gets us closer to the arguments that postmodernists use to try to refute foundationalism. It was shown earlier that power creates discourses, which implies that the further development of this discourse by discursive control is also controlled by power. This fact is important to recognize because it is the basis for understanding the sense in which the challenges on mainstream justification are carried out. For example, to begin with, epistemology is established as a discourse created by power. The development of its central concerns is traced throughout the Western tradition, showing how other important questions, etc. have been ignored. Next, its characteristics are identified, which in this case are the assumptions of non-inferential foundations and logical inferences. These are seen as outgrowths of this discourse, and as being guilty of the same injustices that were nicely illustrated by George earlier in this chapter. Finally, once this status has been established,

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[33] Foucault, "The Body of the Condemned," 175.

it is just a matter of flatly denying the validity of the discourse, and its developments, which was Smith's position above. In this way we can see the progression of the arguments into the supposed refutation of foundationalism, but this is not successful due in part to an inconsistency in the postmodern position. In addition, this uncovers another way in which the postmodern position contradicts itself. I will treat the inconsistency first, and the contradiction after this.

On one hand, postmodernists use the above argument of discourse creation to deny the assumptions of foundationalism. Yet in no specific sense do they give reasons for why these assumptions are mistaken, or are unable to justify knowledge, etc. The argument relies, rather, on the presumed validity of denying instances where discourse and discursive practices are power created and maintained. However, according to the related power/knowledge argument, there is not even a knowing subject involved in the creation of knowledge. It will be remembered that, according to Foucault, "it is not the activity of the subject of knowledge that produces a corpus of knowledge,"[34] meaning that, in a very important way, *postmodernist arguments are not even aimed at any specific justification, because justification is not even considered necessary for knowledge.* In other words, because postmodernists do not even consider a knowing subject, they cannot be taken to offer particular reasons against the various cognitive/logical elements that make up foundationalism. This is a very serious inconsistency in their position, because as I have shown, postmodernists make it a point to refute the assumptions involved in mainstream epistemic justification. This means that, if the discourse-creating element is dropped, and power/knowledge is used as a challenge against the mainstream position, because power/knowledge involves no knowing subject,

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[34] Foucault, "The Body of the Condemned," 175.

it offers *no* arguments against foundationalist justification, and the mainstream position is unaffected.

However, there is a much more serious implication. I will take postmodernists to still offer a challenge against the mainstream position, but this time from the discourse-creation argument. This argument should be very clear by now, but I want to examine an assumption that is usually taken for granted by the postmodernists. That assumption is the repressive effect of a certain discourse, which can be, according to George, quite brutal. I will not question the validity of that assumption so much as I will point out *how* one could come to that conclusion. When there is the reliance on the discourse creating argument, there is a reliance on, if not foundationalism, some sort of empiricism in order to support the taken-for- granted assumption of the repressiveness of discursive control. Such an observation does not come from nowhere. That implies that, when this taken-for-granted assumption is used, the validity of the discourse creation argument rests on the very type of epistemology that it seeks to overthrow. And since the discourse creation *is* a major concept in the postmodern position, the postmodernists have contradicted themselves in another way.

It could be objected that the repressive factor is not necessary to the argument, since its main point is to spell out how discourse and discursive control is created and maintained. Nevertheless, in all that we have seen, the most important justification for this has been to point out *how power represses*. That is, in a very important sense, where this argument gains its interest, and defines how it is used, especially when it becomes the basis for such accepted practices such as discourse analysis. So while it may not be necessary to showing *how* discourses are created, it is necessary to show the negative

effects of discourse creation, which implies an empirical observation. So in a way, the postmodernists are refuting mainstream epistemology by relying on it, which is a contradiction. However, their argument would not be much without this reliance, so the contradiction must stay, and again, the main assumptions involved in mainstream justification are unaffected, meaning that in another sense the postmodern arguments fail in their challenge.

4. Conclusions

Section three was an important one for this chapter. It presented two main arguments: one meant to refute the validity of the postmodern challenge; and one to show another self-contradiction hidden within the postmodern position. The reasons showing how power/knowledge does not refute the main assumptions in mainstream justification reveal the limitations of the postmodern challenge to mainstream epistemology. This is a major development in the sense that it offers major support to one of the most important objectives of the thesis in two ways. First, in the way that we understand better the postmodern challenge; and second, in the way that its limitations are revealed. This first argument is also related to the overall thesis in other ways. It lends direct support to sub-hypothesis two, which is the basis for sub-hypothesis three, which is, roughly, that postmodern epistemology is similar to mainstream epistemology in the sense that it follows the same normative pattern (and elaborating upon the reasoning involved) this creates another contradiction for the postmodernist position which is the subject matter of chapter three.

The second argument, was that within the reasons offered for postmodern discourse-creation—which is given as the principle reason for refuting mainstream justification—a self-contradiction is involved in the sense that this relies on an empirical observation for its validity. The demonstration of this contradiction can be seen as direct support for the thesis's main hypothesis that the postmodern epistemological position implies self-contradictions. When these contradictions are accounted for, and it is noticed that postmodernism is offered as an alternative to mainstream epistemology, it becomes much more suspect than it makes its rival out to be. In other words, in the end it may not be a worthwhile alternative at all.