Domination, Recognition, and Discursive Control

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At the current stage of the scholarship concerned with the sociopolitical issues involved in how we share knowledge and make ourselves heard in knowledge-producing spaces, there has been increased attention directed at how institutional acknowledgment and integration can play a role in better shaping these spaces. The question of whether it is possible to think of adequate ways of sharing knowledge under the weight of socio-epistemic pathologies affecting our daily lives, such as epistemic injustices, structural ignorance, epistemic oppression, and exploitation, is central if we want to envision a path out of these pathologies.

One attempt to address this question is of note here and will be engaged with throughout the paper. It is Amandine Catala's (2015) discussion of hermeneutical domination, a type of epistemic injustice that affects the way individuals and groups make their contribution to institutionalized epistemic spaces, not because of knowledge or interpretive gaps on the part of the agent, but because of institutional power imbalance within these spaces. In Catala's view, hermeneutical domination is the injustice of dismissing a political minority group's epistemic contribution to the production of appropriate public discourse because of the lack of proper trust in deliberative spaces, making the minority group vulnerable to inadequate, but dominating and monopolized discourse on a particular social practice or experience. The way out of such a scenario, according to Catala, will involve a commitment to the basic requirements of deliberative democracy. She centers her account both on the potentially structural nature of epistemic injustices and on the institutional remedies to such pathologies.

In this paper, I want to engage with Catala's account via the recently highlighted connections between socio-epistemic problems and their potential origin in issues of recognition. Since the talk of epistemic injustices and domination, as we will see, revolves ostensibly around the failures to acknowledge the

rational credentials and agencies of epistemic subjects, there's something to be said about the ways that these failures are, in fact, failures of recognition that entail a negation of relevant normative features of subjects, affecting how they are seen and how they see themselves, both epistemically and socially.

Building on the recent literature on this debate, I want to examine the connections between the talk of epistemic injustice as domination and the debate concerning the recognitive expectations we have as members of epistemic communities. In the first section, I want to explore Catala's formulation of hermeneutical domination and assess if it fits a recognitive model of the moral responsibilities we have towards other epistemic agents. I will argue that epistemic domination has its roots in failures of recognition. These failures, as we'll see, affect the agent's freedom and autonomy as a rational enquirer. Thus, the way out of them will need to involve non-domination in the form of recognition and discursive control, something that I will argue for in the second section of the paper. In the third and final section, I want to engage with a possible global version of hermeneutical domination that challenges the efficacy of local recognition and discursive control. Institutional remedies to this global type of epistemic injustice might not be able to account for the extent to which it affects our shared space of reasons with an overarching dominating power. To deal with the structural and institutional aspects of epistemic injustices and to secure non-domination and proper recognition, then, we'll have to go beyond the moderate, intra-institutional measures of deliberative democracy and propose radical measures to secure freedom and hermeneutical non-domination.

1.   Hermeneutical domination as a failure of recognition

Following Miranda Fricker's (2007) efforts in conceptualizing some of the failures of our epistemic practices in terms of epistemic injustices, much has been said about how such failures or injustices have their origin in or are maintained through our basic institutional arrangements (Anderson 2012; Bohman 2012). How we organize our institutional lives, especially in educational and deliberative spaces, might directly impact the fairness of their epistemic outcomes. And might be more or less conducive to "indignities" (Congdon 2017: 243) that affect marginalized groups' and individuals' attempts to offer their epistemic contributions. Amandine Catala has identified one of such indignities that might affect people's ability to contribute to a society's pool

of hermeneutical resources, particularly by offering socially situated under-standings of dynamics of oppression, exploitation, injustice, violence, etc. What Catala calls hermeneutical domination is a type of epistemic injustice that excludes via the imbalance of political power in institutional settings.

With this concept, Catala adds to Fricker's basic notions of testimonial in-justice and hermeneutical injustice and connects these injustices to the ways political power can present itself as epistemic power of domination that disen-franchises marginalized groups in their attempts to contribute to the under-standing of a particular social practice or experience while leaving them vul-nerable to the monopolized and imposed understandings of it. Hermeneutical domination, in her view, occurs through the combination of testimonial and hermeneutical injustices in an institutional setting. Someone suffers a testi-monial injustice if one is unable to credibly testify on some particular matter due to some negative affect that the hearer or hearers might have on one's so-cial identity (Fricker 2007: 1). A person who suffers this kind of injustice suffers a lack of acknowledgment of their competence or authority as an epistemic agent and, as a consequence of this, ends up with their epistemic standing compromised in their attempts to share knowledge in situations of unbalanced social and political power.

A potential and very likely outcome of such exclusion comes in the form of limited participation in the production of a society's general epistemic re-sources, including those that are central to the intelligibility of people's expe-rience as members of socially marginalized groups. To the extent that some of their experiences remain unknown or not properly understood, this person is suffering what Fricker calls a hermeneutical injustice (Fricker 2007: 1). In a complex sociopolitical context, both injustices will most likely work in tandem, in a self-perpetuating vicious loop. Those who suffer testimonial injustices are likely to be the same ones to be marginalized from meaning-making practices, and once these practices are exclusionary, they'll tend to perpetuate the opac-ity of testimonial injustices by failing to come up with the epistemic resources to conceptualize them and the tools to address them properly.

Catala innovates by arguing for another level of injustice, one not con-sidered by Fricker, that poses a great threat to some groups' attempts to have their hermeneutical contributions taken into account. The "differential levels of credibility and intelligibility [of] individuals based on their membership in different social groups" (Catala 2015: 424), which describe cases of testimonial injustices and hermeneutical injustices, respectively, prevent marginalized groups from having an equal footing in the way collective discourses on par-

ticular social practices are produced and shared, which make them subject to imposed discourses on said practices, in such a way that it is almost impossible for them to effectively contest to the wrong and wrongful picture of the practice. (Catala 2015: 429) Thus, by being forcibly – sometimes even by the force of law and violence (Santos 2021: 117) – subjected to monopolized understandings of these practices, this marginalized group is hermeneutically dominated by hegemonic sectors of society and their dominant epistemic frameworks.

It will be helpful to introduce a concrete example of how marginalized groups can be hermeneutically dominated, both to illustrate Catala's point and to allow us to see further theoretical upshots in terms of the debate on the notions of recognition and social visibility, which will be addressed in section 2. Consider the following example[1]. A popular politician ascends to power, partially because of his strong anti-LGBTQ+ rhetoric. Both during his campaign for office and his term, he attempts to paint LGBTQ activists and researchers on topics related to LGBTQ rights as morally deviant and as posing some danger to young children and society as a whole, suggesting that they want to impose what he sees as deviant and promiscuous education upon children – he calls this a "gender ideology". Once in power, not only does this politician continue with the same rhetoric, but also supports and proposes laws that make it illegal to teach anything that challenges deep-seated religious commitments on gender and sexuality in this society. He even suggests that his supporters should interrupt classes, record teachers, and, if necessary, use violence to "save our children" from those he sees as degenerates. In such a scenario, defending LGBTQ+ people's and serious gender scholars' perspectives on these issues becomes more and more dangerous, with the threat of physical and institutional violence looming over whoever attempts to question traditional values in that society.

I think that this example expresses a high-stakes case of hermeneutical domination. But, and this will be important later on, although possibly widespread and a product of overarching ideology, it is related specifically to a particular discourse and targeted to a select group of people. It relates to discourse on gender, and it affects specifically people who have either first-hand or scholarly authority (or who are allies) on the relevant issues. The identity of the speaker, the content of their testimony, and, sometimes, their expressive style make them vulnerable to the three types of injustices discussed so far. They can suffer testimonial injustice when testifying on gender issues, by

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1   I first introduced this example in Santos 2021: 116.

having their credibility deflated to below the minimum threshold. They can also suffer hermeneutical injustice because of the systematic rejection they might suffer on the testimonial level, which can preclude their contribution to the production and revision of that society's epistemic resources.

And, more importantly, they are victims of hermeneutical domination to the extent that even when they have valuable contributions to make to the collective hermeneutical pool on the debate on gender, their contribution is blocked, sometimes by institutional measures, through the threat of violence or via their insufficient participation on knowledge and meaning-producing spaces, given the tendency to political ostracism and segregation imposed by the hegemonic powers that be. So, this case seems to fit well with Catala's account of hermeneutical domination[2].

All the cases that Catala presents in her paper seem to revolve around similar aspects of this case. They involve the exercise of political power to limit marginalized groups' and individuals' movements in social-epistemic spaces. In most of her original cases, this is expressed in deliberative impasses concerning a particular practice or social experience. In the example above, we can cash this limitation in the imposed restriction on the institutional practices of LGBTQ+ people and/or competent researchers on LGBTQ+ issues of making sense of, and educating others on, the material reality and experiences of these marginalized groups. They are limited in their discursive power under the weight of dominant institutional discourse on gender and sexuality, and under the threat of institutional sanctions and potential violence.

As it was gestured before, the recent discussion on how recognition theories can help us understand how someone can be harmed in their rational agency might be of great help to us in our attempt to account for the moral harms inflicted upon those who suffer epistemic injustices and for the normative demands to correct those. I think that both the epistemological expansion of Axel Honneth's theory of recognition and new Hegelian accounts of the ethical character of the "knower" will also help us identify what is wrong with the case of hermeneutical domination we've just discussed.

A current theme in this recent literature concerns the importance of social mediation when we interact with other people in our daily epistemic practices. (Giladi 2018, 2022; Congdon, 2017, 2018) Knowledge practices, in these views, are directly conformed by social mediation in the sense that it is through this mediation, and its social and political contents, that individuals and groups

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2   See Santos 2021 for a longer treatment of this idea.

are afforded authority, cognitive environments are established, cognitive resources are distributed, and epistemic power is consolidated. Epistemic injustices, then, would involve one or more instances of inadequate social mediation in the space of reasons.[3]. Thus, some persons' or groups' very statuses as rational participants in epistemic practices are products of the workings of this social mediation.

This is a Hegelian assumption that drives some of the work in accommodating the character and normativity of our epistemic lives in terms of relations of recognition. Since "Hegelian agency starts from the insight that we are always already part of a social community, and thus subject to a range of discursive, social and cultural norms and practices" (Schuppert 2013: 897), these accounts draw from Hegel and other recognition theorists in their attempt to diagnose "epistemic injustice as a social pathology" (Giladi 2017: 1) and to offer a view of the normativity involved in acknowledging one as having relevant statuses concerning knowledge-production and sharing in a community.

Matthew Congdon (2017, 2018) offers us an interesting incursion into this relation. He analyses epistemic injustices in terms of the violation of basic recognitive expectations that should guide this social mediation[4]. Congdon is interested in uncovering the "deeper indignity at work" (Congdon 2017: 243) when someone suffers an epistemic injustice. This indignity, he argues, comes in the form of the denial of social validation demanded by the very concept of a "knower". To call someone a "knower" is to position this person in the space of reasons in a qualified way, since such act "(i) ascribes agency to its target and (ii) situates that agency within social practices of giving and asking for reasons." (Congdon 2018: 4) Thus, to be a knower is to be expected to perform knowledge-related tasks rationally, responsibly and reciprocally.

The normativity of 'knower' implies its ethical dimension in two ways. On the one hand, to *regard oneself* as a knower is to see oneself as possessing "certain normative powers and responsibilities in the context of practices of justification and warrant" (Congdon 2018: 6), it is to regard oneself as fit to perform the relevant knowledge-related tasks and to value oneself for being able to do so. It is, in Congdon's account, to have "a distinctive sort of positive self-relation" (Congdon 2018: 6), one that merits special ethical treatment reserved for those who are active members of epistemic communities. In addition to that, to *regard someone else* as a knower is to perceive this person as both being in a

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3   More on that idea of the "space of reasons" in what follows.
4   Not his term.

position to perform the relevant knowledge-related tasks and being criticized for their performance, but also to see them as having this positive self-relation.

Alternatively, we could say that a knower is a species of rational agent in the sense that the knower is capable of reason-giving and of acknowledging others in their normative features, especially in their features as rational agents or reason-giving actors (Schuppert 2013: 898).

Now, given this normative picture of the "knower", how can we cash out our responsibilities towards knowers? Congdon addresses this by offering a re-tooling of traditional Hegelian recognition theory. In this theory, at least in its more popular version, that advanced by Axel Honneth (1996, 2007), to recognize someone is both to acknowledge this person as having relevant normative status and also to act accordingly upon such acknowledgment in a way that socially validates the person's status. (Congdon 2018: 8) Here, the possibility of having a positive self-relation is directly dependent on whether one is part of a "developmental process of socialization whereby others confer recognition of their worth and social standing through affirmative expressive gestures and acts" (Honneth 2001: 115; Congdon 2018: 8). So, in this picture, rational agency requires mutual recognition (Schuppert 2013: 896). To regard oneself as a knower involves having normative expectations of proper ethical treatment, in the sense that one's epistemic authority should be perceived, and such perception should lead to proper action that acknowledges such status. The absence of actions of this sort, or the presence of actions that violate this status, is equivalent to the denial of proper recognition and can lead to moral and epistemic injury. Paul Giladi puts it similarly when he talks about intersubjective recognition as a process "identical to the journey of self-realization as a social and rational agent". (Giladi 2017: 4) The mutuality of recognition, then, is part of the Hegelian picture being sought by these accounts. It intends to express the aspects of social mediation, the socio-relational mechanisms that give rise to agency, rationality, autonomy, etc. (Schuppert 2013: 898), not only from an external but also from an internal perspective.

Thus, to regard one as a knower is to confer on this person a particular status as rational enquirer (Giladi 2017: 5), one that implies a set of normative expectations, be that in terms of evidence-gathering, testimonial competence, reason-giving, and perhaps even knowledge-communication clarity and accuracy.

Epistemic injustices, then, are ways of denying that an agent or a group can be expected to attend to these expectations; it is, as Giladi puts it, a way of robbing them of the status of rational enquires, of robbing their "rightful

place as someone moving in the space of reasons" (Giladi 2017: 6). They do that when they violate one or more of what, according to contemporary recognition theorists, are the three basic recognitive expectations that someone, in their attempt to move within the shared space of reasons, has towards one's interlocutors. To be a knower is to have one's needs or particularities, one's particular competence, and standing as bearing general knowledge-related abilities acknowledged. When one doesn't have these features acknowledged, according to Congdon, one suffers instances of epistemic neglect, epistemic disesteem, and epistemic disrespect, respectively. (Congdon 2018: 15)

Love (standing here as the opposite of neglect), respect, and esteem are then the three basic forms of social validation that should be conferred through the social mediation of our epistemic endeavors. First, as an epistemic agent, one requires integration in the epistemic community of knowers in the sense of having guaranteed one's access to basic standards of education and initiation in the shared space of reasons. Second, one requires a basic presumption of goodwill on equal footing to other agents involved in daily knowledge practices – a basic form of respect for a person as a person, independently of one's track record on a particular topic or a particular knowledge-related task. Third, one requires proper acknowledgment of one's achievements and particular abilities for navigating the epistemic commons, through proper and just evaluation of one's competence and sincerity in particular topics or tasks. And, by the same token, the reciprocal self-relation that comes from having these needs attended is, in the epistemic realm, self-love, self-respect, and self-esteem. (Congdon 2018: 11)

Epistemic injustices, then, involve failures of affording to an individual or a group one or more of these three basic forms of recognition. Let us go back to our main example and see whether this normative framework can be put to use to account for hermeneutical domination. In the example, discourse on gender is being precluded by the powers that be that, via institutional measures, including the force of law and the threat of violence, in such a way that blocks contestation when such attempts come from particularly located subjects, who are conspiratorially seen as deviant, promiscuous and as a threat to society's "proper functioning". Those concerned with the correct account, or at least committed to a critical assessment, of gender norms in defiance of the patriarchal, sexist, homophobic, transphobic status quo, are seen as non-trustworthy on the topic at hand, having their identity institutionally associated with deviancy and epistemic risk. Because of that, they are blocked from relevant testimonial settings, where both contestation and explanatory resource-

building usually take place. This lack of trust, I suggest, expresses itself as both a form of epistemic disrespect and epistemic disesteem.

On the one hand, there's a deflationary attitude towards these individuals' humanity, including its epistemic features, since the stereotype of the dangerous deviant subject lowers one's standing as an equal in this particular society. On the other hand, by having their authoritative input denied, those with lived experiences or theoretical baggage on the questions at hand are not met with the expected esteem for their relevant epistemic expertise. One could also add that, particularly to those directly affected by gender and sexual violence, the failure to take their (sometimes life-or-death) contributions to these questions is also a type of epistemic neglect that obscures their needs and particularities in the shared space of reasons.[5]. Thus, hermeneutical domination seems to fit in the recognitive model advanced by Congdon and other recognition theorists. So, beyond the possible accumulated harms of the other types of epistemic injustices, hermeneutical domination also involves epistemic neglect, epistemic disrespect, and epistemic disesteem. Together, these mistreatments amount to the denial of a basic status as rational inquirer and, as a secondary effect, they compromise these agents very capacity of self-conception, not necessarily in terms of hermeneutical lacunae – as it can be the case when one suffers a hermeneutical injustice (Giladi 2018: 12) –, but in terms of their sense of belonging to the shared space of reasons. One can end up unmotivated to partake in the collective knowledge tasks, once one is seldom in equal standing as those who maintain hegemonic perspectives in these spaces. However, in what follows, I want to suggest that hermeneutical domination not only involves failures of recognition but is a case of domination *specifically because of that*.

2. Freedom as democratic recognition

As we saw, Catala argues that hermeneutical domination, like the other basic types of epistemic injustices, is the product of inequalities of epistemic power. (Catala 2015: 436) The imbalance of epistemic power affects the way people's trustworthiness is assessed and, as a consequence of this, their ability

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5   It's possible to think also of neglect as a long-term effect of domination since new generations will be precluded from proper epistemic participation because of hermeneutical domination.

to equally participate in "the production of the appropriate public discourse and policy regarding the social practice [is] at stake". (Catala 2015: 425) All the cases Catala discusses involve an escalating process of credibility and intelligibility deficits that give rise to the unequal hermeneutical conditions present in hermeneutical domination. Both in her cases and mine, there's an interpretative impasse affecting the way a particular social practice or a set of practices is understood. In both cases, marginalized groups are subjected to the monopoly of public discourse access and to actual corrupted public discourse that is imposed by those in hegemonic positions in society.

The disenfranchisement of marginalized groups makes them vulnerable to dominant epistemic practices that are imposed upon them in a way that fails to track these groups' relevant interests and blocks the effective possibility of contestation. (Catala 2015: 430) Drawing from the debate on domination outside of the epistemic realm (e.g., Bohman 2012), as Catala also does, we can understand domination as involving a "severe imbalance of power between two agents that is left unchecked, creating the capacity of arbitrary interference". (Catala 2015: 430) Non-domination, then, would naturally involve the effective dismantling of the possibility of arbitrary interference. In the case of hermeneutical non-domination, it would involve a correction of such imbalance and dismantling of monopoly over society's hermeneutical resources, to allow for control and contestation power in the discursive arena. (Catala 2015: 430)

Looking at the idea of domination more broadly, in the way it relates to freedom in a broad sense, the notion of freedom as non-domination can be spelled out in different ways, but one that points to some of the concerns of those who are worried about the effects of the hermeneutical domination is that of *freedom as discursive control* that can be found in some recent works on the republican tradition (Bohman op. cit.). To be free, in this perspective, is to have one's rational agency protected against arbitrary interference. (Schuppert 2013: 896) Freedom here is the ability to be in discursive control, it is to "have the ability to discourse and… have access to discourse" (Schuppert 2013: 896), and, as Fabian Schuppert points out, "In order to be in discursive control, people have to stand in discourse-friendly relationships to each other, as only in such relationships can agents exercise their agency freely." (Schuppert 2013: 896) According to Philip Pettit's account of freedom, one that's nicely summarized by Schuppert (2013), to be free is to be able to participate in "discourse as a critical, reflective reason-responsive person", but to do that in a "discourse-

friendly" environment, with the possibility of having one's reason-giving abilities socially recognized (Schuppert 2013: 897).

Now, the demand for recognition is central in this account, since both from the republican perspective and for the new-Hegelian recognition theorists, our full agency is only realized in social reason-giving practices. For the latter, particularly, for these practices to be successful, they need to involve mutual recognition in the terms already discussed so far. So, to be free is to move qualitatively in the shared space of reasons, where one's abilities, needs, and social standing are – or can be – properly acknowledged in self-relation and in relation with others (what Schuppert calls the 'inner' and 'outer' conditions of freedom as discourse control, respectively [Schuppert 2013: 898]). In this picture, "discourse-friendly relationships can be redescribed as relationships of recognition, in which persons are socially recognized as reason-responsive and reflecting discourse participants". (Schuppert 2013: 896) To be free, in this sense, is to be recognized as a rational agent in a way that allows for one's autonomy to be present in the form of responsible endorsement. For Schuppert,

> reciprocal intersubjective recognition was defined as a complex social-relational state in which two important conditions are fulfilled: first, every agent recognizes the other members of society as competent judges and legitimate sources of claims and reasons, while enjoying reciprocally this very same recognition as a legitimate reason-giver; second, every agent sees himself or herself as a legitimate source of reasons, meaning that an agent can stand by his or her judgment and take responsibility for it. (Schuppert 2013: 899)

Therefore, hermeneutical domination would be a way of impinging on general freedom by compromising someone's agency and ability of discursive control and responsibility. By not being able to significantly weigh in on discourse aimed at explaining particular social practices, one is dominated not only because one is coerced into imposed understandings of a given practice, but because, as a consequence of a set of failures of recognition, one is not free, in a broader sense. One doesn't stand in a position to move freely in the basic space of agency exercise, the discursive space, the shared space of reasons, because one is not respected, esteemed, and loved. So, for our hermeneutical domination case, we saw before, the policies and propaganda advanced to criminalized debate on gender inflicts upon the discourse environment in two ways: it disrespects those involved in questioning hegemonic discourses, making the

environment not friendly for the proper exercise of discursive control; and, as a product of that, it puts them under the dominating power of the hegemonic understanding that the hegemonic forces advance, and thus effectively dominating those who are marginalized.

From the above, it seems that to secure freedom in the space of reasons, one needs first to secure proper recognition. Catala's proposed adoption of three basic deliberative democracy criteria to counter the effects of hermeneutical domination seems then to be called for here. For her, to secure epistemic trust, we need to observe three substantial criteria of democratic deliberation that aim to control, limit, and distribute hermeneutical power: equality, legitimacy, and accountability. (Catala 2015: 424)

First, treating marginalized groups and individuals as equal in their epistemic status is a way of correcting the "credibility imbalance" they face in the discursive space and of distributing epistemic power. Fricker argues for something along these lines when she argues for the *virtue of testimonial justice*, which is, in her account, central to undoing testimonial injustices[6]. Putting this in the language of recognitive expectations, we could suggest virtually the same thing, but in terms of basic epistemic respect, the egalitarian portion of the epistemic recognition fits nicely with the first criterion Catala proposes.

Second, acknowledging the legitimacy of expert discourse is a way of limiting epistemic power only to those who have the relevant credentials on the matter at hand. In the case of marginalized groups, their members have first-hand experience that might "[result] in social expertise or epistemic privilege. Thus, a commitment to legitimacy in the context of deliberative democracy requires recognizing minorities' special credibility or epistemic privilege, which allows contestation." (Catala 2015: 437) The locus classicus of such an idea, one highlighted by both Catala and Fricker, is feminist standpoint theory and its view of the potential special credibility of marginalized groups in accounting for their oppressive relations. Again, in recognitive terms, epistemic esteem as an acknowledgment of expertise qualifies the agent to produce specialized discourse.

Third, by securing an accountability condition in the space of reasons, we control epistemic power through transparent reason-giving, especially when the reasons come from those who are marginalized. The idea here, for Catala, is that their skin-in-the-game-ness makes them reliably accountable to standards of reason-giving practices in rational discursive and deliberative spaces.

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6   See Anderson (2012) for an institutional version of this idea.

Thus, in the recognition theory parlance, it is a way of avoiding epistemic neglect in the form of obliviousness to groups' and individuals' needs and particularities.

Once we have secured these three criteria, a deliberative space becomes a space of institutional recognition, a democratic deliberative space where non-domination is instituted. The result is that political minorities will have their epistemic abilities respected, their special expertise recognized, and their particularities accounted for in the debate, making them no more vulnerable to coercive and arbitrary interference of hegemonic hermeneutical power. This can be the case, for example, when a progressive force takes power with the intent of dismantling the oppressive mechanisms put forward by bigoted forces. Once new democratic measures are put to work, measures that involve these criteria, the political minority regains the ability to contest the remaining bigoted practices and understandings. Not only does the minority cease to be dominated, but also it ceases to be misrecognized, or not to be recognized at all. The minority is respected and esteemed, but it is also epistemically considered (loved), which in turn allows for its members to build or reinforce their processes of self-relation, especially in terms of the development of intellectual autonomy as the aforementioned responsible endorsement that is sought in one of the reciprocal ends of recognition. It seems, then, that the three deliberative democracy criteria, equality, legitimacy, and accountability, proposed by Catala as a way of resolving the deliberative impasse caused by hermeneutical domination, match some of the accounts put forward by recognition theories to explain the conditions not only for the proper ethical relationship but also for freedom in the space of reasons. In the remainder of this paper, I'll present a potential problem for this deliberative picture of freedom as recognition.

3. Global hermeneutical domination

It's important to locate the epistemic injustices debate within the broader debate on structural oppression and institutional constraints on one's ability to properly exercise one's agency in the face of these oppressions. As we'll shortly see, especially when talking about hermeneutical domination, the scope and reach of the epistemic pathology might influence the scope and reach of the proposed solutions. Although Catala's deliberative democracy framework offers the institutional route in the direction of discursive freedom as recogni-

tion – after all, securing the criteria of equality, legitimacy, and accountability seems to be an important step towards the constitution of a healthy and free discursive environment –, I want to suggest that there's a different type of hermeneutical domination shaping discursive environments in a way that makes it harder for us to transpose the same solution and to envision *fully free* discursive practices.

Consider, for example, a case of what I will call *global hermeneutical domination*, as in the case of Charles Mills' (1997) account of the Racial Contract. It would take us more time and space than we have available to present a detailed explanation of Mills' account, so let me explore just the main features, which I think are enough for us to grasp the intended analysis in terms of domination. In his 1997 book and subsequent work (2007, 2015), Mills puts forward a critical political philosophy centered on the uncovering of the racial (and racist) roots of traditional contractualist political theories. His critique, however, aims not only at these theories but also at racialized outlooks producing and being produced by such theoretical views. In his account, white supremacy has been the prevalent political ideology shaping the way our societies have organized themselves and their self-images in the past centuries. As the prevalent political and ideological force, white supremacy shapes the way we conceptualize basic ethical and epistemological notions, such as "human" and "knower" for example, the way we perceive ourselves and each other, i.e. as less or more fitting to these basic notions, especially in the assessment of other people's epistemic authority, and also the way some information becomes part of a society's collective memory, i.e. as central explanatory tools to account for the shape of human relations throughout history. The theoretical outcome of white supremacy's normative power (or white normativity) is what Mills calls a Racial Contract. As his 1997 most famous passage asserts,

> Thus in effect, on matters related to race, the Racial Contract prescribes for its signatories an inverted epistemology, an epistemology of ignorance, a particular pattern of localized and global cognitive dysfunctions (which are psychologically and socially functional), producing the ironic outcome that whites will in general be unable to understand the world they themselves have made. (Mills 1997: 18)

Thus, one of the practical results of the Racial Contract is widespread and actionable ignorance. Corrupted forms of consciousness and understanding, which ignore the true character of marginalized, non-white peoples' material

existence, on the one hand; and impose white-interested outlooks to account for the way the world is or should be, on the other. Those on the losing end of the Racial Contract, I want to propose, are hermeneutically dominated. Given that, according to Mills, the influence of the Racial Contract is widespread across racialized societies, there'll be a tendency in those societies and their institutions to see the world not in its true colors, especially when it comes to seeing the relations of oppression, exploitation, and marginalization that shape most of the social relations taking place in them. But, more importantly, white normativity will determine who can speak and what one can speak about, which will in turn affect the proper participation of racialized individuals in our daily epistemic practices. The "ideological socialization" (Mills 1997: 81) of the Racial Contract will, in effect, monopolize both the distribution of epistemic authorities and the criteria for what can count as evidence in the space of reasons.

Objecting to these corrupted outlooks will most likely come with the burden of sometimes having to swim upstream the institutional current on particular discourses, as in the case discussed above, what I'm now calling *localized hermeneutical domination*. But also – and more importantly – for its global form comes with the challenge of presenting alternative understandings to a potentially infinite set of practices, concepts, perspectives, etc., all affected by the way white normativity has been, in the last centuries, shaping our cognitive tools, our meaning-making strategies and shared spaces of reasons, the organizational schema of political institutions and so on. The hermeneutical domination here presents itself in the form of evidentially resistant outlooks *imposed on the whole of society*, but also in the sedimented nature of the corrupted cognitive patterns that we tend to inherit and that affect the way testimonial and hermeneutical contributions are made and assessed in a racialized society. If one wants to contest or object to the main ideological accounts of the ways race has shaped our society and its institutions, including its deliberative spaces, one will face an uphill challenge. White normativity is the dominant explanatory force and, together with its associated theoretical tools, it constantly affects people's very ability to contest it in a robust way (i.e., in a way that threatens the status quo).

So, we have two illustrations of hermeneutical domination, one local and one global. Both seem to involve the monopoly and imposition of particular discourses and the near impossibility of contestation. What separates them, I suggest, is their scope of influence. While the "gender ideology" discourse functions by blocking particular inputs on a specific matter, in specific discur-

sive spaces, the Racial Contract shapes the way we think, remember, conceptualize, and perceive, and also the way we set up our institutions, not only in their composition but also in their principles, goals and basic functions. It is the structural nature of this global hermeneutical domination that, as we will see, makes it difficult to resolve through the same deliberative mechanisms that Catala advocates for the local cases (which are the cases she seems to have in mind in her work). This is the case because this global type of domination, I will argue, infringes upon the very conditions for the fulfillment of the recognitive expectations involved in her democratic remedy.

Under global hermeneutical domination, it seems that it is only possible to secure trust via the criteria of equality, legitimacy, and accountability, and their recognitive correlates of respect, esteem, and love, in a *partial* way. This is because global hermeneutical domination is constantly threatening the undoing of progressive measures taken in well-intentioned democratic spaces. *Political integration*, of the type Catala proposes, in a racist society might be a way of securing immediate acknowledgment and participation, but it will not secure them in all close-by possible worlds. In scenarios of global hermeneutical domination, there's no undoing of the mechanisms of domination by integration, since the threat of mistreatment will always loom over all.[7].

Given that white supremacist ideology presents itself as white normativity and shapes our collective epistemic lives, be that in terms of theory-building or public discourse, it is natural to think that those marginally located will have a hard time contesting and opposing basic racialized commitments present in these societies, especially given the tendency of, in a racist society, those who are racialized being seen as inapt to advance some knowledge claims. I think this is correct. As in the case of local domination, those marginalized and authoritative (from experience or research) individuals who try to advance alternative interpretations of the social phenomena will be met with institutional blockades put in place to deflate any threat to the highly advantageous (to those in hegemonic positions) status quo. Thus, these individuals will most likely have their standing as apt contributors to the hermeneutical pool doubted, their expertise denied, and their skin-in-the-game-ness neglected, composing the same picture of ethical mistreatment as seen in the above case of failure of recognition.

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7   We could compare this to the distinction Marx makes in *On the Jewish Question* (1975) between political emancipation (through access to liberal rights) and human emancipation (not secured by mere liberal rights).

However, the global case involves a further problem. Given that white supremacy and white normativity are prevalent forces in shaping racialized societies, in most of their interactional and institutional aspects, there's a case to be made that, although racially marginalized individuals are on the receiving end of most of the harms of the epistemic pathologies thus produced, the inability of contestation is shared across society more or less independently of the identity or the marginalized status of the those who attempt to contest. The ideological force of white normativity subjects *everyone* to its corrupted outlook and its arbitrary interference in the space of reasons. Again, this is not to say that everyone is harmed in the same way. But the near impossibility of contestation is a central feature of the ways the shared space of reasons is constituted. Such a feature makes hermeneutical domination a *built-in mechanism* that directs a great number of our social and institutional interactions.

One still could argue that the same is the case with local hermeneutical domination. After all, *anyone* who tries to oppose the sexist, homophobic, transphobic, and queerphobic policies will be met with disdain, at best, and violence, at worst. But notice that, although this might be the case, it is only contingent on the example. This society might elect a progressive candidate instead of a bigoted one next time, and the institutional measures to block gender discourse contestation might be overturned. This won't mean the end of bigoted gender discourse, since it fundamentally involves deep-seated gender ideology, but it can mean the end of the local hermeneutical domination through discursive integration. It's important to highlight that the domination in the local case is the product of actively imposed discourse and policies targeting a particular group identity or the content of this group's discourse. In the global case, however, hermeneutical domination is not tied to specific policies, but it constitutes the very discursive fabric of the racist society, regardless of those who are in power.

James Bohman (2012) argues for something along these lines when he defends that epistemic injustice as domination should not be focused on an identity prejudice explanation for the systematic character of the phenomenon. For him, an alternative explanation should point to the idea that the systematicity found in most cases of epistemic injustices is the product of domination. As Nancy Hartsock puts it, and Bohman quotes it, "the dominated live in a world structured by others for their purposes—purposes that at the very least are not their own and that are in various degrees inimical to our development and even existence". (Hartsock 1998: 241; Bohman 2012: 178) Thus, in his view, domination lies at the very basis of the injustice and affects the subject's stand-

ing as knowers by making them vulnerable to epistemic harm. Domination is the "systemic social hand" that influences our prejudiced attitudes towards marginalized groups and makes it such that these attitudes track these groups in their daily lives, making epistemic injustice one of the features of this exclusionary system (Bohman 2012: 177). Thus, epistemic injustice is one of the expressions of domination, not the opposite. There's no identity power, his argument goes, without a prior power of domination, be that as patriarchal domination, the continuation of slavery through segregation – and, I would put it – the Racial Contract and white normativity; there's no identity power without the political power of denying people "basic statuses and powers". (Bohman 2012: 183)

Although Bohman means to generalize this assessment to all cases of epistemic injustices, we don't need to commit to this stronger thesis. But what I have tried to show is that there's at least one type of hermeneutical domination that fits this structural pattern. As Bohman puts it, "deeper inequalities have sustained exclusions from the broad public sphere in which hermeneutical participation might have taken place" (Bohman 2012: 184). In this sense, global hermeneutical domination is the structural ideological manifestation of political domination as a whole. And, because of that, it needs to be analyzed taking this complexity into account.

Therefore, global hermeneutical domination can be seen as the ideological side of the political constraints put upon people by the power of arbitrarily interfering in their basic statuses, including their epistemic status. The Racial Contract not only directs the way we think about race but also does it by giving shape to the social institutions we take part in daily, even if these institutions, from time to time, work to integrate those marginalized from public discourse. Even in these cases, the institutional discursive environment is never discourse-friendly. They might look friendly on the superficial level, but once the threat of arbitrary interference is always there, after all, we have yet to see the end of racist social relations, *only* via integration, one never ceases to be dominated. By the same token, one is never in the position of being truly respected, esteemed, and loved. There might be fleeting acknowledgment, but never full recognition. Full recognition is only possible in a true discursive-friendly environment, one where freedom as discursive control means exactly freedom as non-domination.

From this picture, it seems that the moral import that recognition theorists propose runs deeper than one might first think. Since the challenges to contestation are widespread, failures of recognition are not necessarily indexed to

marginalized identities. Marginalized identities will be systematically harmed by white normativity, but the primary wrong of global hermeneutical domination as an *epistemic* injustice lies in the arbitrary control of *the society's ability to contest* and the self- and other-relational aspects that come with it. In a society where white supremacy is a hegemonic force, the pool of hermeneutical resources is dominated as a feature of the society. Its epistemic spaces and its political institutions will all be established under disrespectful and neglectful assumptions towards first the marginalized groups, but also anyone who tries to question the racial basis of this society. Global hermeneutical domination will give rise to epistemic neglect, disrespect, and disesteem, but these are not classic recognition failures. They are structural failures of recognition and should be met as such.

Given the above, there seems to be a need to improve upon Catala's proposal of non-domination as just deliberative democracy. I don't have the space to argue for this here, but it seems that we need institutions that not only protect us from individual, local cases of domination, but we need institutions that are born out of commitments of non-domination. They might be the fruit of marginalized-based constitutions. They might be reshaped by processes of popular consultation. Or they might be born and shaped via a revolutionary movement. In any case, truly free institutions are still not among us. Until then, any discursive dynamic within them is vulnerable to hermeneutical domination.

4. Concluding remarks

In this paper, my aim was twofold. First, I wanted to further the connection that recognition theorists identified between epistemic injustices and failures of recognition. To do that, I explored Amandine Catala's notion of hermeneutical domination, a combination of two basic forms of epistemic injustice that function as ways of blocking proper contestation in relevant testimonial settings. I argued that hermeneutical domination involves a deflationary attitude directed to marginalized people's humanity and the denial of authoritative contributions of their lived experiences or expertise, resulting as a result epistemic disrespect and lack of esteem towards the target group or individual. On top of that, such blockage tends to amount to a type of epistemic neglect of the needs and particularities of marginalized groups. These individuals end

up with their basic statuses as rational inquirers denied, and their capacity for self-conception as rational agents compromised.

I also argued that hermeneutical domination not only involved failures of recognition, as specified above but that it is an instance of domination precisely because of that. If we think of domination as a way of interfering with the general freedom of an epistemic agent, by blocking their ability of discursive control in a deliberative space, we have to locate this lack of freedom on the lack of proper recognition, which would guarantee the conditions of epistemic trust via the criteria for democratic deliberation and its correlate recognitive measures: treating them as equals in their epistemic statuses by epistemically respecting them, acknowledging the legitimacy of their expert discourse by epistemically esteeming their capacities as epistemic agents, and securing accountability in the space of reasons avoiding the epistemic neglect of their needs and particularities as people who have a deep interest, because the risk it represents to them otherwise, of the correct account of their marginalization. Once secured, the three deliberative conditions proposed by Catala and the three recognitive conditions proposed by the theories of recognition, together, promote not only a space of institutional recognition but also freedom as a feature of deliberative practice.

Finally, although not exhaustively, I argued for the need to improve upon Catala's account of non-domination as just deliberative democracy by taking into consideration the threat of a global type of hermeneutical domination as arbitrary interference and control of the whole society's ability to proper contestation regarding deep-seated ideological outlooks that shape our institutions and deliberative spaces as a whole. Once the failures of recognition are structural and not related to a particular topic and a particular deliberative setting, we might need structural remedies to them that don't seem to be readily available in the accounts of hermeneutical domination and recognition taken separately.

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