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Contact: forst@em.uni-frankfurt.de

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ABSTRACT: In this reply to critiques by Albenaz Azmanova, Pablo Gilabert, Mark Haugaard, Clarissa Rile Hayward, Matthias Kettner, Steven Lukes, and Simon Susen, Rainer Forst explains and expands upon his theory of ‘noumenal power.’ In particular, he stresses the non-normative character of the approach and clarifies how the account of the exercise of power as working through ‘giving’ reasons also includes non-reflexive and non-transparent forms of producing reasons in others. This has implications for aspects of power that relate to the unconscious, the body and for understanding ideological as well as structural power.

Sometimes a small piece of work creates an impressive response, or, in other words, a simple idea generates a lot of noumenal power and becomes something bigger. That it does so is most often the result of a great deal of contingency. So someone who is as lucky as I am to have a group of the greatest theorists of power one could wish for to reply to a few thoughts of mine on power first of all feels humbled by that honor – and grateful to the gods of fortune. But apart from the gods, there are individuals who through their work have done me this honor. So in the first place I would like to thank Matthias Kettner and Mark Haugaard for organizing not just this set of papers on my work on noumenal power but also two sessions on it in Prague, within the framework of our annual conference on Philosophy and the Social Sciences. I am immensely grateful to them and to the other authors of this special issue – Albenaz Azmanova, Pablo Gilabert, Clarissa Rile Hayward, Steven Lukes, and Simon Susen – who came to Prague and were so kind as to challenge me on my views, and to write them down and publish them here.

I hold the work of these colleagues in such high regard that I feel I should just accept what they say. However, given the rules of intellectual exchange, I will do my best to respond. This will require me to introduce a few new constructions of my theory, not only because the original piece on which my colleagues based their interpretations and criticisms was so short, but also because it was in many ways so vague. So the challenges posed by my generous critics really require me to expand, revise and clarify my views. Clarification seems to be especially urgent, because I see from many responses that the original statement of my view was not sufficiently precise on a number of issues, such as on what I mean by such key notions as justifications, reasons, structure and so on. In

general, I need to provide a better explanation of my cognitivist view and of how it relates to the many forms of unconscious, ideological, material, bodily and structural forms of power highlighted by my critics. I will do my best but, from a dialectical perspective, if any of my replies are successful, this will be a credit to the power of the astute challenges to which I have been exposed.

Perhaps another word by way of introduction about the character of the paper on noumenal power, originally published in the *Journal of Political Philosophy* (Forst 2015) and reprinted in my book *Normativity and Power* (Forst 2017b, pp. 37–51),¹ would be in order. As I explained in the introduction to that book and in a number of its chapters, I propose to use the term ‘justification’ in two very different ways, and the piece on power is pivotal here. We can use the notion of a justification in the normative sense of a ‘good’ and valid justification, assuming that we know what the standards of validity are. Then to speak of the realm of justifications is to speak of a realm of reasons that are valid and (more or less) well-ordered. And to speak of an ‘order of justification’ in that sense is to speak of a justified social or political order that rests on and produces good, legitimate or just – but in any case, *justified* – justifications. In most of my previous work on justice, democracy and toleration, this is the sense in which I have used the term ‘justification.’²

But in a number of works, especially in the context of our joint interdisciplinary research within the Normative Orders Centre in Frankfurt (Forst and Günther 2011), I have also used the term ‘justification’ – and the related term ‘order of justification’ – in a descriptive sense to refer to the justifications that exist in the social and political world or the justifications that gain social acceptance, whether they are acceptable or not in a normative sense. Such justifications can be based on false information and/or be normatively wrong, but they are still justifications that exist and that ‘work’ in forming, stabilizing or destabilizing a normative order. I am convinced that such a perspective is fruitful, as (I think) a lot of our joint research has demonstrated.³ But if the methodological approach is not explained properly, such a descriptive use of the term justification is in danger of being confused with a normative one. If you mean ‘justification’ in a descriptive sense, analyzing how social orders of justification come about and are reproduced, and thus call existing or past normative orders ‘orders of justification,’ those who assume that you are using the term in a normative sense might consider you a complete Panglossian. Likewise, if you fail to make clear that the thesis that power works through or on reasons and justifications precisely does not mean that these are necessarily good, reflexively accepted reasons or justifications, it may sound like you are merely referring to a variant of the felicitous forms of power Habermas called ‘communicative’ (see Habermas [1976] 1983, 1996, ch. 4). But this is not my intention. My analysis of how power works is open to normative reflection, as Haugaard and Kettner (2018) assert in their fine editorial introduction to this special issue; but it is not intended as a normative analysis. I want to understand how power functions and my inquiry is intended to apply to both justified and unjustified forms of power, while providing ways to distinguish between the two. But as I said in the original paper, this time I am not primarily interested in the justification of power but in the *power of justifications*, whether good or bad ones. I have learned from my critics that this way of speaking of power is a revisionist one, given certain presumptions about the term ‘justification.’ But since I still believe that

there is value in using the term both descriptively and normatively, I will do my best to clarify my views and revise them as seems appropriate. However, I remain committed to a certain way of combining philosophy and the social sciences in this double usage of justification, and I hope that I won't be the only one who finds something elegant about a view that connects them through a multi-dimensional analysis of one and the same term.⁴ I aim to provide a synthetic theory of justification that unites empirical uses such as those suggested by Boltanski and Thévenot⁵ with normative uses in the tradition of Kantian constructivism.⁶ As the beings we are, our world only becomes a human (and humane) world insofar as we are socialized into it as a space of justifications and learn to navigate it (see Forst 2012, ch. 1). In that spirit, I will attempt to navigate my way through the impressive challenges with which my critics confront me.

1. The seductive force of the normative (reply to Simon Susen)

In his careful and truly impressive piece Simon Susen does what I should have done, namely, properly analyze the many aspects of my view of noumenal power, as he does in his helpful list of fifteen features of my view (Susen 2018). As I was reading them, I was inclined to agree with his reconstruction; but when I read his critique of my view as one-sided and naïve, I was forced to reconsider. For either he changes his interpretation of my view once he enters into his critique, or his reconstruction was more one-sided than I thought. In any case, I think that most of his criticisms stem from him succumbing to the seduction of a reading of my theory as a normative rather than a descriptive one. Let me explain.

To begin with, I would like to briefly address the question that both Susen and Steven Lukes raise, and to which I will return in my reply to Lukes, namely, that of a normatively neutral definition of the concept of power or that of its 'essential contestability.' That these are different (though related) questions is shown by the fact that Lukes agrees with me that we should aim at a normatively neutral definition of power but nevertheless defends the essential contestability of the concept. As it seems to me, however, the contestability issue arises at a different stage from the basic definition of the *concept*, namely where we spell out particular *conceptions* of power and define which forms are justifiable and which are not. That is where normative disagreements arise. I don't think they arise at the basic conceptual level, where I argue that an agent A having power means that A has the capacity to motivate another agent B to think or act in a way B would not otherwise have thought or acted – and that thereby the power effect is noumenal in nature, that is, an effect of A changing the space of reasons that motivate B. B is still an agent, not a mere object of physical force (a point to which I will return).

Susen thinks that it is 'both naïve and deceptive' (ibid., p. 18) to argue for a normatively neutral notion of power, yet one page later he says that legitimate rule is obviously a case of the (justifiable) exercise of power. If that is the case, then he must also be using a normatively neutral definition of power, for what I meant was simply that, as such, apart from any additional normative considerations about its justifiability, the exercise of power is a phenomenon that needs to be analysed in its own terms.⁷

Therefore, I do not find it 'ironic' or 'baffling' to use a general, non-normative concept of power and add the resources required – in my case, a theory of justification – to generate a critical theory of power, an aim we both share. You only need to be

methodologically aware of these additional resources, precisely in order to be able to critically analyze the ‘intrinsic normativity of all aspects of social reality’ (ibid., p. 18), as Susen says. That a critical theory needs to reflect on the normativity of its own views and inquire into their rationality is obviously true, and others involved in this exchange such as Albena Azmanova and Pablo Gilabert agree; but that in no way requires such a theory to view its basic concepts as nothing more than normative weapons based on certain social interests.

Susen rightly asks why I call my view one of ‘noumenal power,’ questioning whether it makes sense to use that term, since Kant called a noumenon a ‘thing in itself’ that can’t be known directly (ibid., p. 20). That is true, but I make clear in my paper that this is not how I use the term. I mean it in the basic, traditional sense in which it refers to what exists ‘in thought,’ in the *nous*, that is, in the space of reasons and justifications (in German, ‘*das Gedachte*’). And I fail to see what logic would force me to distinguish between noumenal and non-noumenal power because I use the term ‘noumenal power.’ That seems like saying that Kantians should no longer use the term deontological morality because then they would also have to accept the existence of non-deontological morality.

As far as the cognitivism of my view is concerned, the criticism is often made that I neglect the ‘importance of the body and the unconscious’ (ibid., p. 20).⁸ This is a serious issue, and I need to say more about it (more than I can say here, I fear). Susen misunderstands me if he thinks that I disagree with the view that the exercise of power is ‘inconceivable without its capacity to shape our corporeal dispositions of perception, appreciation, and action’ (ibid., p. 20). This is exactly what I mean, and it is how I read Foucault, who analyzed forms of discipline that shape such dispositions and perceptions of how we feel and act as embodied beings. But I deny that these are non-cognitive forms of discipline, for otherwise Foucault would not have analyzed them as forms of *discursive* and *epistemic* power stemming from certain truth regimes. Foucault did not subscribe to the Cartesian dualism of body and mind that animates Susen’s critique. So I disagree that the creation of disciplined subjects works without ‘noumenal classifications’ (ibid., p. 21), since Foucault reconstructs exactly these classifications and shows how they operate.

Furthermore, it is a misunderstanding to think that my theory entails that these power effects came about through ‘rational justification’ (ibid., p. 21). This is the seduction of the normative that I believe is at work in Susen’s critique. My intention is to analyze how justifications creep into our bodies and minds, but in no way do I think they do so by way of rational justification, if that is meant in a normative way. Rather, Foucault shows how, in the context of social institutions, subjects are formed in their subjectivity by various forms of discipline and learning or indoctrination which lead them to adopt certain views about themselves and none of which is rational in a normative way, although in a descriptive sense Foucault and I would say that they are part of a general social form of rationality, of what is taken to be well justified. The same mistake is at work in Susen’s critique of my rationalism, I may add. For I would never deny that subjects often ‘act in irrational ways’ (ibid., p. 21) or claim that reason constitutes social life. My claim is that reasons guide persons, not reason; and I assert that exercising power is a matter of ‘giving’ others certain reasons, good or bad ones, in the form of information, seduction or threats. There is nothing rationalist about this.

The notion of ‘giving’ someone a reason by, say, a threat may sound unusual; but I think it is the correct and productive way of speaking if we want to theorize the many forms of ‘reason-giving’ or ‘reason-producing’ involved in relations of power.

I am not sure why Susen thinks that my claim that the successful exercise of power depends on those who are subject to it recognizing the reason the power-wielder wants them to recognize commits me to denying the existence of social forms and processes of misrecognition. For example, holding a gun to someone’s head and issuing a serious threat is not really a laudable practice of mutual recognition; but if the threat is perceived or recognized as credible, it gives the person who is threatened a reason to act. In my work more generally – for example, in dialogue with Honneth and Fraser⁹ – I suggest ways to conceive of practices of misrecognition and argue that domination works by structuring the social space of justifications in such a way as to make misrecognition seem justifiable and/or invisible. That is an important aspect of the exclusion that both Susen and I criticize.

Susen’s interpretation that my view assumes that the acceptance of a justification on which power rests is an acceptance of a ‘good’ reason is based on a one-sided reading of my understanding of what it means to ‘recognize’ a justification, which is precisely not necessarily reflective and rational, since I am also interested in understanding how ideological justifications work and have effects. The notion of acceptance at work here is as descriptive as the notion of justification or that of a reason; power works if the reasons intended by the wielder of power are effectively accepted, whether out of persuasion, fear or ideological delusion. Again, Susen is seduced by a normative reading of my theory.

An important point he raises concerns the relation between justifications, interests and desires. Contrary to my allegedly ‘naïve’ view that justifications are more fundamental to explaining action than interests or desires, Susen thinks that ‘reasons to act in one way or another are derived not from reason itself but from the interests that underlie, or indeed constitute, our real reasons’ (ibid., p. 23). For Susen, justifications are mostly rationalizations of our interests. But, again, I don’t think that our reasons are all ‘derived from reason.’ Rather, I am interested in what it means to form or have an interest or desire. If you follow an interest or desire in action, you know what the interest is in and what you desire. It has a content. It also involves what Davidson called a *pro* attitude (Davidson 1980), that is, you think that it is a good thing to realize that interest or desire and you know why it is a good thing – it is valued by you, your friends, God or whatever. You see a *justification* – what Davidson calls a ‘primary reason’ in an explanatory as well as normative (first-personal) sense – for being interested in it or for wanting it. Note that I don’t claim that the justification grounds the interest or desire causally, though that is often true (you want what you think is good); my claim is only that if we want to understand an action we need to understand the justification that the actor sees for it – that it is pleasing, morally good, impressive, useful, and so forth. To think that we ‘have’ an interest first as a raw, non-noumenal occurrence and then invent a justification for it does not help in understanding what an interest is and how we act.

Susen thinks that he and I have different views about plural spaces of justification or about mixed or convoluted motivational states. But we don’t. Note, for example, the many reasons (or motives) I cite in section VI of ‘Noumenal Power’ that might support patriarchal authority, from love to fear or despair (Forst 2015, p. 124f, 2017b, p. 48f). I also don’t

think, as Susen argues with respect to my ‘normativism,’ that ‘social relations are always open to questioning, competition, and struggle’ (Susen 2018, p. 26). My notion of domination or oppression accounts for social situations in which the space of justifications might be successfully sealed off and shielded from critique, at least temporarily.

With respect to the relation between order and disorder, there is no disagreement either, for I do not hold as strong a view of coherence as Susen thinks. I analyze forms of disorder in a paper co-authored with Klaus Günther and in my theory of narratives of justification (Forst and Günther 2011, Forst 2017b, ch. 3) and, far from downplaying the ‘interplay’ (Susen 2018, p. 27) between hegemonic and counter-hegemonic narratives, I am interested in that interplay.

Finally, a word about my alleged ‘foundationalism.’ It is true that I believe that, from a moral philosophical perspective, human beings have a right to justification. But that is neither foundational for my theory of power, nor would I ever claim that the task of such a theory is to ‘prove’ (ibid., p. 27) the validity of a deontological moral philosophical view. I aim to make the different parts of my overall theory of justification cohere; but a descriptive theory cannot ground a normative one. From the perspective of validity, it is beyond me how power relations ‘may both confirm and undermine the contention that human beings possess a right to justification’ (ibid., p. 27), although from a sociological view that sounds plausible. And again, if Susen thinks that I would deny that ‘despotic versions of power need not be based on reasonable justifications in order for them to be truly powerful’ (ibid., p. 27), he gets me wrong. I assert that such forms of power generate noumenal power by making their subjects act according to certain justifications that such regimes ‘give’ them – say, through indoctrination, fear or corruption – but these are far from ‘reasonable justifications.’ The giving of reasons can assume many forms, and some of the most effective ones do not work through rational persuasion but through ideological delusion. Nevertheless, they *produce reasons* in those who accept them.

2. Testing the limits of the noumenal (reply to Steven Lukes)

I am especially honored to have Steven Lukes among my critics, because contemporary theoretical discourse about power would be so much the poorer without his pioneering work on Power and his subsequent reflections on it (Lukes 2005, Hayward and Lukes 2008). My own views on these matters would definitely not be the same had it not been for his influence; thus, even where I depart from his theory I am very much indebted to it. Lukes raises important conceptual and explanatory questions and they force me to clarify my view, especially with respect to the epistemic assumptions underlying my claim that power operates through, with or on reasons.

But first I would like to say a word about conceptual issues. I don’t think we have a disagreement about the fact that, insofar as we aim for a philosophical and social scientific understanding of the *concept* of power, we must assume that this is a worthy goal and that the many different attempts to define power engage in a reasonable practice of mutual criticism. This goal and practice would not be reasonable if the concept of power lacked a core meaning that we could search for (at least as a necessary assumption); otherwise we could all simply fabricate our own concepts. This is compatible with the methodologically modest assumption that, as finite beings, we may not yet have found the

correct definition of the concept; but that is what we are striving for. Whoever attempts, as Lukes and I do, to define the concept of power cannot assume that it is essentially contested and that there is no general conceptual core on which all further contestations must rest if they are to be part of a discussion about power (and not about something else). We can and do disagree about normative *conceptions* of power – say, about what constitutes domination and, even more so, when it is present in a social situation; but, then again, we presuppose that there is a concept on which these conceptions rest and that we share and use when we inquire into the boundaries of a concept, as Lukes does in his critique. There is no hidden Platonism here, just a conceptual point. When we search for a normatively neutral core concept of power, as Lukes and I do (Lukes 2018, p. 48), we believe that there is such a thing.

I also agree with Lukes that the explanation of any exercise of power must be *interagentive* and that power is a relation between free agents, so that pure violence is a sign of failed power (I will return to this point). I would add, however, that the interagentive view has to make room for collective agents too, such as a class, for otherwise we could not speak of class domination. With respect to such forms of domination, for example, I think that the strict distinction between interagentive and structural domination or structural power suggested by Lukes may be too strong. For even if the *exercise* of power is interagentive, it is made possible by structural power relations that *enable* and *express* such forms of group domination and that, as Hayward (2018) makes clear, have a life of their own. That life, as I argue in my paper, is also noumenal (I will come back to this); but I think it makes sense to speak of ‘structural power’ as an ensemble of relations, norms and institutions that provide persons or groups with ‘noumenal capital’ as a resource needed to exercise power over others.

Such structures can also solidify and attain a very resilient existence of their own, as in my example (in section IV of ‘Noumenal Power’ in Forst 2015, p. 118f, 2017b, p. 44f) of people still acting according to patriarchal structural norms even though the patriarchs are gone (or no longer see themselves as patriarchs). But with respect to structural power, I agree with Lukes that it is important to recognize that structures *structure actions* (see Giddens 1984) and the exercise of power – they do not ‘exercise’ power themselves. Lukes is right to stress the link between the exercise of social and political power and the question of responsibility: In complex societies, the question of ‘who did it?’ or ‘whom to shoot?’ (as in the Steinbeck dialogue (Steinbeck 1987, p. 49) he cites in Hayward and Lukes 2008) is extremely difficult to answer; but to speak abstractly and anonymously about, for example, unjust social structures ‘having’ or ‘exercising’ power over us would be to make an improper use of the language of injustice. Injustice is something attributable to agents, even if these are collective agents (who are enabled by general structures); and although the question of who ‘caused’ certain states of affairs is difficult to answer, it is nevertheless important to ask who benefits from them and who could change them (but does not do so). Otherwise, the conceptual link between structural domination and structural injustice gets lost (I will also come back to this).

Lukes presses me on the question of intentionality (as do other critics). He is right to point out that in my account of power the word ‘exercise’ is important (Lukes 2018, p. 49), and I agree with him that ‘for power to be effective, it need not be exercised’ (*ibid.*, p. 49). But we need to distinguish various cases here. First, I agree that a

bureaucrat with sufficient noumenal capital can secure compliance ‘without having to lift a finger’ (ibid., p. 49). But if he does so intentionally, knowing that ‘anticipated reactions, deference to status and indeed loyalty’ (ibid., p. 49) will do the work for him, he is exercising noumenal power in the way I describe, even if no particular action is required (which is not quite true actually, for certain actions would destroy his noumenal capital, so he must be careful to preserve it). Yet, second, if he is unaware of such reactions and does not intend them, he still has power and (unknowingly) generates influence and power effects, but he is not exercising power. So I think one issue here is how broad our notion of intentionality and the exercise of power can be, and the other issue is to distinguish between the *exercise* of power and certain power *effects* that may be unintended. Thus I do not deny that sometimes people just obey orders because of certain ‘noumenal power statuses’ of persons (ibid., p. 51); but I think that if this is intended or knowingly accepted – as in the case of the authority of an expert whose suggestion I trust – it is a case of the exercise of power, and if it is not, it is a mere effect of power.

But in contrast to Lukes, my notion of the exercise of power is so expansive that I think that a good teacher (or a great theorist of power) whose word I trust exercises power over me if she wants me to accept what she says. That Lukes denies this (ibid., p. 51) shows, I believe, that his view of power as the capacity to ‘secure compliance’ is more narrow and Weberian than mine; the Weberian conception does not really allow that cases of communicative power can come about by convincing someone through a good argument. Despite Lukes’s acknowledgement that his original view was about domination rather than power more generally (Lukes 2005, p. 109f), the paradigm of domination still structures his general view.

When it comes to the explanatory power of my theory, Lukes raises extremely important, critical questions about my ‘rationalism’ insofar as he highlights the connection between reasons and emotions and points to forms of unconscious power. Here, as I mentioned briefly above in response to Susen but now want to expand on, I need to clarify my view, because I neither want to deny the emotional character of noumenal power nor to rule out the possibility of unconscious workings of noumenal power. How is this possible?

Although far from being an expert on this, I am inclined to agree with the constructivist approaches Lukes (2018, p. 52) cites which argue that emotions have an affective and a cognitive component. We should not regard emotions as raw, noncognitive occurrences in our motivational makeup or mindset but as more or less strong *evaluations* of certain objects, persons, actions or states of affairs, imagined or real. Emotions have a cognitive content (namely, *what* I fear, love, hate) and express a positive or negative evaluative *relation* to that content. And as Machiavelli and many others have taught us, power often works by evoking emotions, by inducing, strengthening, using and reproducing, love, admiration, hatred or fear, to mention just a few. So only an extreme form of Cartesianism would make a strict separation between emotions and thoughts, and we should not do that. To take a simple example, if a threat works, it mainly works through fear; but the threatened person knows what she fears, although she may not be completely aware of all of the (deeper psychological) factors that account for why she has that fear.

For my account of noumenal power, I need to analyze the cognitive-emotional state that makes someone conform to what another person intends; but I don't think I need to be committed to the view that this act of conforming is based on (a) good reasons, (b) reflected reasons, (c) fully transparent reasons or (d) reasons that are based on purely cognitive rather than emotional states. The question of the deeper causes of what we feel and think (and their order of importance) may remain forever in the realm of the thing-in-itself. Thus, as long as we do not think that people who are under the 'sway of emotions' (ibid., p. 53) are automatons who are exclusively physiologically or physically steered by others, like marionettes, the power that others exercise over them by using their emotions is a form of noumenal power. For example, fascist power that incites hatred will ensure that you know what you hate and why (fabricating a narrative for that purpose), even though the deeper motives for that hatred may be obscure to you as well as to observers. The analysis of noumenal power goes deep but not that deep; it remains at the level of the considerations that move you, without reaching the level of the 'true' causes of these considerations.

The thought that power works through reasons or motives that often have an emotional component but are not fully transparent to you, especially not as regards their causes and genealogy, helps to answer the question of unconscious forms of power. For no one who analyses ideological forms of noumenal power would deny the importance of unconscious motives and background beliefs such as stereotypes or, more generally, 'internalized habits of interpretation' (ibid., p. 53), as Lukes formulates it with reference to Bourdieu's notion of habitus or Foucault's notion of 'power imprinting itself on the body' (ibid., p. 53). But here there is no disagreement. I fully agree with Lukes when he says that 'in accepting reasons as justified we will often be unaware, even be unable to recognize, why we do so' (ibid., p. 53). That is true, but note that the power effect is still the *acceptance* of a reason or a justification, and that is the effect highlighted by the theory of noumenal power. Noumenal power does not work *through* reflected and transparent reasons, but it works *on* reasons and *produces* reasons in the (embodied) minds of those subject to power. Whether it does so through lies, indoctrination, bodily discipline plus subject-formation, socialization into racial stereotypes that remain unquestioned and so on is a matter for social and psychological analysis; but none of these modes of justification-production denies that this is what power is about and how it works, namely, by producing justifications that determine how persons think and act. Certain forms of power produce reasons not by reasoning but by working on our reasoning, so that you may not know how you formed a certain belief but still the belief is operative in you. Many forms of power have that character, and not all of them are ideological or vicious; for example, pedagogy often uses such techniques. Sometimes a reason may be very strongly held precisely because one does not know how and why one adopted it. So there are many forms of unconscious power, but they are all noumenal in producing motives or background motives in the various noumenal forms of interpretations, normalizations, stereotypes, cultural schemas (see Haslanger 2012) and so on, that is, patterns of *thought* (and feeling). This is why genealogical critique – that is, the enlightening reconstruction of how certain modes of perception and thought came about and colonized your mind – is so powerful and important. And note something important, especially for Foucauldians: If the modes of power attacked in that genealogical way were not noumenal, such critique would be pointless.

So I agree with Clarissa Hayward's nice formulation that power often works *around*, not *within* the space of reasons, only in part; for if power is to be effective, it needs to find its way *into* the space of reasons, although not necessarily by a route transparent to those subject to power, as Marx, for example, demonstrates in the chapter on the fetish character of the commodity form (Forst 2015, p. 121f, 2017b, p. 46). Again, noumenal power is not necessarily reflexive power; it is power working in and on the mind. So I both agree and disagree with Lukes's formulation that securing compliance often does not run through the 'recognition and acceptance' (Lukes 2018, p. 54) of the reasons of the powerful. I agree if a reflexive recognition and acceptance is meant; I disagree since we ought to take recognition and acceptance produced by ideology, seduction or threats to be noumenal modes of someone thinking something that those who exercise power want them to think.

Therefore, I agree with Lukes that the 'power of occlusion' (ibid., p. 54), of restricting the noumenal realm of justifications for others by taking things off the agenda or 'policing conceptual boundaries' (ibid., p. 54) is an important form of power – yet I would add: of noumenal power.¹⁰ It works, if it works, on the minds of people. Likewise, the 'power of signaling' Lukes mentions, that is, the intentional confusion of and within the realm of reasons by, for example, fake news, is another aspect of noumenal power. It is an attack on certain forms of reasoning and is not a new phenomenon, as Hannah Arendt reminds us (Arendt 1972, [1951] 2017). Disrupting and perverting the space of reasons is a powerful tool of noumenal power.

So, to finally take up a major worry of Lukes, if the theory of noumenal power includes all of that, what does it exclude? First of all, it excludes those forms of influence exercised over others that are not noumenal, such as acts of sheer violence. It also is helpful, secondly, to differentiate between the exercise of power and power effects and their relation to structures of power, as I tried to argue. But most of all, thirdly, this view helps us to differentiate the very different modes of noumenal power, of working on the minds of others, ranging from communicative argument to using authority, ideology or threats. That is the main point of the theory – namely, to highlight the many forms of power that can be subsumed under the noumenal, including exercises of power that rely on emotional and unconscious mechanisms.

3. The power of and within structures (reply to Clarissa Rile Hayward)

I am deeply indebted to Clarissa Hayward for pressing me to clarify my view of structural power, and I am especially honored to have her as a discussion partner in this enterprise, for her theory of 'de-facing power' (Hayward 2000) is one the best accounts we have of the power of social structures. So I will do my best to explain my view, especially by highlighting where we don't have a disagreement and where we do.

As I said above, we should free ourselves from a non-dialectical opposition between interagential and structural accounts of power, for we clearly need both. We need, as Hayward says, an account of justification narratives that enable the exercise of power within 'inter-agentive relations of domination and subordination,' and we need an account of justification narratives that 'enable and constrain social action by defining relations of power that are structural in form' (Hayward 2018, p. 65). Like Hayward, I try to do both, and I don't think that I neglect the latter. Note that in her formulation,

Hayward uses the terms ‘exercise’ and ‘constrain’ in much the same way as I do. Still, important disagreements remain, especially concerning the value of a cognitive analysis of power and when it comes to an important mediating term between individual inter- agentive power and structural power – namely, groups that have and exercise asymmetrical power in the form of, say, class domination. I fear that notions such as class are largely absent from Hayward’s analysis of structural power, and this takes some bite out of the analysis.

As I explained briefly above, my view of the exercise of power is inter-agential. It includes group agents and, by using terms such as ‘justification narrative,’ ‘noumenal capital’ and ‘power resources,’ I situate it within a structural context that enables and constrains action. Structures structure action – they themselves do not act. This notion of structural power calls for a conceptual distinction between different forms of power: *individual*, *collective*, and *structural*. However, these are not different forms of the exercise of power; they refer to different modes of action as well as to background conditions for action, whether empowering or disempowering. But *all* of them are noumenal in nature, including the most ‘material’ ones to which Hayward draws our attention.

My account of power, as Hayward rightly notes, is structural in nature (and at the same time, yet in a different sense, inter-agential, as Lukes points out). So I disagree with her basic critical claim that, by focusing on the noumenal and cognitivist dimension, I cannot fully explain the power of structures, because they work *around* and not *through* cognition (ibid., p. 57). As I said above, that distinction is not sufficient, since power only works *within* the realm of the cognitive, even if that realm is colonized by ideologies or false beliefs. As it happens, the first formulation of her critical claim should already give us pause, because she explains what working ‘around’ cognition involves by pointing to ‘incentive structures’ and ‘schemas’ (referring to Sewell 1992 and later to Haslanger 2012). But this invites the question: How do incentives work if not through beliefs and motivational states that are cognitive, and what is a schema except a framework of knowledge and belief, even if based on stereotypes and one-sided justification narratives? I will come back to this.

I admire how Hayward reconstructs my answer to her first question – that is, how structural relations of power become established – by laying out my theory of justification narratives. It is important to stress how such narratives become institutionalized and solidified, as resources that sustain and are sustained by structures. The stories that stabilize complex social relations and structures are, as Hayward and I stress, multiple, for we cannot understand such structures if we think that they are only based on a single narrative. The plurality of such supporting narratives sometimes strengthens and sometimes weakens a structural system, as the case may be.

However, Hayward takes issue with my cognitivist account how such structural normative orders develop and become stabilized by pointing out how a racial narrative became solidified in US laws and complex social structures, such as housing policies and city structures, and then, after the dominant narrative ceased to be dominant or active, achieved a life of its own, independent of its cognitive foothold and support. I think that the story Hayward tells here (and in her powerful book; see Hayward 2000, especially ch. 4) is nuanced and rich, but I fail to see how it casts doubt on my theory. Hayward vividly reconstructs how the racist narrative led to segregated housing (and schooling) areas and became combined with economic motives and values of property.

The policies of the US Federal Housing Administration institutionalized the racial narrative and ‘insured that public investment would be channeled toward racially exclusive white enclaves’ (Hayward 2018, p. 61) in cities; thus the value of property mirrored such policies. Hence a white buyer of a home, in order to get a state-backed mortgage, ‘was constrained to buy in a racially exclusive white enclave’ (ibid., p. 61). For Hayward, this shows that such structural power had a force of its own, regardless of whether such buyers agreed with the racist narrative – which was already being socially questioned, according to Hayward.

I disagree for several reasons with the conclusions Hayward draws from this narrative concerning structural power. First, the case of structural power she depicts explains the extent to which *agency* by an administration is involved in the exercise of racist power. But that is not the main point here. Rather, secondly, one should stress the *intersection* of racist and economic narratives instead of separating them, for it is questionable how long such racist policies could survive if they were not supported or at least tolerated by large parts of the population – apart from purely economic incentives. Such incentives always have a cultural character, and in this case it is a racial one. Maybe it is a particular ruse of racism to dress itself up in mainly economic garb. But the main point is the third one about the people who see themselves as being structurally *constrained* to conform to such policies for economic and social reasons, even though they might actually disagree with them or at least not support them. Is what is going on here really something ‘extra-discursive,’ as Hayward argues (ibid., p. 61), a case of structural constraint that has nothing to do with cognitive acceptance? This is not how it seems to me. But we must be careful to analyze the power effects here. For to conform to a racially divisive policy even if you are not a racist but feel compelled to acquiesce for economic reasons (or out of concerns for your children’s educational opportunities) presupposes a certain *acceptance* of the rules of that game – and what is the nature of the acceptance at work here?

I think it may be a combination of many things and deep-seated racist stereotypes (or ‘schemas,’ to use Haslanger’s term) may still play a role; but such structures are only accepted and reproduced if those who don’t agree with their racist point still accept them as structures that – to cite a few possibilities – (a) are unchangeable, (b) are based on unquestionable economic laws, and (c) better serve their self-interest. Thus, even if the motivations in the example of segregationist housing policy were mainly economic in nature, they were still cognitive, since they were based on certain beliefs about the way things are, must be, maybe even should be, and in any case must be accepted if you want to promote the interests of yourself and your family (for example, by moving to a good school district). Would any such structures function if they did not come with and produce (and be reproduced by) these beliefs about why they are as they are and why they must be accepted? And why should we not call such forms of acceptance ‘noumenal’ or ‘cognitive’? Think of Hayward’s example of those who play by these rules even though they ‘disavowed the racial narrative’ (ibid., p. 61) – surely they must have reasons for still playing the game, and they must have something in mind when they do. If we want to explain structural power,¹¹ we need to understand these reasons and the justification narratives they are based on. There is nothing non-noumenal here. The thought that ‘there is no alternative’ is one of the most powerful noumenal supporting

narratives of structures. We should conceive of structural power as the noumenal power that structurally limits and constrains the realm of the thinkable and doable.

As far as Hayward's third question about the critique or dismantling of power structures is concerned, we agree about the importance of fighting power in the discursive realm of justifications, as Gramsci (2000) argued. I also agree with her that 'telling better stories' (Hayward 2018, p. 62) is not enough to bring about structural change and that 'institutionalizing and objectifying new justificatory narratives' (ibid., p. 62) is required. But I do not think that this can be done by some mysterious mechanism or by a sovereign Leviathan, because it can only happen if the change in the noumenal social realm is primary, strong and stable. Thus I find it difficult to understand what Hayward means when she says that, 'regardless' of the realm of justifications, structural change requires 'strategically targeting key institutions and reconstructing the material forms that shape social action' (ibid., p. 65). Such strategies and such reconstructions won't be possible if they are not based on new justifications, for otherwise there will be neither institutions nor actions. Social agents are not automatons who can simply be (re-)programmed.

Finally, I do not see how Hayward's neo-Bourdieuian reflections about structural power can support the claim that such power works around and not within the noumenal. For I think that none of the major terms used (ibid., pp. 62–64) – 'internalization' of norms, schemas of 'knowledge' (citing Haslanger), dispositions to 'see' things (Haslanger), 'habitus,' ways to 'represent' (Haslanger) the world, 'adopting' incentive structures, having 'practical know-how,' and 'common sense,' to name a few – can have any meaning in an 'extra-discursive' or non-cognitive (Hayward 2018, p. 64) way. Neither Bourdieu nor Foucault nor any other major theorist of power I can think of would agree that the formation of such ways of seeing, feeling and thinking should be understood as a purely 'corporeal' (ibid., p. 63) and non-cognitive experience. It is also a corporeal process; but as I said above, to think that such forms of subject-formation had no cognitive component would be a bad form of Cartesianism. They might not have a reflexive component, but that is a different matter. A lot of such knowledge remains implicit, as Hayward says (ibid., p. 64), but for all that it is still knowledge. And, of course, a theorist of noumenal power does not have to say that such effects must be intentionally produced, as Hayward seems to think (ibid.). Rather, such justification complexes secure 'noumenal capital' for members of normative orders to use and to exercise power as they wish. This is an important reason for separating the analysis of, first, the exercise of inter-agentive power from the analysis of, second, structural forms of power that express, constrain and enable such forms of power and from, third, the character and formation of noumenal resources or background conditions that carry and support such structures, especially the justification narratives they rest on. I am indebted to Hayward and my other critics for helping me to achieve more clarity about these distinctions.

To return to some remarks I made at the beginning of my reply to Hayward, let me add a word about her definition of structural power citing Iris Young. In a system of structural power some vulnerable persons or groups suffer, in Young's formulation, 'systematic threat of domination or deprivation of the means to develop and exercise their capacities' (Young 2011, p. 52) as a result of, in Hayward's formulation, 'multiple, large-scale social processes, which interact to create patterned inequalities that no

identifiable agent directs, controls, or intends’ (Hayward 2018, p. 64). I agree with both formulations, but more needs to be said. The first formulation by Young indicates that the threat of domination is a danger of being dominated by *someone*, such as members of a powerful class, and thus is inter-agentive. If the ‘deprivation’ referred to was a simple social or natural accident, one would not call it domination. So it matters for our social analysis to give a full structural *and* inter-agentive description of vulnerability and of oppression or domination – and not to depict it as a by-product of anonymous social forces. And that analysis includes group domination, which is also inter-agentive. As far as the second formulation is concerned, it is true that a complex social structure of inequality is not produced or controlled by single agents; but that does not mean that powerful agents do not use it for their aims, that they do not do what they can to reproduce and stabilize it and to make sure they benefit from it. Whether we call that an expression of class domination or some other kind of social group domination, we must be careful not to anonymize power structures, such as the one described by Hayward’s excellent example of housing policies, and efface the many ways in which powerful groups are implicated in such structures. There is no group domination without dominating groups, just as there is no racism without racists, even if the structures racism grounds develop a life of their own (as Hayward shows). And there is no capitalism without capitalists. Structural power structures action and structural domination expresses and enables the exercise of *domination* by some over others; and if we want to call that kind of domination, as we should, a form of structural *injustice*, we must not anonymize what is going on. For that would be to neglect the question of responsibility for structural injustice, and deprive critical theory of social bite. Which brings me to Albena Azmanova’s inspiring critique.

4. Systemic domination (reply to Albena Azmanova)

In her challenging contribution to this exchange, Albena Azmanova (2018) exhibits the dialectical skills with which she defends and at the same time criticizes a justificatory approach to critical democratic theory (see also Azmanova 2012). She rightly places my theory of noumenal power in the context of my normative theory of justice and justification, although, as I explained above, that is not the primary context in which the theory of power has been developed. But it is useful and enlightening to combine the two and also inquire into the limits of both. According to Azmanova, these limits reside in the fact that my theory lacks conceptual space for a notion of *systemic* rather than *relational* or *structural* domination and fails to provide the necessary normative resources to critically address such forms of domination. She defines systemic domination as ‘the subjection of all actors to the functional imperatives of the system of social relations’ (Azmanova 2018, p. 69); in capitalism, for example, that refers to the subjection to ‘the imperative of competitive production of profit’ (ibid., p. 72). With this concept, she takes up a very important aspect of a Marxist critique of capitalism but lends it a shape that extends much farther than a critique of capitalism, because her notion of domination refers to any system that makes social relations follow a particular, overarching social logic – thus, it also applies to other normative orders such as ‘bureaucratic socialism, or communism’ (ibid., p. 72). Should a critical theory of power

and justification include such a notion of power or domination, as Azmanova argues? I am not convinced, and here is why.

As much as I find the differentiation between relational, structural and systemic power important and useful for clarifying our ideas, I would distinguish more sharply than Azmanova does between the general phenomenon of power and the more restricted phenomenon of *domination*, understood as a subclass of the exercise of power. Azmanova tends to understand the notion of power in a predominantly negative way that does not seem to allow for any real difference between relational power and relational domination, the former being defined as ‘the uneven distribution of ideational and material resources among actors’ (ibid., p. 70). I agree that such types of uneven distribution result in ‘relational domination,’ as Azmanova asserts; but we can also conceive of forms of relational power that do not have such an asymmetrical form, such as communicative power based on argumentative discourse.

The same is true of structural power versus structural domination, a distinction that is also effaced in Azmanova’s view. According to her, structural power implies the asymmetrical control over larger social structures leading to domination and ‘injustice’ (ibid., p. 70). But that is not necessarily the case, for we can also think of forms of democratic structural power or rule that might not be forms of domination. As critical theorists of democratic justificatory justice and power, we need to hold onto this distinction. Power is not necessarily domination; rather, domination is a particular form of the exercise of power.

Still, Azmanova is right to argue that, for justice as justification, it matters whether we only focus on relational forms of injustice that result from uneven distributions of resources or whether we include the larger question of how structures of production and distribution and decision-making are determined, as implied by my relational-structural ‘picture of justice’ (Forst 2014d). We are in agreement on this point. However, such critique reaches its limits, as Azmanova argues, when it comes to systemic domination, that is, the ‘subordination of all members of society to the operational logic of the social system, including the winners from the asymmetrical distribution of power’ (Azmanova 2018, p. 72). In what way is this a form of domination? I think Azmanova’s answer is not fully clear. I agree that all members of a capitalist society are ‘subjected’ to a certain dynamic of a scheme of production and social organization; but why is that a form of domination? Who dominates whom here? More exactly, who or what dominates the capitalists? Are they forced to be and act as capitalists? To some extent that may be true, though too rigid an idea of the power of a social system is in play for a strong notion of ‘force’ here, if we think of Friedrich Engels’s biography, for example. But even if it were true that capitalists are not free not to act as capitalists, should we in that case not rather speak of them being constrained than of being dominated? Maybe it is a matter of the idiosyncratic way in which I understand the term domination, but for me it is an inter-agentive term, thus one which applies to persons or groups or classes that dominate others but not to the fact that, as part of a particular social system, whether capitalist, communist or socialist (or liberal or democratic?), one is dominated simply by the fact that such a system has a particular general ‘logic’ (if it does in fact have *one* such logic, a point I leave aside for now).

Azmanova also argues that all, capitalists and others, are subject to the same form of alienation typical of capitalist societies. This may be true if one holds a certain view of the ‘species-essence’ (ibid., p. 72) of human beings; but even in this view, it is not clear

whether we would call that ‘domination’ or ‘injustice’ – that is, an injustice also inflicted on the capitalists. In addition, I think there are alternative accounts of alienation based on our standing as equal normative authorities that gets violated in hierarchical and unjust societies which account for a general phenomenon of alienation that includes those who dominate but which neither says that they are dominated nor depends on a particular view of our true ethical essence as human beings in terms of the good life (see Forst 2017a). And it does not require Azmanova’s notion of systemic domination.

So I am not sure to what kinds of ‘injustices’ (Azmanova 2018, p. 73) my relational- structural view is supposedly blind if I have no resources to address the general injustice of systemic domination as Azmanova conceives it. I tend to think that my justificatory view is able to capture all relevant forms of structural domination, while the phenomenon of systemic domination, on Azmanova’s totalizing conception, may not exist and thus does not generate any injustice either. It is an injustice to be dominated within a capitalist society, but it is not an injustice to be born a capitalist. That is just a fact of life, while injustice is relational and structural in nature and is man-made.

Azmanova responds that it is important to be able to question not only ‘the stratification of life chances’ but also ‘what counts as a life chance’ (ibid., p. 74). I agree, but I think that if structural domination in a society prevents one from asking and answering such questions, it needs to be addressed and overcome; and I don’t see why we need an additional term or additional resources for that purpose. Thus, I do not think that my view ‘falls short of the capacity to address injustices rooted in the very operational logic by force of which a social order is constituted’ (ibid., p. 74). If my notion of justificatory justice were not powerful enough to question the general logic of an unjustifiable economic system, it would not deserve the name structural justice or democracy. So I fear that there is a reduction of the realm and range of what structural justice means at work here.

But Azmanova may have something different in mind, namely, a form of criticism that questions a whole form of life (compare Jaeggi forthcoming). I think we need resources for such criticism, because forms of life can be either structurally unjust or bad in other ways, impoverishing the richness of human life, for example. But if the latter is the animating thought of critique, one had better possess a good definition of what constitutes the non-impoverished life, apart from being subjected to injustice. Yet, even if we aim for such a general and totalizing form of critique, I am still not sure that ‘systemic domination’ is a useful term for what we want to overcome.

I think that using the notion of domination in too broad a sense is problematic, because we need a relational-structural description of capitalist domination as socially concrete class or group domination, for example, which can show the forms of exploitation that are at work in such systems of domination. The term is used too broadly when we also use it for subjection to a particular social order, be it capitalist or communist or whatever. That would be to think of ourselves as being held captive by that system and, by using the term ‘domination,’ it would also amount to lending that system personal characteristics in a quasi-theological way. Moreover, we would no longer be able to speak of social injustice, for systemic injustice would be something ‘done’ by the system, not by groups within it. That would amount to exculpating them by turning a situation of injustice into a general social fate. Ultimately, this could lead to

the view that capitalists are dominated by capitalism, racists by racism and socialists by socialism, all of which I find unacceptable.

At the end of her article, Azmanova gives the idea of systemic domination a particular twist by citing the paradox or ‘scandal’ of reason that results from normatively aiming at a general critical transcending of given horizons of justification while being confronted with the realistic insight that such horizons are always limited, and in certain social systems very much so. The theory of noumenal power addresses this, but it cannot pretend to have found a universal language of reason that is factually capable of transcending every sealed realm of existing justifications, ideological as it can be. So I do indeed believe with Kant (and Gilabert)¹² in human beings’ *noumenal* capacity to transcend such horizons, while we as *phenomenal* selves recognize how difficult that is. I am not sure I see the scandal or paradox here; it is just an important insight into the finitude of reason which, however, we hold onto as the only capacity that can – in principle – question its given forms and limits. Processes of socialization, as Azmanova reminds us, can help generate such critical power or stultify it. But if we were to abandon the hope that critique, including radical critique, remains a rational possibility in principle, we could no longer regard ourselves as critical beings. No critical theory can allow for that kind of defeatism. I think I am in agreement with Azmanova here.

5. Power and violence (reply to Pablo Gilabert)

It is always a pleasure and challenge to engage with Pablo Gilabert’s work, as he is both an exemplary analytic and a synthetic thinker, a rare combination (Gilabert 2012, forthcoming). We agree on a large number of important issues, such as the need for a non-moralized concept of power that is broad enough to capture what is important for social and political analysis and critique but still has clear limits. Yet he thinks that the limits I draw are too narrow. Whereas I regard an extreme form of violence (and only that extreme), if isolated from social noumenal contexts, as the sign of a break- down of power and as an exercise of sheer physical force, Gilabert wants to classify such acts as exercises of power and, furthermore, suggests that every exercise of physical force, such as, say, cutting a tree, is also an exercise of power. This raises the issue of the phenomenon we want to describe, and I fear that his notion of power becomes too broad. Cutting a tree represents a different form of the use of force or strength – or of what in German is called *Kraft* – from the exercise of social power.

Gilabert proposes a broad definition of agential power that includes the power to destroy things or to bring them into existence; what is essential is that agent A can determine how other agents act or what lives, dies or exists (Gilabert 2018, p. 86). It is interesting that he remarks that ‘applied to social contexts, this definition leads to the view that A has power over another agent B to the extent that A can get B to be or act in ways A intends’ (ibid., p. 86). This is close to what I mean, since I take social power to be a relational, inter-agentive phenomenon whereby A makes B think and act in a particular way. Thus, the relation in question is one between *free* agents – although surely not necessarily between *equally* free agents. The power-wielder acts in a certain way and tries to limit (or enlarge) the space of acting and thinking for the object of power; but as long as that subject has an opportunity to think and act otherwise, even if only a slight one, some freedom remains, and the power relation exists.

Thus, it is not true that I don't provide any 'explicit statement of the rationale' (ibid., p. 83) for my account of power, for I do so in the first section of my article: power is exercised 'by and over free agents' (Forst 2015, p. 112, 2017b, p. 38), and that is why it is an interesting phenomenon, because there are so many ways in which this can be done, limiting or enhancing the freedom of those involved. In line with a number of major theorists of power such as Arendt, Foucault, Lukes and Haugaard, I think that 'power is exercised only over free subjects, and only insofar as they are "free"' (Foucault 2001, p. 342). That is the phenomenon I want to analyze, namely, power in the social realm, where some people want others to think and act in a certain way. If they don't succeed, the exercise of power fails, and that remains a constant possibility.

One reaction to the failure of the exercise of power is violence, the destruction of the other one wanted to dominate but could not. I have only that rare case in mind when I speak of violence as a reflection of the loss of power over another and as the attempt to destroy (or incapacitate) him or her as a free agent. Note that Gilibert and I agree that the use of violence often, indeed most of the time, is meant to have noumenal effects on others, be they victims or bystanders. Thus I do not deny that the exercise of violence is in many ways a form of the exercise of power, such as when one shows one's weapons and also shows that one is willing to use them. Ensuring that threats, for example, work as means of power often requires proof of the will and determination to be serious, and that can involve the exercise of violence. I do not see any difference from the cases of making threats credible that Gilibert lists (Gilibert 2018, p. 83). I would only add that 'credible' comes from *credere*, which means believing.

My only concern is to reserve a single, isolated and very particular act of the physical destruction or objectivation of the other as a case of violence that marks the limit of the concept of power, for the following reason. Take the situation of the kidnapper I cite in 'Noumenal Power' (Forst 2015, p. 116, 2017b, p. 41). As long as he has power over the kidnapped person and over those who are supposed to pay the ransom, the latter think they are forced to act in a certain way (although they might do otherwise), and the kidnapper may indeed need to prove that he is willing to use violence to back up his threat. So such acts of violence clearly have a noumenal meaning and effect (though the act itself, of course, is not noumenal). But if his credibility diminishes or others refuse to play the game, he can become desperate and recognize that he will not succeed, because either the kidnapped person or the others will not act as he wants them to. In such a dangerous situation, he may decide to kill the kidnapped person in the hope of erasing his traces, which is something he had hoped to avoid (at least before receiving the ransom). Such tragedies are, alas, not unrealistic. But I think it is clear what happens here: The act of *destructive violence* is a result of *having lost power* over those he wanted to dominate. This is the logic of power and freedom operative in that situation.

Similarly, the use of destructive violence by a dictator is often a sign that the latter has lost power over his subjects in revolt or is afraid of doing so. Then the use of violence is meant to have a noumenal effect and make the subjects (or at least most of them) obedient and compliant. Yet using destructive violence can also be a reaction of despair and revenge in the knowledge (or the incipient realization) that one has lost power and will not regain it. Often the situation may be unclear, including to the dictator, those he commands and those in the streets. But once the dictator realizes that

the noumenal power of the weapons and threats is fading, he can still kill a lot of people, but his social power to make them act in a certain way is gone and it is time for him to make his escape and seek refuge.

These examples show that power only works if one can rule over the minds of others, and violence as a possibility or actuality can do a lot to stabilize a power relation – although it can also contribute to destabilizing it. But the decision to destroy the others means that you cannot rule over them, that their freedom can't be directed as you wish; thus, it means that you have lost power over them while you still have the physical means to destroy them, that is, the means of violence. You have physical 'power' of destruction left, but no social power, and in that sense your physical power is powerless. Their freedom resists your power, and so it must be destroyed. Thus, I do not have to deny, I think, that it could make sense to speak of 'sheer physical power', as Gilibert (2018, p. 83) suggests; but I still think that, in its pure and isolated form, the exercise of destructive violence is a sign of failed social power, and that is the kind of power that I want to understand. Different linguistic intuitions and conventions may play a role here. Thus, in German one speaks of acts of physical violence in terms of *Gewalt* rather than *Macht*; but I do not see any general terminological problem with using the term 'power' to refer to physical force in the sense of *Gewalt*, *Kraft* or *Stärke*, as Gilibert does, and we do so when we translate motor power units of *Pferdestärke* into 'horsepower.' But if we want to understand social power and the role of violence in relation to it, then the freedom relation is essential, while the physical-causal relation is not. A physical notion of power – of the power that enables you to exert causal effects in the physical world – is different from a notion of social, relational power.

As remarked above, to regard the limit case of sheer destructive violence as the breakdown of social power rather than a case of its exercise does not mean that the exercise of violence can't have lots of noumenal effects, intended or unintended. And it obviously does not mean that we can't condemn acts of violence or the people who have the resources to perform them, as Gilibert seems to assume (*ibid.*, p. 84). Acts of violence are still, at least for the most part, actions for which persons are responsible; in that sense, they are of course part of the noumenal world.

The question of power over oneself that Gilibert raises (*ibid.*, p. 84f) is indeed important and fascinating, and I wish I could say more about it. Every notion of autonomy, mine and Gilibert's included, has to imply the capacity to 'govern yourself,' and it is a challenge to clarify what that means (compare Christman 2009). I have more to say about this in my recent article on alienation, which includes a notion of being alienated from your own status (or 'nature') as a normative authority equal to others (Forst 2017a). The question of how you relate to yourself and to others is connected, as Kantian as well as Hegelian theories show (though in different ways). And likewise the question of how resilient one is to being dominated is connected to old and constantly renewed questions of the strength of one's self-conception as an equal authority.

In conclusion, I would like to thank Gilibert for his excellent final reflections on a systematic framework for a theory of power. Despite our disagreement about power and violence, I find that framework very informative and inspiring, and a good basis for future theoretical reflection.

6. The heterogeneity of the social landscape of justification (reply to Mark Haugaard)

Mark Haugaard's four-dimensional theory of power is the most comprehensive theory we have today, one that attempts to synthesize the truth of the rival accounts into one unified theory.¹³ I admire this truly Hegelian enterprise and its achievement in raising our thinking about power to a new level. Thus it is a special privilege to have him as a dialogue partner in my own attempts to conceptualize power. I am also deeply impressed by his proposed way of thinking about different modes of justification that support or destabilize power relations in the four dimensions he distinguishes, and I can only learn from them.

So where do we differ? Given the details of his analysis, there seem to be two important differences, apart from a few minor ones. The first major difference is that I tend to read the four dimensions of power not as 'ideal types' of power, as Haugaard (2018, p. 95) claims; rather, I agree with his other characterization, namely that they provide ways to 'render certain aspects of reality visible' (ibid.) that are relevant when we want to analyze power. As I read him, Haugaard makes excellent, innovative points about the noumenal character and dynamics of power, given the aspects of agency, structure, systems of thought and subject formation (or 'social ontology'); thus, I would not say that only the third dimension of power focuses on 'the epistemic or cognitive aspects of power' (ibid.). I think it does so in a particular and productive way, namely, by inquiring into the frames of thought or justificatory paradigms or schemas (Haslanger) that structure the realm of social justifications; but as he makes clear, cognitive elements are crucial in every dimension of power.

Second, when it comes to my own view, Haugaard on the one hand rightly separates my descriptive analysis from my normative assessment of modes of exercising power, but on the other hand he draws them too closely together when he says that, according to my view, 'the successful exercise of power presupposes an isomorphism of reason between the powerful and less powerful responding actor' (ibid., p. 93). I fear, however, that this is not my view; for I can think of lots of successful exercises of power in which no such isomorphism either of reasons or of reason exists, whether based, for example, on threats or on ideological delusion. So I fully agree with him when he says that 'in practice the reasons for B's compliance are usually not isomorphic with A's intentions, even in cases where B complies perfectly with A's commands' (ibid., p. 94). I fear that Haugaard's interpretation that I base the exercise of noumenal power on 'shared reasoning' (ibid.) or some form of 'consensus' (ibid., pp. 101f, 105 and 108) or on 'justificatory convergence' (ibid., p. 111) of a strong kind (based on shared reasons) confuses my *normative* with my *descriptive* view; and indeed, when Haugaard says that the 'assumption of isomorphism is linked to the normative aspect of his theory' (ibid., p. 94) he is correct, even though I would have to think hard about whether the normative idea that legitimate exercises of power always presuppose that the reasons the power-holder gives to those subject to power are (a) reciprocally and generally valid and (b) identical on both sides is true of every legitimate exercise of power, if you think, for example, of pedagogical or parental forms of power and their legitimacy. In any case, these two criteria are indeed true of legitimate democratic power as 'concerted power' (ibid.), but that is not my paradigm case of 'successful' power in a descriptive

mode. So the disagreement he believes exists between us does not exist in my view, and I basically agree with the many passages where he points out forms of justificatory power that are not consensual.

The analysis of justificatory power in the various dimensions distinguished by Haugaard is, as I said, impressive and I have learned a lot from it. For example, we both agree that extreme violence is not a form of social interaction and thus ‘not social or political power’ (ibid., p. 98). And we agree that coercion, in contrast to violence, ‘works communicatively’ (ibid.). Haugaard is also right not to regard most cases of coercion as zero-sum. We only understand how coercive power works if we understand what people think is ‘in it’ for them and why they think they ought to comply. I am also convinced, like Haugaard, that economic power rests on a number of noumenal conditions that render economic exchanges plausible and beneficial, or in any case natural, in the eyes of those involved (possibly wrongly so).

When it comes to the ‘2-D power’ of structures, Haugaard also masterfully shows how many different forms of cognition and recognition are required to make such forms of power work, ranging from the case of a police officer to more complex cases such as the Catalan-Spanish conflict, where the opposing sides fight a noumenal struggle over the correct definition of democracy (ibid., p. 101), aiming at ‘3-D resonance’ (ibid., p. 102) – which shows, in turn, that these dimensions of power cannot be analyzed separately. He also makes the important point (with reference to J. Scott) that in a system of ideological delusion, the dominating group might be more enthralled by their own ideology than the realistically minded subaltern groups who have their own reasons for compliance (ibid., p. 103).

In his analysis of ‘3-D power,’ Haugaard uses Giddens’s notion of practical consciousness – *Lebenswelt* knowledge, as Habermas and phenomenological sociologists would say – to explain the kind of knowledge that operates in ‘routine social interaction’ (ibid., p. 104). This is a very important and useful concept for avoiding an overly restrictive dualism between subconscious motives and reflexive knowledge, and Haugaard shows the dynamics of critique and noumenal domination this opens up. It is true that social criticism asks for better justifications for existing social relations, and it is also true that the more powerful groups try to close down these discursive spaces in various ways by trying to seal off the space of reasons. As Haugaard explains with reference to Durkheim, deeming or declaring certain norms to be sacred or to be grounded in absolute truth are forms of reification that seek to avoid further critical scrutiny (ibid., pp. 105–107). He is also right to point out that truth claims only generate noumenal power and capital as long as they do not encounter rivalling paradigms in Kuhn’s sense of the term.

With regard to ‘4-D power’ in the mode of social ontology and subjectivation, Haugaard and I agree (in contrast to some of our colleagues discussed above) that social forms of discipline give ‘noumenal justification power purchase on the subject, leading to compliance’ (ibid., p. 108). His interpretation of Elias’s work is very illuminating in this respect, and Haugaard shows how noumenal power multiplies in complex social structures (ibid., p. 110) – and how seductive more restricted and older narratives of justification, such as religious ones, can become at certain points of crisis of modern societies.

Yet, while he thinks that such cases of justificatory incommensurability represent challenges to my view, I disagree; rather, we should take cases of a lack of ‘justificatory convergence’ (ibid., p. 111) seriously when explaining social and political crises and we can call that a ‘justification crisis’ (Forst and Günther 2017). I do think, as I believe Haugaard also does, that some form of justificatory convergence is required for power to work. But this convergence need not be of a consensual kind, as contrary to his interpretation of my position, and no isomorphism or sharing of reasons is required here. That would be to mistake a normative for a descriptive account of power. Still, I agree with Haugaard that in order to create a descriptive *and* normative theory of power, we need to take the many forms of power that do not rest on reflexive reason-giving into account and ask what it meant to transform these social relations into relations of justification.

7. Noumenal and discursive power (reply to Matthias Kettner)

Since our time as students in Frankfurt, I have learned so much from my discourse-theoretical colleague Matthias Kettner that I am truly grateful for his critical reading of my account of noumenal power and for subjecting it to his argumentative ‘discursive power,’ a concept he has worked out in the course of a number of writings. According to Kettner, discursive power is ‘the power to modify via argumentation,’ and it ‘operates on our interpretations of reasons as better or worse’ (Kettner 2006, p. 6).¹⁴ Discourse ethics is an attempt to theorize an ideal of such positive argumentation, aiming to improve our ‘shareable stock of reasons’ (Kettner 2018, p. 147). Yet as susceptible as I usually am to the discursive power of Kettner’s arguments, on this occasion I feel compelled to offer some resistance.

The main reason for doing so is that, in Kettner’s view, my notion of noumenal power shares the aims and scope of his notion of discursive power but at the same time overstretches it in important ways of which he is critical. But I fear that the ‘Forstian bargain’ (a beautiful term) does not exist in the way he believes. His reading of my view of noumenal power is itself far too rationalistic and reductionist, since he thinks that it is a form of power that works *through* rational argument, whereas with that term I want to capture all forms of power that work on and *within* our reasoning, even by using lies, ideology, threats or emotional manipulation. Noumenal power works in and on the space of reasons of persons in many ways, not only through reasoning of a reflexive kind (though that is an important form of discursive or communicative power, as Kettner emphasizes). This is something I should have made much clearer, and thus I am grateful to Kettner and some of my other critics for forcing me to clarify my meaning.

Among the things I should have stressed more is that, although I do work within a ‘Habermasian theoretical framework’ (ibid., p. 139), as Kettner says, I do so only to a certain extent, but not exclusively, since my framework is also Gramscian, Foucauldian and influenced by Bourdieu. So the main mode of exercising power on my conception is not argumentative discourse but all of the modes, including rational discourse, which make people think and act differently than they otherwise would have if it had not been for the reasons ‘given’ by those who exercise power. And reasons can be ‘given’ in this sense in a variety of ways, including by using fear, as in the kidnapping example. So it is

not so much my view of power that is excessively rationalistic, as Kettner assumes, but his interpretation of it.

Let me explain this in greater detail. Why does Kettner think that my view is ‘over- confident by placing all power in reasons, and undercomplex by reducing reasons to justifications’ (ibid., p. 141)? According to him, there clearly are forms of power, like ‘technical power’ (ibid.), that work in a purely physical way (like someone moving a stone) and thus are not noumenal at all. As I said above in my discussion of Gilabert (and in agreement with Lukes and Haugaard), such forms of physical power or force do not fall within the scope of a proper analysis of social or political power at all. I agree with Kettner that a correspondingly more focused definition of power, which takes power as a relation between and among free agents, is acceptable (ibid.); however, I would hesitate when Kettner says that these agents have to be ‘sufficiently free to either let themselves be moved by accepting the normative force (of justifications) or not’ (ibid.). In cases of ideology or manipulation, as Kettner’s apt example of Effi Briest shows, power is exercised over people with the aim of dominating them in such a way that their space of reasons allows for basically no alternative critical thought. I think that as long as persons are not turned into pure automatons as a result (the extreme negative case), they still have the potential to say no – activated, say, by a crisis experience – but their space of noumenal freedom is extremely limited. So the kind of freedom required for noumenal power to work as domination can be highly asymmetrically distributed and very restricted – and may exist only as a potential, but not in actuality. Again, the ‘Forstian bargain’ must not be read in too rationalistic a way. Yet a bargain it still is, since I want to say that all ways of exercising social or political power are noumenal in nature, though not discursive as Kettner understands the term.

With regard to Kettner’s critique that I reduce reasons to justifications, I fear I must disagree for two main reasons. First, I do not have any ambition to provide a general theory of reasons in the first place (as Kettner does in his work, see Kettner 2016), and so I think I can remain neutral with respect to that question. All I want to say is that power generally works in the space of reasons by producing certain justifications in the minds of persons who, due to particular exercises of power by others, change their way of thinking or acting in accordance with the power-holders’ intentions. So only in such cases do I combine reasons, justifications and motivations, for power is only effective if the relevant change in a person’s realm of reasons and justifications generates motivating force for the person in question. Therefore, the ‘normative force’ in such cases is generated by the acceptance of certain reasons as motivating justifications by the subject of power; but such acceptance need not be a product of critical reflection.

Second, I also do not reduce reasons to ‘justifying reasons’ (ibid., p. 142) if these are understood in a normative sense, as Kettner does, as ‘good justifying reasons’ (ibid.) that conform to some discursive standards of a communication community. They have to motivate persons and thus provide them with a sufficiently good justification in their own eyes; but that need not be a good justification from a reflexive viewpoint. The problem here is that a *descriptive* use of the term ‘justification’ is mistaken for a *normative* one – and as I said before, this is a confusion caused by my twofold use of the term. So I agree that the reasons that persons take for their action are certainly not always good justifications (ibid., p. 143); but still they regard the reasons that move them as sufficient justifications. Thus the reduction of reasons to good justifications criticized by Kettner

is not part of my view. And as I said, I make no general claim about the relation between reasons and justifications, although I would think that ‘sense-making reasons’ (ibid., p. 144) that disclose the power of a certain religion, to use Kettner’s example, only get traction when combined with powerful justifications that explain (for those who adopt such a new belief system) why that view is being adopted. This need not be seen, as Heidegger reminds us in his account of world disclosure (see Kompridis 2006), as a move in a linear argumentative discourse but as something like a paradigm change. But we still need to think of this as a comprehensive innovation (and maybe revolution) of the justificatory horizons of a communication community, and thus it cannot be completely severed from the former horizons and must provide powerful justifications that the older view did not provide (see MacIntyre 1988).

Another aspect of Kettner’s far too rationalistic interpretation of my view is his claim that the subjects of noumenal power achieve a kind of ‘self-governance via responding to reasons’ (Kettner 2018, p. 144). That is a useful ideal of communicative discourse and the positive power relation within it, but it is not my paradigm of noumenal power and it is far from exhausting its meaning. But that might leave me open to Kettner’s charge of superficiality, according to which the noumenal ‘is nothing but the final common pathway of any and every conceivable means by which actors who are able to do so are more or less effectively exercising their power-over’ (ibid., p. 146). In response, first of all I don’t think that Kettner can criticize my view as both overly rationalistic and merely superficial in that way, for it can only be either the one or the other. But secondly, neither interpretation is correct; for while the rationalistic interpretation is too narrow, the charge of superficiality is too superficial. The point of my analysis is precisely to look below the surface into how the power of argument, ideology, seduction, threat or fear works, and not merely to distinguish various forms of power (such as rule, domination or coercion) but also to stress the need for a careful analysis of the different modes of noumenal power ranging from reflexive argument to the cognitive effects of fear or love. As I remarked above, in my original paper, I used the example of patriarchal power. If we want to understand how such power works and is reproduced, we need a differentiated register that ranges from religious reasons to fear as well as familial love. Disentangling such complex motives is a task for a non-superficial theory of noumenal power.

Kettner’s example of the fear of ghosts instilled in Effi Briest by her husband Innstetten is a good example of noumenal power, notwithstanding Kettner’s view that it is a counter-example. Innstetten uses manipulation by fear; but, as Kettner says, that only works as a form of power or of disciplining in virtue of the ‘fear instilled in Effi’s imagination’ (ibid.), thus only by producing a cognitive effect that leads to a stable noumenal stance on Effi’s part (intended by Innstetten): it gives rise, as Kettner says, ‘to further reasons’ in Effi’s personal ‘space of reasons’ (ibid.). That such a change in her space of reasons is achieved through the use of ‘affective forces’ (ibid.) of fear does not mean that it is not a case of noumenal power, since in my non-Cartesian view affect and cognition are not separate areas of the mind. Moreover, the intended use of fear in this case is clearly a noumenal one; and if successful, noumenal power was exercised successfully.

To sum up, discourse theorists like Kettner and myself regard human beings as justifying beings, and we believe that this aspect of our being forms the basis for our understanding of concepts such as reason, morality, justice – and power. However,

when we reconstruct these terms philosophically, we must employ a twofold perspective and conceptualize the basic human practice of justification as both a *social* practice of actual and more or less effective justification for which we need a proper descriptive language and as a *normative* practice with built-in principles of discursive conduct and criteria for arriving at good justifications. And when doing so, it is essential to keep these perspectives distinct and combine them in the right way.

As Plato and Aristotle remind us, one of our particular forms of life as justifying beings is the life of scholarship. If that life produces something of value and is progressing, this can only be in the mode of dialectics and mutual criticism. Responding to the challenges by others provides you with the opportunity to make your ideas clear, sometimes digging deeper into their grounds, sometimes revising them. I conclude these remarks by expressing the hope that I made some such progress in my attempt to reply to my generous and thoughtful critics; and if that is not an illusion, I am deeply indebted to them – also for the many opportunities they offered me to make even greater progress that I may have missed.¹⁵

Notes

1. In that version, there have been a few slight changes in certain formulations.
2. See especially my *Contexts of Justice* (2002), *The Right to Justification* (2012), *Toleration in Conflict* (2013) and *Justification and Critique* (2014a) as well as in *Justice, Democracy and The Right to Justification* (2014b).
3. See, for example, Niesen (2012), Hellmann (2013), Fahrmeir (2013), Lutz-Bachmann (2015), Hofmann and Kadelbach (2016).
4. See, for example, the productive use of the notion of noumenal power made by Nicole Curato, Marit Hammond, and John Min, in their *Power in Deliberative Democracy: Norms, Forums, Systems* (forthcoming).
5. See Boltanski and Thévenot (2006) and my introduction in Forst (2017b, p. 12f).
6. I develop my view of Kantian constructivism especially in *The Right to Justification* (2012) and ‘The Justification of Basic Rights: A Discourse-Theoretical Approach’ (2016).
7. In the same vein, I also do not see why Susen, after having reconstructed my distinction between rule and domination and allowing for the notion of legitimate – say, democratic – rule as distinct from domination (i.e., rule without proper justification) thinks that the distinction has no use (Susen 2018, p. 19).
8. See the critique by Allen (2014) and my replies in Allen, Haugaard and Forst (2014) and Forst (2014c).
9. See my discussion of contexts of justification and recognition in Forst (2002, ch. 5). I discuss Honneth and Fraser in Forst (2014a, ch. 5). See also my paper on ‘Noumenal Alienation’ (Forst 2017a).
10. See my remarks in footnote 44 in Forst (2015, p. 124); footnote 48 in Forst (2017b, p. 49).
11. Note that here I am using the term ‘structural power’ as outlined above. So Hayward is mistaken when she says that I only speak of power when it is exercised intentionally by powerful agents (Hayward 2018, p. 62). That is not the case; it only applies to the cases in which I am speaking of the exercise of power. See my response to Lukes on these issues.
12. As Gilibert puts it in his paper: ‘Reason is a continuous source of resistance, resilience and initiative in the face of injustice. So long as their rational capacities are not themselves extinguished, human beings can question and reject unjust orders and imagine and pursue just ones’ (Gilibert 2018, p. 82).
13. See Haugaard (1997, 2003, 2012).
14. See also his more comprehensive discussion in Kettner (1999).

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