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A Description And Elaboration Of Reality, Power, and Ethics: A Dialogue Concerning Approaches To Political Theory

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A thin but important line needs to be drawn between a theory creating political reality and one describing political reality. This distinction is at the core of what continues to divide political theory: The question is whether political scientists should strive for theories that describe reality in the tradition of science, or should they attempt to develop theories that describe reality in terms of what ought to be changed or remain the same. Regardless of one's side on this "is" versus "ought" issue, there are common concerns beyond constructing reality that must be addressed: namely, power, ethics, organizations, and context. Clearly, one lives by means of theories; therefore, we hope that this article gives all participants involved in the "is/ought" dialogue a better understanding of what a theory is, how it can be used, how it can be abused, and its impact on political analysis. "Sometimes science is nudged by pioneers from the field who put studies together in new ways and ask questions from an unexpected perspective." --Kathleen DesMaisons

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