

Alexander Max Bauer and Malte Ingo Meyerhuber

Epilogue¹

On Doxa and Aletheia

One might think that the concluding chapter of a volume on the relationship between empirical research and normative theory ought to provide some sort of a robust, conclusive, and unambiguous answer on how these two domains are and should be related. The perspectives on the relation between the two spheres illustrated throughout the chapters are manifold, especially due to the inter- or transdisciplinary nature of the chapters within this volume. Nonetheless, the interested reader may still expect an integration of these different angles into one larger comprehensive framework of how to relate empirical research and normative theory.

We may, however, need to somewhat dampen such expectations. Different fields seem to require different levels of integration between the two. Most authors in this volume appear to have an affirmative perspective on the matter at hand. Others, however, problematise certain relations of those spheres.

Several chapters discuss the relation of empirical research and normative theory for the social sciences. First, Sylke Meyerhuber (chapter 2) reflects how normative theories and value-systems can be used to guide empirical (qualitative) research. She argues for these normative theories as a valuable guiding compass for scientific professionalism and identity, concerning issues such as keeping a humanistic outlook and acting in ethical and sustainable ways. Next, Jannis Kreienkamp, Max Agostini, Malte Ingo Meyerhuber, Marvin Kunz, and Carlos A. de Matos Fernandes (chapter 3) critically reflect on the unintentional impact of normative assumptions throughout the (quantitative) empirical research process and demonstrate how this may distort the search for scientific “truth”. They, thereby, demonstrate some of the dangers of unreflected intertwinement between normative assumptions and empirical research, while also offering several potential solutions to this problem. Thereafter, Guillermina Jasso (chapter 4) shows the interweaving of empirical work and normative considerations from the perspective of social sciences, providing several illustrations tracing the path from ideas to theory to empirics. Her work introduces is-about-ought questions, which represent the scientific search for knowledge about the normative views to which persons subscribe. Also at the intersection

¹ The considerations concerning Hannah Arendt’s Socrates have been published in German as Bauer and Meyerhuber (2019).