
Vagueness and social ontology: implications of inquiry-resistant borderline cases for social ontological theorising

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Résumé

The aim of the paper is to develop a critique of the explanatory scope of social ontology as developed by the Cambridge Social Ontology Group (CSOG) by reference to semantic and ontic vagueness. At its core lies the theory of social ontology, which proposes that human beings and artefacts occupy social positions within emerging social totalities by virtue of receiving community-accepted, interdependent rights and obligations. However, we argue that vagueness postulates a fundamental incompleteness for social ontology. Vagueness, here, is to be understood as a matter of indeterminacy in borderline cases that pose non-trivial limitations to social positioning. By this we mean to say that there are instances in social ontological theorising that exclude themselves from proper inquiry. While these limitations cannot be overcome we identify four sets of theories, namely supervaluationism, epistemicism, truth degree theories and contextualism, which will allow CSOG members to explain why these limitations are present.

Mots-Clés: social ontology, philosophy

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