

Open Questions in the Metaphysics of Habitable Categories*

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Abstract

My purpose in this text is to offer a general roadmap for navigating most current debates in the metaphysics of social categories regarding what sort of fact it is for a person to inhabit one social category or another—for example, what makes a person Mexican, or gay, or rich. With this goal in mind, I propose classifying the debating positions into three broad camps: common sense theories, socio-historical accounts, and performative theories. I characterise their main differences, identifying the main challenges and achievements of each. I show that for persons well integrated into their categories, the differences between these three broad camps are minuscule, yet become crucial when we try to account for

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people not so well integrated. Then, I sketch a pluralist proposal that reconciles the three camps I have identified, while doing justice to the challenges presented by interstitial phenomena such as *mestizaje*, transition, passing, migration, etc.

Key Words: social ontology, social categories, social construction, identity, migration