23-24 Giere Memorial Lecture    
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Title: Language and the Complexity of the World: A Prolegomenon to Theorizing Vagueness

Abstract:

Nature is complex, exceedingly so.  A repercussion of this “complex world constraint” is that it is, in practice, impossible to connect words to the world in a foolproof manner.  I explore the ways in which the complex world constraint makes vagueness (or more generally imprecision) in practice unavoidable, illuminates what vagueness comes to, avoids higher-order vagueness, and guides us to a sensible way of thinking about truth of vague statements.  Along the way we see that the problem of ceteris paribus laws and the problem of vagueness have the same source and are susceptible to similar treatment.