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## gLAWcal #172 COMMENT

### THE LINK BETWEEN ONTOLOGY, LANGUAGE AND GOVERNANCE

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*Based on*

**Margaret Stout and Jeannine M. Love**  
**“Grounding Governance in Ontology”**



**gLAWcal**  
Global Law Initiatives for Sustainable Development



**Routledge**  
Taylor & Francis Group

## A gLAWcal comment on "Grounding Governance in Ontology" in Margaret STOUT and Jeannine M. LOVE "A Radically Democratic Response to Global Governance"

Chapter 3 deals with a study of the differences between ontology and language. By ontology, the author means the most general branch of metaphysics concerned with the nature of being and generally stems from philosophy, religion, or physics. In other words, it is how we frame an understanding of ourselves and the human condition within what we presume reality to be. It is easily understandable that ontological assumptions drive our behavior, but are nearly invisible to those holding them unless specifically questioned or confronted by differing perspectives. The author makes clear that ontology is a very complex concept which has been studied and can be linked to divergent ontologies. In order to explore them, it is helpful to employ an ideal-type method to draw out principal characteristics and their differences. What is evident is that it has been claimed that "public administration exists to realize the governance of society." Ontology is also important to governance theory and practice be-

cause it frames presuppositions about all aspects of life and what is good and right. It is worth noting that the preliminary dialogue on ontology in public administration is encouraging, it by no means fully elucidates answers to the implications of its pre-figurative role in governance. Nor have subsequent articles and books by these and other public administration scholars exhausted the topic. A growing number of scholars in a variety of disciplines argue that ontology prefigures which particular social and political forms are deemed appropriate or even possible. Political philosophy is based on beliefs about how to achieve the Good, assuming the ontological nature of human being. Governance practices are grounded in political philosophy and because of that governance theory cannot overlook or assume the ontological underpinnings of the political philosophy from which it cannot be severed. If we do not do this philosophical work and merely try to change practices to achieve different results, the attempts are likely to fail. It is necessary to identify the reasons why principal approaches to governance and their hybrids do not fit the contemporary global condition and perpetuate hegemonic colonization. An alternative ontology that could meet the unstable and weak characteristics can represent a most promising solution for a non-hegemonic approach to governance.



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To influence policymakers, to raise awareness over Non Trade Concerns, to encourage stakeholder participation, and to disseminate gLAWcal's publication results.



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