

ABSTRACT

Epistemicism about vagueness (e.g. Williamson, Sorensen, Horwich) postulates a realm of distinctions drawn by basic vague concepts—semantically unstructured concepts like *bald*, *yellow*, *tall*, *heap*, and so on, — that transcend our capacity to know them. Thus an indiscernible difference between two colour patches in a sorites for “yellow” will mark an abrupt transition from yellow to e.g. orange; the impression of the *indeterminacy* of that distinction is merely a misunderstanding our inability to know where the determinate boundary falls. An intuitionist philosophy of vagueness, as do many philosophies of the semantics and metaphysics of vague expressions, finds this idea superstitious and rejects it. The vagueness-intuitionist, however, credits the epistemicist with a crucial insight: that vagueness is indeed a *cognitive*, rather than a semantic phenomenon —something that is not a *consequence* of some kind of indeterminacy, or open-endedness in the semantics of vague expressions but rather resides in our brute inability to bring e.g. *yellow* and *orange* right up against one another, so to speak, to mark a sharp and stable boundary.

I will present a solution to the Sorites paradox that is consonant with this idea but, by motivating a background logic that observes (broadly) intuitionistic restrictions on the proof-theory for negation, allows us to treat the paradoxical reasoning as a simple *reductio* of its major premise, without the unwelcome implication, sustained by classical logic, of sharp cut-offs. (The proposal I will try out is different from that put forward in earlier work, e.g. Wright (2007). I will not presuppose familiarity with that, but knowledge of it might help set the scene.)

References:

- Williamson, T. 1994 *Vagueness*. Routledge.
Sorensen, R. 1988 *Blindspots*. Oxford.
Horwich, P. 1990 *Truth*. Blackwell
Wright, C. 2007 “ ‘Wang’s Paradox’ ”, available at:
<http://philosophy.fas.nyu.edu/object/crispinwright.html>