
Abstract:
An Anti-Bivalentist Solution to the Sorites Paradox
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The phenomenon of *first-order vagueness* is characterized by expressions (e.g. predicates) that lead to *borderline utterances*, such as “Byron is bald”, which seem to violate *bivalence*. Bivalence states that every utterance is either true or false. So it is false that every utterance is either true or false.

A closely related phenomenon to first-order vagueness is the phenomenon of *higher-order vagueness*: that is, there are borderline cases to first-order borderline cases and this phenomenon generalizes *ad infinitum*. It might, for example, be unclear whether Byron is a borderline case of baldness. A common strategy to resolving the problem of vagueness (and higher-order vagueness) is anti-bivalentism (i.e., the view that bivalence is false).

The two most prevalent objections to anti-bivalentism come from Timothy Williamson. He argues that all claims that bivalence is false are self-contradictory, and that the contradiction will occur at any level of vagueness: so anti-bivalentism can neither handle first or higher-order vagueness. However, I argue for a novel view of anti-bivalentism in which the anti-bivalentist, without self-contradiction (at any level of vagueness), can claim that borderline utterances are neither true nor false.

In Chapter 1, I introduce the phenomenon of vagueness.

In Chapter 2, I show that Timothy Williamson’s two *reductio* proofs that purport to show that all our utterances must have precise (and unknowable) boundaries fail. I argue that one can coherently deny bivalence by recognizing that the proper characterization of bivalence involves the use of two distinct extensions of classical negation.

In Chapter 3, I argue that *supervaluationism* is not a viable theory. My *main* argument is that the supervaluationist’s claim that we can *sharpen* our truth-valueless utterances so that they can be classified as either true or false leads, contrary to the supervaluationists claim of a sparse ontology, to semantic extravagance: there will be a multiplicity of sharp expressions for every vague utterance.

In Chapter 4, I argue that *nihilism* can be resisted by showing that the *problem of the many* has nothing to do with the sorites paradox but with reference.

In Chapter 5, I argue for the novel view that *ontological vagueness* should be understood in terms of vague unity relations.

In Chapter 6, I argue that our use of vague utterances are sufficiently similar to other, more mundane practices. This gives us evidence for my anti-bivalentist position without involving any ignorance. I defuse the sorites paradox (and higher-order vagueness), explain the semantics of my third truth-value, *b*, and explain why we are attracted to sorites reasoning in virtue of subjunctive, not indicative conditionals.

¹This document was written in [L^AT_EX](#).