

Rosanna Keefe and Peter Smith (editors)

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## REVIEW

GEORGE ENGLEBRETSSEN

A common feature of natural languages, a feature hard to overlook, is the large number of vague terms. In English, for example, terms such as ‘old’, ‘tall’, ‘smooth’, ‘bald’, ‘thin’, and so on, are vague. Indeed, the term ‘large’ in the first sentence above is vague. Vague terms have certain obvious features: they admit borderline cases (Michael Jordan is tall and I am not, but what about those 6 foot guys?), their boundaries are fuzzy (even admitting six-footers as borderline, where is the boundary between the tall and the borderline?) and they can generate paradox (*viz.*, sorites paradoxes: if Jordan is tall, so is the man 1mm shorter; and if *he* is tall, so is the man 1mm shorter than him; and if that third man is tall, then . . .; so every man is tall). Vagueness might be seen as a defect of natural languages, as Frege and Russell believed, or it might be taken as simply an essential feature of natural languages, as Dummett, for example, has claimed.

Whether vagueness is to be eliminated from natural languages or is essential to them, the puzzles and challenges raised by vagueness are to be met in a wide variety of philosophical environments. Philosophers of language must, eventually, come to terms with the question of whether or not certain kinds of expressions have vague meanings or have a variety of precise meanings but stand in some vague semantic relation with them. Epistemologists face the issue of whether to assign the apparent vagueness of certain concepts to the concepts themselves (*e.g.*, *old* is an inherently vague concept) or to assign it to us (we are limited in our ability to determine the point of demarcation between what is old and what is not old). Ontologists are challenged by the question of where is vagueness to be located (in objects, in the properties of objects, in us). Logicians must deal with the paradoxes of vagueness (*viz.*, the sorites) and with the problems raised for formal languages that admit