Vagueness: Some Questions

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Some questions

• (1) Why is vagueness a problem? Why is it a philosophical problem?
• (2) What role does logic play in setting up the problem of vagueness?
• (3) How should one approach the problem of vagueness? What counts as an acceptable solution?
• (4) What role should one’s intuitions about what is vague or not play in assessing answers to the problem of vagueness?
• (5) Does the sorites argument require one to change classical logic?
• (6) What does it mean to change a law of logic? How is that possible?
• (7) Can a law of logic be changed on empirical grounds? Does this happen in the case of the sorites?
Some questions

• (8) Let us suppose that Barney is a cat, and that it has loose hairs, $h_1...h_{100}$. Let us also suppose that it is indeterminate whether these loose hairs are parts of the cat.

• Let us now consider the cats $c_i$, which have among their parts all the loose hairs except $h_i$. So:

• Cat $c_1$ has all the loose hairs except hair $h_1$.
• Cat $c_2$ has all the loose hairs except hair $h_2$.
• Cat $c_3$ has all the loose hairs except hair $h_3$, and so on.
• Clearly, each of the cats $c_i$ is cat-like and, since they have different parts, they are not identical to each other.

• Question: which of them is Barney? (See Lewis [1993], Unger [1980], and Keefe [2000], pp. 160-161.)
Some questions

• (9) Which (if any) of the various approaches to the sorites we discussed seems right to you?
• (10) How would you construct your own account of the sorites paradox?