REFEREE REPORT: Vagueness or Graduality?

* Recommendation: Revise and Resubmit

Apologies to the author for the terrible delay in this report.

* Reasons for recommendation: What follows are general comments that motivate my recommendation.

1. General Comment: The paper is interesting, and seems to propose a novel and potentially valuable treatment of vagueness. The main worry is that it isn't exactly clear how the proposal differs from similar frameworks on the market, or at least natural extensions of familiar frameworks. (See item (2)--(4) below.) Because comparison or discussion of other such frameworks is vital for this sort of framework, I cannot recommend publication at this stage. That said, the paper has a nice discussion of Williamson's position (and arguments), and it is certainly interesting to see a paraconsistent continuum-valued approach being similar, in many respects, to Williamson's approach -- but without the prima badness of Williamson's approach (viz., the incredible essential ignorance of borderlines).

2. Paraconsistent: paraconsistent treatments are promising inasmuch as they keep the main premises of the sorites -- at least when expressed as a disjunction. These may be kept because DS fails on such theories. I do not see anything terribly novel in Author's proposal beyond this -- except for the continuum-values approach (see below).

3. Continuum-valued approach: it isn't clear how Author's approach is an improvement on Priest's continuum-valued approach in his paper in Beall's /Liars and Heaps/ (OUP, 200?) volume. Author should at least make the difference clear. (NB: Priest doesn't add another negation, but this is -- at least on the surface -- not an essential difference. There's no reason that such a negation can't be added to Priest's proposal.)

4. Two Negations: in his 'Transparent Disquotationalism' (in Beall and Armour-Garb, eds., /Deflationism and Paradox/ OUP 200?), Beall proposes two negations -- in effect, a strong and weak, in Author's terminology -- but doesn't go the route of continuum values. It'd be helpful to know what Author's proposal can do that Beall's proposal cannot do. (As I recall, Beall's paper didn't have much to say about the sorites, but a natural paraconsistent treatment falls out of the discussion -- one that, minus the continuum values, would be along the same lines of Author's.)

5. Paraconsistent and implicative connective: Author correctly discusses the fact that, for a suitably detachable and strong conditional, the major premises of sorites will be rejected. (Indeed, they're flat out implausible with a suitably strong conditional.) This is correct, but Author fails to make clear that this is a well- known point about paraconsistent approaches. (After all, if => detaches and the major premises are true, then triviality results.
The key to a paraconsistent solution is that there is no suitably strong conditional in the language for which the major soritical premises are plausibly true.)

6. Observable gluts: one issue that Author ought to discuss a bit more is a common complaint against paraconsistent approaches to vaguenss. In particular, we seem to be saddled -- even on Author's proposal -- with the truth of observable contradictions, i.e., true contradictions in the observable world. (Such and so is red and not.

Etc.) If Author's proposal were a non-paraconsistent, 'consistentist' degree approach, then such apparent contradictions are explained away. But that's not Author's approach. What would be good is for Author to at least explain why such /observable/ contradictions are tolerable. (Some work by Beall and Priest, and Beall and Colyvan has been done on this issue in the AJP.)

7. Degrees, in general: Author should also spend more time on the general issue of 'higher-order vagueness', which is typically a major complaint against degree-theoretic approaches. (Author touches on this in discussion of Williamson's position, but more could be said against standard worries here.)

*** Let me emphasise that I think the Author's paper is potentially important. At the moment, however, it simply leaves too much under- discussed or unclear (see points above). Were Author to fill in the gaps (above), I would be happy to look at the paper again, as it could be a novel and important position.