Williamson on Wittgenstein's "Family Resemblances" and the Sorites Paradox

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ABSTRACT: In a short section of his book *Vagueness*, Timothy Williamson attempts to resolve a paradox regarding the expansion of Wittgenstein's 'family resemblance' concepts, as they are described in his *Philosophical Investigations*. Williamson contends that certain 'family resemblance' concepts such as "game" seem to have the capability to expand through a network of resemblances to become applicable to everything – an undesirable and perhaps paradoxical conclusion. In short, if Wittgenstein's theory is to be plausible, argues Williamson, there must be some sort of block, conceptual or otherwise, to extensions of concepts that are susceptible to sorites paradoxes. Williamson finds the best such block to be that the negation of a family resemblance concept expands in tandem with that family resemblance concept, eliminating the possibility of paradox through a sort of tension between assertion and denial. This paper argues that this solution, along with Williamson's framing of the problem, is untenable because it misunderstands the nature of Wittgenstein's investigations and provides no relief from the problem it sets out to correct. An alternative solution is presented through an exegesis of Wittgenstein's text, which, while not addressing the problem directly, gives guidance on how to approach paradoxes like Williamson's.

KEYWORDS: Family resemblance, Sorites paradox, T. Williamson, vagueness, Wittgenstein.

Introduction

In a short section of his 1994 book *Vagueness*, Timothy Williamson discusses the relationship between the Wittgensteinian theory of 'family resemblance' concepts and the sorites paradox. Certain 'family resemblance' concepts such as "game" seem to have the capability to expand through a network of resemblances to become applicable to everything – an undesirable and perhaps paradoxical conclusion. In short, if Wittgenstein's theory is to be plausible, Williamson contends, there must be some sort of block, conceptual or otherwise, to extensions of concepts that are susceptible to sorites paradoxes. As Wittgenstein offers no answer to the question himself, Williamson considers several possible answers, concluding that perhaps the theory could only allow for a block that functions in practice, rather than some conceptual block. Williamson finds the best such block to be that the negation of a family resemblance concept expands in tandem with that family resemblance concept, eliminating the possibility of paradox through some sort of tension between assertion and denial. This paper argues that Williamson's solution is untenable, and his formulation of the problem misguided. An alternative solution to the problem is presented, with grounding in Wittgenstein's text.

1. The Sorites Paradox

The Sorites Paradox, or paradox of the heap, is one of the most famous ancient Greek paradoxes, and the most famous one to deal with vagueness. It can be formulated in various ways, but is most well-known in relation to grains of sand. One possible formulation (adapted from Sainsbury 1987, p. 46) uses as its first premise:

(1) A 10,000-grained collection is a heap.

This premise is uncontroversial, as it could be equally well formulated with any larger number as well, to appease anyone who doubts that only 10,000 grains would make a heap. The second premise is:

(2) If any n-grained collection makes a heap, so does an $n-1$-grained collection.

This premise also appears reasonably uncontroversial. If a 10,000-grained collection is a heap, it's almost unthinkable that a 9,999-grained collection wouldn't also be a heap. But if both of these premises are held to be true, they lead to the apparently unacceptable conclusion that even a 1-grained collection of sand is a heap. If we assume that a 10,000-grained collection is a heap, then by premise 2, so is a 9,999-grained collection. A 9,998-grained collection is therefore also a heap, by premise 2. Following this procedure for the ever-decreasing sizes of the collection, we reach the conclusion that if a 2-grained collection is a heap, so is a 1-grained collection. This conclusion seems unacceptable.

Furthermore, with the addition of two other premises, which seems analogous to the previous two, an outright contradiction can be derived. The third premise is:

(3) A 1-grained collection is not a heap.

This premise seems to be in tune with the normal, everyday usage of "heap." A fourth premise, which seems as uncontroversial as the second premise is:

(4) If any n-grained collection does not make a heap, neither does an n+1-grained collection.

These latter two premises can be combined in a similar manner to the former two to show that even a 10,000-grained collection is not a heap, con-

tradicting the first premise, which states it is a heap (these four premises actually generate many more contradictions – any n-grain sized collection is both a heap and not a heap).

The sorites paradox raises many philosophical problems, mainly centered on the issue of vagueness. Where is the dividing line between heap and non-heap? Is there such a dividing line? If we accept there to be borderline cases, are there also borderline borderline cases? Moreover, the question of what exactly this vagueness is has yet to be answered. R. M. Sainsbury gives several possibilities in his book *Paradoxes*. Vagueness could be the absence of fact: for those collections that could potentially be heaps or non-heaps, there is no fact of the matter as to whether they are heaps or not. Vagueness could be the absence of a sharp boundary between what is a heap or not. It could be an incompleteness of meaning; if 'heap' were more exactly defined, it would not experience these problems resulting from vagueness. Vagueness could furthermore be a feature of the world, and entirely objective; or a result of human ignorance, and entirely subjective (Sainsbury 1987, p. 42). Solutions to the paradox are equally as varied, however center in on the second (or fourth) premise as the faulty one – that it isn't always the case that adding/subtracting one grain won't change the status of the heap/non-heap.

2. Wittgenstein's Family Resemblances

In his *Philosophical Investigations*, Wittgenstein turns his examination of language to an analogous investigation into the activities that we call "games." When posed the question "What is a game?" it is easy for one to begin his/her search for an answer by considering what element or elements of certain games are held in common by all games. But to assume that a common element exists is a mistake, argues Wittgenstein. Rather than positing that some common element must exist, in virtue of which all games are called

"games," Wittgenstein argues that we must first look and see whether there is such a common element. Its existence is not a necessity. "Don't think, but look!" Wittgenstein warns (Wittgenstein 1953, §66). The search for a common element to all games proves to be difficult. Begin with board games, for example. Perhaps we find that all board games are competitive as well as entertaining. But then consider certain other games, like a father playing catch with his son. This is also entertaining, but the competitive aspect has now dropped away. Then consider a sort of putting drill that a professional golfer has turned into a game to better his skills. He may play the game for hours yet find it excessively dull. Now the aspect of entertainment has dropped away. Consider the ratios of skill to luck in games. In some games, like chess, the influence of luck is essentially nil. In other games, like the card game War, skill has no influence. One of the best candidates for a common aspect to all games is the existence of certain rules as to how to play that game. However, one can imagine a child playing a game in which the rules are nebulous and in constant flux, so that there isn't really any set of specifiable rules for the game. The search for a common element to all games turns up fruitless in Wittgenstein's study.

Instead, what we end up finding is "a complicated network of similarities overlapping and criss-crossing: similarities in the large and in the small" (Wittgenstein 1953, §66). Many games may be similarly competitive or entertaining. A smaller subset of games may all feature competition between two teams. Another small group of games may all make use of a chessboard. Rather than all games having some common property, there seem to be intertwining similarities between the different kinds of games. Here Wittgenstein poses a potential objection to his conclusion that there may be no one common element to all games:

> But if someone wanted to say, "So there is something common to all these constructions – namely, the disjunction of all their common properties" – I'd reply: Now

you are only playing with a word. One might as well say, "There is a Something that runs through the whole thread – namely, the continuous overlapping of these fibres" (Wittgenstein 1953, §67).

It isn't entirely clear what Wittgenstein means when he says, "Now you are only playing with a word." He seems to mean that calling the disjunction of these common properties itself a common property is just playing with the term "common property." This is not sufficient as a common property to all games, as it really serves more as a common property of all the common properties of games – that they can be arranged in a disjunction that is applicable to all games.

Wittgenstein terms these overlapping and criss-crossing similarities "family resemblances" (Wittgenstein 1953, §67). He likens these similarities to the similarities in appearance or demeanor that one might find in a family. Perhaps in a family of four, three out of four members have blue eyes, but one has brown. However, the member with brown eyes is linked to the others by the fact that he has brown hair, like two other members of the family. It's possible that none of these possible similarities extend over the entire family, yet between any two members of the family there are enough commonalities that a striking resemblance can be found. However, we can also imagine these resemblances extended out over a family larger than a nuclear family. Perhaps the daughter of a certain mother has many of these features in common with her. This mother also has many features in common with her own mother, who also shares many features in common with her respective mother. However, the features each particular mother-daughter pair shares in common might be varied. One pair may share eye and hair color, and the next pair may share eye color and height, and so on. Through this process, it's easy to imagine how after several generations, a daughter may look entirely different from her great-great-great-grandmother, although many features are held in common by each respective pair. We

could imagine different sorts of games to be like generations: board games may hold much in common with ball games, which may hold much in common with other athletic games. However, this chain of similarities may not preserve any single similarity that is common to all games.

It's important to remember that Wittgenstein does not contend that all concepts are family resemblance concepts. Take the concept of "airplane" perhaps. While the different sorts of airplanes may differ a great deal, it seems reasonable that wings could be a common property of all of them. This is why Wittgenstein says to look, not think; investigate as to whether there is a common property, but if there is not, that too can be the result of the investigation.

Williamson is correct when he says, "the sense of a family resemblance term has a dynamic quality, for the extent of its legitimate application can grow over time" (Williamson 1994, p. 85). Wittgenstein says that it's possible for the extension of a family resemblance concept to not be "closed by a boundary" (Wittgenstein 1953, §68). The concept "game" functions well as an example here, as countless new games which were never previously specified as games can be appropriated into the concept by virtue of their similarities to other games. Each new board or card game doubtlessly departs from all previously enumerated games in some ways, but is nonetheless considered a game. However, some family resemblance concepts may also be closed by a boundary. "Number," for example, could be given rigid boundaries, such that the concept of number is exhausted by some definite list of sub-concepts, which are interrelated in a family resemblance way. Wittgenstein anticipates an objection to his conclusion that some family resemblance concepts have open boundaries. A potential objector might contend, "the use of [game] is unregulated – the game with play with it is unregulated" (Wittgenstein 1953, §68). Wittgenstein concedes this – that in a certain way, our use of the word in unregulated. However, unregulated is not synonymous with unusable. If the ability to use a word is analogous to

the ability to play a game, then the example of golf could shed some light on how this lack of regulation is not entirely destructive to our use of the word. In golf, there are regulations for just about every foreseeable circumstance, yet some are lacking. There is perhaps no rule for how fast one may swing the club, nor a rule for how long one's hair may be. However, the lack of these rules does not (at least usually) prevent one from being able to play the game. In the same way, lacking certain rules for the usage of "game" does not usually prevent one from being able to use it.

Wittgenstein's insistence on the possibility of certain concepts lacking a common feature in all their occurrences generates uneasiness in some readers. Specifically, it seems as though Wittgenstein is saying that we can use certain words without being able to explain their meaning very well at all:

> How would we explain to someone what a game is? I think that we'd describe games to him, and we might add to the description: "This and similar things are called 'games'." And do we know any more ourselves? Is it just that we can't tell others exactly what a game is? – But this is not ignorance. We don't know the boundaries because none have been drawn (Wittgenstein 1953, §69).

Wittgenstein makes two important points here. First, the reason we don't know where the boundaries between game/non-game lie is that such boundaries do not exist. The concept is open to new extensions. But later Wittgenstein says, "the concept of a game is a concept with blurred edges" (Wittgenstein 1953, §71). So which is it? Are the boundaries non-existent, or are there edges, but in a "blurred" state? The answer might be be that both of these are true, once one makes the distinction between boundary and edge. The concept has no boundaries, no limits to what it could eventually apply to (given that we actually would apply the concept to these cases as a practical matter) but it exists with blurred edges as to what it does apply to, with perhaps some disputable cases, which are neither clearly games nor non-games. Second, Wittgenstein

draws a distinction between *knowing* and *saying*, which he later illustrates more explicitly:

> Compare knowing and saying:
>
> how many metres high Mont Blanc is –
> how the word "game" is used –
> how a clarinet sounds.
>
> Someone who is surprised that one can know something and not be able to say it is perhaps thinking of a case like the first. Certainly not of one like the third (Wittgenstein 1953, §78).

It seems obviously ridiculous that someone should know the height of Mont Blanc but not be able to say it, but it is not so ridiculous that someone could know how a clarinet sounds, but not be able to say what it sounds like. Wittgenstein compares our knowledge of what a game is to our knowledge of how a clarinet sounds – just because we can't say what it is, doesn't mean we don't know.

3. 'Family Resemblances' and Sorites Paradoxes

Williamson contends that "family resemblance concepts appear susceptible to sorites paradoxes, indeed positively to invite them" (Williamson 1994, p. 87). There appears to be no stopping an open-bordered family resemblance concept from gradually extending itself to include any activity or object we can think of. The concept of a game could be extended, through reasonable extensions by virtue of resemblance, to perhaps include "nuclear warfare" or any other activity (Williamson 1994, p. 87).

Wittgenstein offers no solutions of his own to this problem, contends Williamson. Williamson begins his search for a solution by considering possible conceptual blocks. The first block he considers is a requirement that "any two games should sufficiently resemble each other (not in the same

respect for each pair), sufficiency being determined by speakers' judge-ments" (Williamson 1994, p. 87). Williamson rightly rejects this, because it "violates the spirit" of Wittgenstein's family resemblances (Williamson 1994, p. 87). Wittgenstein's account was intended to show how a single con-cept, like "game," could encapsulate very diverse activities, activities which need not be similar to any other certain game in any certain way. I would expand upon Williamson's criticism by noting that requiring a commonal-ity between any two games undermines the focus on local similarities that Wittgenstein's account emphasizes. Another such failed requirement noted by Williamson would be a requirement that any game should sufficiently re-semble a certain paradigm game. Though this requirement is not equivalent to the requirement of a single common property to all games (as each game could resemble the paradigm game in different ways, and therefore there could be pairs of games which bear no resemblance to one another), it runs into other problems. In expanding on Williamson's criticism, it's helpful to ask, which game should be chosen as the paradigm game? There doesn't seem to be any clear candidate. This also clashes with how we use the word "game." When we describe what games are to someone who doesn't know, we don't give a description like "Games are activities similar to baseball." The description is much more complicated and requires more than a single example game. Furthermore, I would argue, the requirement of a paradigm game would give the concept of "game" rigid boundaries. The paradigm game presumably has a finite number of properties (if it had an infinite number, we'd be in trouble again, as its power to limit the extension of the concept would be in question). For sake of example, we could say that the paradigm game is played with a ball, is entertaining, is competitive, and has no other properties. This could reduce the concept of game to the disjunc-tion of all activities which are either played with a ball, entertaining, or competitive. These sort of rigid boundaries Wittgenstein finds at odds with

the way in which game is used, and the way in which the concept grows. This requirement nullifies any possibility for a family resemblance term to have truly open boundaries, which is a central incentive to Wittgenstein's account. Williamson rejects this conceptual block as well, but does so for the wrong reasons, I would argue. Williamson says:

> If there are paradigm games, there are paradigm games of many kinds, and 'paradigm game' is itself a family resemblance term, threatened by its own sorites paradox. One hardly wants to block a paradox about paradigm games by invoking paradigm paradigm games (Williamson 1994, p. 87).

Williamson ignores Wittgenstein's warning of "don't think, but look!" in assuming that, first, there would be paradigm games of many kinds, and second, that 'paradigm game' would itself be a family resemblance term (Wittgenstein 1953, §66). First, if a paradigm game exists, there need not be more than one. This would be the paradigm game which all games must resemble in some way. Williamson is perhaps thinking there would also be paradigm games of other types, like a paradigm board game or paradigm ball game, which all board or ball games should resemble. But this need not be so, as "board game" and "ball game" are not family resemblance terms, and so require no paradigm game. They are already strung together by a common property, that of being played with a ball or a board. Second, 'paradigm game' is not necessarily a family resemblance term. In order to see if it is a family resemblance term, one would need to look at all the paradigm games (assuming that there are multiple, which need not be so) to see if there is some common property among all of them. But as we have no examples of paradigm games, we cannot investigate whether it is a family resemblance term or not. Again, I would argue, the right reason to reject the appeal to paradigm games is that it ignores the major focus on local similarities in Wittgenstein's account and gives the concept rigid boundaries out of sync with our actual use of the term.

4. Williamson's Solution

Williamson's solution for the threat of sorites paradoxes to family resemblance concepts is offered quite tentatively, only as a "more hopeful suggestion" (Williamson 1994, p. 87). His idea is that "the negation of a family resemblance concept is itself a family resemblance concept" (Williamson 1994, p. 87). If the extension of the concept of "game" grows through a branching-out of local similarities, then the extension of the concept of "non-game" should mirror this growth, expanding the extension of activities which can be properly denied to be games. The paradox will be avoided through a sort of tension between assertion and denial. When the concept of "game" attempts to over-extend itself, it will be limited by its own negation and unable to claim those things under the extension of "non-game" as games. Though on their own, each concept could extend itself into paradoxical territory, put together they constitute a block for any potential sorites paradox.

Williamson admits this solution is limited. It constitutes no conceptual block, but only "suggests a device in the functioning of family resemblance concepts that might prevent paradoxes from arising in practice" (Williamson 1994, p. 88). Certain difficult questions also remain to be answered, such as which activities actually are games.

5. Problems with Williamson's Solution

The crux of Williamson's argument relies on the assumption that the expansion of the negation of a family resemblance concept is analogous to the expansion of that family resemblance concept. In his own words:

> If it is legitimate to deny that x is a game when it sufficiently resembles things that in the past have been legitimately denied to be games – just as it is legitimate to assert that x is a game when it sufficiently resembles things that in the past have been

legitimately asserted to be games – then the expansionist tendencies of assertion and denial should hold each other in check (Williamson 1994, p. 87).

One of the main appeals of Wittgenstein's account of family resemblances is that it seems to accurately reflect how we actually use everyday language. We call some new activity a game when it rightly resembles other activities that are accepted to be games. Williamson's solution has none of this appeal. It doesn't seem at all like we deny some new activity to be a game when it sufficiently resembles some other non-game. For example, we would not judge the activity of writing emails to be a non-game because it so closely resembles writing letters, which is also a non-game. Rather, when asked, "Is this a game?" we would compare the activity in question to known games, to see if there are sufficient similarities to warrant us calling it a game. We might say to ourselves, "Well, it is entertaining and competitive and played with a ball; therefore, it is a game." We equally might say, "It is not entertaining, nor competitive, nor played with a ball nor board nor cards; therefore, it does not seem to be a game." But what we would never say to ourselves is "Like gardening, it takes place outdoors, involves vegetation, and requires training; therefore, like gardening, it seems to not be a game." The concept of "non-game" does not grow by family resemblances, but rather it is a sort of negative concept – an accumulation of all activities which currently do not resemble known games sufficiently enough to be called games. Without this parallel expansion by the negation of the family resemblance concept, there is no "tension" keeping us from asserting that everything is a game, and Williamson's account breaks down.

Williamson also offers a more complex account of his solution, in which "the tension might be between 'game' and various specific contrary concepts, such as 'warfare', rather than between 'game' and its explicit contradictory 'non-game'" (Williamson 1994, p. 87). But how would this work? There would have to be some sort of ban that whatever is a game cannot

also be warfare, and vice versa. This also doesn't seem to be how ordinary language works. "Warfare" and "game" are considered contrary concepts because their current extensions are very dissimilar to one another. Another such pair of contrary concepts could be "survival activities" and "leisure activities", which at one point were perhaps mutually exclusive. An activity like fishing was considered among the survival activities because of its similarities with other activities necessary for survival. However, at a later time, because of its similarities with other leisure activities, fishing could be included in the extension of leisure activities. Though these two concepts were once contrary, it constitutes no contradiction or major offense that they should later overlap. In absence of some clarification as to how exactly these concepts are "contrary," we seem left with very little tension in the concepts themselves that isn't supported entirely by our current use of the terms.

This result raises a more important question regarding the sorites paradoxes that family resemblances terms find themselves threatened by. To what extent are they even paradoxes at all? Williamson frames the paradox as: "What is to stop us from gradually extending the concept of a game to any activity we choose, such as nuclear warfare?" (Williamson 1994, p. 87). As the previous paragraph showed, it isn't clear how extending the concept of game into territory such as warfare would constitute any sort of paradox or rule-breaking. It could certainly lead us to a concept of game which is exceedingly different from the one we have currently. It could also lead us to a concept of game that loses all usefulness – everything is a game. What seems to bother Williamson is the disharmony between this extended concept of game and our intuitive grasp of what a game is. But this is the same disharmony that someone in a hunter-gatherer society might feel in extending the concept of "leisure activities" to include hunting and fishing. It constitutes no contradiction, and is not a paradoxical outcome, but rather is discordant in proportion to the differences between the two different extensions of the term. This isn't

meant to bring up any concerns of cultural relativism, but rather to point out that we're free in many ways to call things what we want to call them, if we're willing to accept new standardized uses of terms.

There also doesn't seem to be a strong Wittgensteinian motivation to find a solution like Williamson's, even if it is somewhat problematic that a language game *could* break down like this. In relation to the proper usage of any term, Wittgenstein says, "It is not everywhere bounded by rules; but no more are there any rules for how high one may throw the ball in tennis, or how hard, yet tennis is a game for all that, and has rules too" (Wittgenstein 1953, §68). The rules of correct usage, or the rules of a language game, do not have to be exhaustive of all possibilities in order to be usable. This possibility is parodied in David Foster Wallace's *Infinite Jest*, in which a game of "Eschaton," which simulates nuclear warfare to an absurdly accurate degree through the use of a huge and esoteric body of rules, becomes unplayable once a small gap in the written rules, a gap assumed to be a part of the conceptual apparatus in which the rules are made possible, is manipulated by one of the players in order to avoid his impending loss (Wallace 1996, p. 335). However, it required a malevolent will for this gap in the rules to become problematic. In the case of family resemblance terms becoming sorites paradoxes, it's clear that there is no need for a conceptual block in order for the terms to be usable, as we use them every day. However, through purposeful manipulation of the existing rules, perhaps it is possible to make the language game unplayable, or not worth playing. This possibility should not worry us any more than the possibility of the rules of tennis breaking down, especially as the existence of both possibilities seems unavoidable.

6. Problems with Sufficient Resemblance

Williamson differentiates the paradox he identified in family resemblance concepts with others that he finds less interesting:

> At each stage, the new applications of the concept would resemble the old ones enough to be legitimate, even clearly so (the present sorites is quite different from one exploiting the vagueness of 'sufficient resemblance') (Williamson 1994, p. 87).

Williamson seems to mean that another paradox of the same sort could be contrived here, through a relaxed use of sufficient resemblance. As "sufficient resemblance" doesn't seem to be very exactly defined, one could utilize this wiggle room in meaning to extend the concept of "game" to activities that only sufficiently resemble other games on a very strained understanding of resemblance. However, Williamson defends that his paradox could be realized through a chain of resemblances that are strikingly clear.

However, "sufficient resemblance" might be a misleading term in thinking about family resemblances. Wittgenstein never uses the term while explaining the concept of family resemblances, choosing instead to talk about "affinities" (*Verwandtschaften*, Wittgenstein 1953, §65), "similarities" (*Ähnlichkeiten*, Wittgenstein 1953, §66), and "correspondences" (*Entsprechungen*, Wittgenstein 1953, §66). Whereas "sufficient resemblance" implies a sort of quantitative measure of resemblance, which could be justified as sufficient through quantitative evidence ("This activity resembles that game in 8 out of 11 properties, and is therefore sufficiently similar to be called a game"), Wittgenstein's words imply a more qualitative approach. An activity must resemble a game in the right *sort* of way in order to also be called a game. It might be difficult to say in *which* sort of way the activity must bear a resemblance to a game, but this analysis of resemblance seems to be more on the right track than a quantitative approach. After all, many non-game activities share numerous trivial properties with games – the activity takes place in Illinois, the storekeeper down the street takes part in the activity, the activity takes roughly 2 hours to complete, and so on. Many of these similarities simply hold no weight in determining whether an activity is a game or not. This puts Williamson's claim, that "At each stage, the new applications of the concept would

resemble the old ones enough to be legitimate, even clearly so," into jeopardy (Williamson 1994, p. 87). It doesn't seem to be a question of whether the new applications resemble the old ones "enough," but rather if they resemble the old ones in the right way.

The question of in which way an activity must resemble a game in order to also be a game is a difficult one, and perhaps a bad one, if not posed with the expectation of receiving multiple, varied answers. Doubtlessly an activity, in order to be called a game, must resemble a board game in a way different from how it must resemble a ball game. Perhaps we only know these varied ways in the same manner in which we know how a clarinet sounds – an unsayable knowledge. This view of resemblances may also be the best block we have to the "paradoxes" which family resemblance terms seem to be able to bring about. We know which resemblances are the right kind of resemblances, perhaps only through convention, and therefore we know how to expand "game" in a licit manner. Though an illicit expansion may have some sort of intellectual appeal through an argument for its "sufficient resemblance", just as Evan Ingersoll's illicit move in *Infinite Jest* is frustratingly appealing for its cleverness and obstinate defense, it nonetheless goes against convention in an intolerable way.

Williamson's paradox seems to play a role in a larger paradox in the text, which some have called the central issue in the *Investigations*. Wittgenstein proposes, "This was our paradox: no course of action could be determined by a rule, because every course of action can be brought into accord with the rule" (Wittgenstein 1953, §201). On one hand, Williamson seems to perceive this, as his paradox consists of an overextended case through "properly followed" rules. On the other hand, his search for a solution ignores this broader Wittgensteinian paradox. What good would any "conceptual block" do, if this block just imposes a rule for proper usage, and rules are doomed to indeterminacy? If following a rule is a "practice,"

which depends on convention and training just as the proper usage of a word does, this leaves our usage just as inadequately limited with a conceptual block as it would be without one.

Conclusion

It seems that Wittgenstein's silence on the question of family resemblance terms and sorites paradoxes may have constituted more of an answer than Williamson thought. Williamson's philosophical problem is best met not with a philosophical answer, but with a reexamination of the question, which, in the right light, reveals itself as poorly framed. As opposed to a rather reluctantly Wittgensteinian answer ("From the standpoint of the *Philosophical Investigations*, may one ask for more?"), the response offered in this paper has grounding in the text of the *Investigations* itself and is easily subsumed into a harmonious whole with the rest of his philosophical thought, both early and late (Williamson 1994, p. 88).

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Williamson o Wittgensteinovim „obiteljskim sličnostima" i paradoksu gomile

Daniel Olson

Sažetak: U kratkome odsječku svoje knjige *Vagueness*, Timothy Williamson nastoji razriješiti paradoks povezan sa širenjem Wittgensteinovih pojmova „obiteljske sličnosti", kako su oni opisani u *Filozofskim istraživanjima*. Čini se da pojedini pojmovi „obiteljske sličnosti", poput „igre", imaju sposobnost širenja kroz mrežu sličnosti na način da u konačnici postanu primjenjivi na bilo što. To je neželjena, a možda i paradoksalna konkluzija. Ukratko, da bi Wittgensteinova teorija bila plauzibilna, argumentira Williamson, trebala bi postojati neka vrsta blokade, konceptualne ili pak drukčije, za širenje pojmova koji su podložni paradoksu gomile. Williamson smatra da je najbolja takva blokada negacija pojma obiteljske sličnosti koja se širi u tandemu s pripadajućim pojmom obiteljske sličnosti. Mogućnost se paradoksa otklanja kroz neku vrstu napetosti između tvrđenja i poricanja. U članku se argumentira da je ovo rješenje, kao i Williamsonovo formuliranje problema, neodrživo jer na pogrešan način razumije narav Wittgensteinovog istraživanja te nas ne oslobađa problema kojega nastoji ispraviti. Alternativno rješenje je predstavljeno putem egzegeze Wittgensteinovog teksta koji, premda ne pristupa problemu izravno, pruža smjernice kako pristupiti paradoksima poput Williamsonovog.

Ključne riječi: Neodređenost, obiteljska sličnost, paradoks gomile, T. Williamson, Wittgenstein.