

# RESEMBLANCE AND SUPERVENIENCE: REEVALUATED

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*Abstract - This paper primarily harps on the issue whether the admission of universals (Especially as discussed in this paper resemblance and supervenience) would impose any extra burden on the ontology. In this connection I would like to make a special mention of the fact that metaphysical issues dealt in Philosophy are quite relevant in medical ethics and management speculations or even in marketing. In this paper both the relation of Supervenience and that of Resemblance is dealt which undoubtedly helps in the understanding of properties, the structure or orientation of any programming or theory. So the present paper may be a sure help in prioritization of issues in case of management study or in the removal of any disharmony generated in patients after treatment of an ailment. Keeping this in mind I have tried to analyze the almost known fact that providing an account of sameness of type is the compulsory task for any theory of Universals since unless the question of sameness of type is answered and a philosophical superstructure is unfolded the question of making or arriving at an ontology which is not unduly burdened can at all be addressed. I started with the Realist and the Nominalist. In order to arrive at this position I had first discussed about the positions of the different types of Nominalism. I have also tried to show how realism and the different forms of nominalism have made an attempt to explain the compulsory task of giving an account of sameness of type. I have seriously dealt with a very crucial point of considering resemblance as a relation and supervenience as a relation. Here one thing is stressed on namely that both supervenience and resemblance if and when considered as a dyadic universal which binds two relatas, it works as a property of a pair ( relatas). So it can very well be thought of as gaining a separate status over and above the pair that it unites. The whole discussion on a non-cumbersome ontology thus gains its strength at this point when such extra burden is ruled out by both supervenience and resemblance nominalism theory. I have made an attempt also to show that a burden less ontology can also be achieved if further questions on the issue of similarity being subjective or objective or simply as innate be addressed.*

## **Keywords-**

- 1. Realism- A theory of Universals which claims that the explanation of objects lays in the common property that different non-identical objects share at the same time. This common property may very well transcend the given object*
- 2. Nominalism- A theory of Universals which claims that the explanation of an object lies in the issues related with properties and relations which the objects possess. Nominalism refrains from making any reference to shared or common properties and accord primacy to the attributes as fundamental by taking beings to be not susceptible to any further analysis.*
- 3. Resemblance theory- Resemblance is taken as a property between objects which is actually a weak sort of identity relation. It is a relation which intertwines amongst objects and explains their being members of a given class.*
- 4. Supervenience theory- Supervenience is a relation which can be true of any relation whatsoever. So it is more of a super order or a higher order relation. It is important to note that whether this higher order relation is imposing any burden on the existing ontology.*
- 5. Ontology- It is the theory of existence which is an integral part of any philosophical discourse. Ontology studies what sort of existence the entity has in any philosophical discussion. The*

*ontological status(in what way does an entity exist) is very important in any philosophical discussion.*

6. *Universals- Universals is an important metaphysical issue, which explains the identity of objects on the basis of shared common property. Realists claims that universals are entities that can be simultaneously exemplified by several different objects,*

## **1.INTRODUCTION**

One of the very pertinent question as to whether the acceptance of properties, classes or for that matter universals as such is imposing any undue pressure on the ontology needs to be addressed. In the present chapter an attempt may be made to address the issue in terms of the explanation provided by the resemblance nominalists and the supervenience theory. For this we must first discuss the compulsory task for both realists and the nominalists.

## **2. THE COMPULSORY TASK**

We are continually talking about different things having the same property or quality; being of the same sort or kind having the same nature and so on. It seems that giving an account of sameness of type has become a compulsory task for any and every philosophical system. The point which puzzles philosophers is that the same property can belong to different things and that the same relation can relate different things. So there must be something identical among the particular things which are not identical. Here we must primarily explain in what sense is this concept of being identical and yet not being identical, used. The particulars are not identical in having their own peculiar properties and qualities. We can talk of these properties as factors which distinguish one particular from other particulars. We also know that the very fact of being more than one separates, distinguishes particulars in general. Apart from being many in number particulars also falls under a class by way of which they are classified as similar particulars. This class character has many a times in Philosophy called as sameness of type. Before explaining the details about how the realist and the nominalists explains this critical issue there is another important point which can add color to our discussion. The point is ; the point of similarity is not always in terms of the common properties which a group or classes of particulars have. The point of commonness can very well be the common properties which the set or class of particulars does not have. So commonness may be explained and taken under consideration in the sense of possessing properties and also in the sense of not possessing properties. In fact the same class of particulars may be classified on the basis of both possessing and not possessing a common property. An example might help in this regard. If we have a stick which is 15 cm long and a stick which is 12cm long then all sticks measuring 15 cm long may be classified into a class having the common property of length 15cm. All sticks which are 12cm long may be classified in similar way. An alternative may be such that, all sticks of length 15cm is 3cm longer than sticks of length 12cm. This difference of length (especially in case of the class of sticks which are 12cm long, in their case not having the 3cm length also acts as a common property) is also a common property between the two classes of sticks. The only difference being that once the sticks may be classified as possessing a particular common property and once they may be classified as not possessing a common property. In the second case the property of non-possession of a property in other words ,the case of all sticks which are 12cm long and which do not possess another 3cm to be 15cm long. So once this particular class of sticks may be classified as all sticks possessing the common property of possessing the property of measuring 12cm, again if the same class is compared to another class that is the class of sticks possessing the common property of measuring 15cm then in that case their common property would be the non-possession of the property of not possessing +3cm length so that their total length be 15cm.

All these discussions become important for this paper because this will actually lay the ground for the entire upcoming discussion on supervenience. Whenever we talk of objects possessing properties we actually frame our arguments in a domain where we eventually project relations amongst classes, one of which supervenes another. The supervenience may be for example amongst classes like all red colored objects and all colored objects. Again the supervenience may be amongst all objects possessing a common

property and hence being classified while all objects not possessing a common property and hence being classified. In all such cases we actually talk of many classes at the same time while dealing with a single one, hence bringing in the discussion on supervenience. The present paper would try to explain supervenience but for the present let's discuss how both the realist and the nominalists deal with the common question of sameness of type.

Realist and nominalists react to the puzzle in different ways. For the realist besides particulars there are universals; that is, the commonness among particulars. In other words it is not the case that there are only particulars. The problem which the nominalists face is that of giving an account of the identity of numerically different particulars. The nominalists are philosophers who refrain from making any reference to shared or common Forms as entities and accord primacy to the phenomena of attribute agreement as fundamental fact; in the sense not susceptible to any further analysis. As for the realist giving an account of the sameness of type is indisputably of first priority; Armstrong has taken up the case of nominalism to show how the compulsory question is inevitable for them as well. Armstrong deals with a variety of nominalism. Nominalists can attempt to explain apparent sameness of numerically different particulars by way of postulating some other means; be it 'falling under the same predicate', or 'being a member of a class' or for that matter 'having a suitable resemblance with a paradigm case' are ultimately all different approaches of explaining the same compulsory question.

The nominalists actually try to explain the phenomena of sharing of properties by different individuals by confining himself within the purview of particulars themselves. They thus employ the notions like that of 'predicates' or 'class-membership' or 'resemblance to paradigm cases' etc. The realist who explains the sameness of type as the cause to account for sharing any one property, is deviating from the line of thought and perhaps falls outside the arena of particular objects. Armstrong makes repeated attempt to demolish the nominalists endeavor of determining the phenomena of having a property in terms of expressions such as 'by falling under a predicate' or 'having a resemblance to a paradigm case' etc. He argues that the whiteness of an object is not due to the object falling under the predicate 'white'. It is the applicability of the predicate 'white' which depends upon the whiteness of the object.

To understand this better I would now like to discuss over the different types of nominalism, namely, predicate nominalism, class nominalism and resemblance nominalism. This would help us to understand both the difficulty which Armstrong has detected in his book "*Universals and Scientific Realism*" regarding all these different forms of nominalism and it will also make clear the temperament of the realist and the nominalists.

## **2.1 PREDICATE NOMINALISM**

The prime contention of the predicate nominalists as claimed by Armstrong is as follows; -

'a has the property, F, if and only if  
a falls under the predicate 'F''. (Armstrong 1978, p. 13).

If we analyze this we get the following explanation. Given a class, a class of white things, each white thing has the same sort of relation to the predicate 'white'. Here every member of the class of white things is a token and the predicate 'white' to which each member has the same sort of relation (falling under) is the type. So any and every token of the predicate white has the same sort of relation to the predicate type 'white'. So types are the phenomena to be reduced to predicates. The predicate nominalists have covertly appealed to types in course of developing a theory which claims to give a reductive analysis of types. Armstrong's contention is that, the predicate nominalists' reductive account of types only lands in reinstating further types, which is no advance.

### **2.1.1 CLASS NOMINALISM**

The class nominalists are no exception. Their main contention as claimed by Armstrong is as follows; -

'a has the property, F, if and only if

a is a member of the class of Fs'. (Armstrong 1978, p. 15).

Here too the nominalists has made a similar mistake; 'a's' being a member of a class of Fs is presumably a matter of a relation holding between 'a' and the class. This relation ought to depend upon a's having the property F or a's being F. The nominalists has just reversed the case by saying that the relation, that is., that of being a member of a class constitutes each member's having the said property. To have a clear perception of this we consider a white thing which is a member of a class of white things. According to the class nominalists the object's whiteness is constituted by its membership of that class.

A white thing being a member of the class of white things has a relation with the class, i.e. the relation of being a member. So we can at most say that the relation of being a member depends upon the thing's being white; but the thing's whiteness can never depend upon its membership. This becomes more evident if suppose that except the particular white thing we are talking about, there are no other members of that class. In other words that it is a unit class. The thing would still remain white despite it's being the solo member of the class of white things. So whiteness does never depend upon the membership of a class.

### **2.1.1.1 RESEMBLANCE NOMINALISM**

In case of resemblance nominalism, resemblance too is a relation or is the uniting principle which the resemblance nominalists provide amongst particulars. For example, if we say that a particular is white because it resembles other white things more closely than it resembles any other thing then the trouble is that we would try to unite red things by using the same formula of resemblance. A resemblance nominalists would obviously keep himself away from such explanation that would appeal to the difference between redness and whiteness. So if it is the same resemblance which ought to distinguish the two cases of red and white; then the resemblance nominalists can at most say that white things has suitable resemblance to this thing; while red things as a suitable resemblance to that.

But here too two things are white because they suitably resemble a paradigm white, should not be the case; for a paradigm for one property-class i.e. the class of white tables can also serve as a paradigm for another, for example, the class of white chairs. In other words they may serve purposes over and above the one they are intended for. In order to stop this it will be needed that the paradigms be intended for any one property class only, but then the content of the resemblance nominalism rather stands as falsified. The prime contention of such nominalism as claimed by Armstrong is as follows; -

'a has the property, F, if and only if

a suitably resembles a paradigm case (or paradigm cases) of an F'. (Armstrong 1978, p. 15).

Here resemblance to paradigm cases seems prime and a's being F be explained in terms of resemblance. So here the notion of having a property need to be analyzed but if in order to fix paradigm for any one intended property-class be essential then we perhaps are using the same property-class which needs to be analyzed. Since the task exceeds the means available; what else can be said of their aim of explaining sameness or similarity without appealing to types.

### **3. A JUSTIFICATION FOR BOTH THE REALIST AS WELL FOR THE NOMINALISTS**

All this time I was simply trying to have a picturesque framework of what Armstrong has to say. In perusing such analysis I must say that, I saw both the stands of the realist as well as that of the nominalists as justified. Nominalism has made attempts sometimes by way of making predicates or class-membership or resemblance as primitive and unanalyzable. They have tried to explain 'having of a property' without going beyond particulars; because as for e.g.; falling under the same predicate is but, about particulars themselves. It is surely something very much unlike that of 'whiteness' or 'redness' to which the realists had appealed to. The question which ignites the spark, I suppose is; if a Platonist can say for e.g., this statue participates in the Form of beauty and hence is beautiful; why not a predicate nominalists can say that

'a' has the property F if and only if

'a' falls under the predicate F.

The realist and the nominalists try to answer the compulsory question of sameness of type. It is as per the temperament of the distinctive 'isms' that they have dealt with the compulsory question. In explaining sameness of type, the Platonists schema places or assigns fundamentality to the Forms or rather participation in the said Forms and hence provides us an explanation of particulars. Whereas a predicate nominalists is in favor the 'falling under a predicate' as primitive and fundamental. In both the cases be it 'participation in Forms' or 'falling under a predicate' the two 'isms' equally dislike to go beyond the said primitives. So why are we to judge the standard or criterion of one, keeping in mind the criterion of another? That the whiteness of an object cannot depend on its falling under the predicate white is true but only if we let realism to rule. Moreover perhaps such confusion won't even crop up in such a circumstance.

So according to me if unanalyzed primitives be allowed in case of the realist, equal freedom must be given to the nominalists camp as well; as long as they both deal with the compulsory philosophical question of giving an account of sameness of type.

### **3.1 RESEMBLANCE IN TERMS OF SUPERVENIENCE (WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO RESEMBLANCE NOMINALISM)-**

In the present paper I would like to examine, the relation of resemblance and to find out whether it creates any extra pressure on the ontology as such. This is important since we have to address the compulsory question for the philosophers on the one hand while on the other we also need to find whether the ontology is not being cumbersome. In this connection it would be helpful to bring in the view point of resemblance nominalists and the discussion about theory of supervenience. Here I would like to rely upon Hume and Armstrong in proportion.

To start with I must refer back to *Treatise*, where Hume has suggested that every relation there is may be brought under one of the seven different heads: resemblance, identity, relations of time and place, proportion in quantity or number, degree in any quality, contrariety and causation. The first sort Hume calls "Relations of Ideas". He places in this group, resemblance, proportion in quantity and number, degree in any quality and contrariety.<sup>1</sup> The rest of the three he calls "Matters of Fact". Armstrong on the other hand brought in a division consisting of 'internal' and 'external' relations. Armstrong's proposed definition of 'internal relation' is, "Two or more particulars are internally related if and only if there exist properties of the particulars which logically necessitate that the relation holds". (Armstrong 1978, p.85). Armstrong treats resemblance as an internal relation and also refers to it as a relational property. By admitting non-relational property, Armstrong actually admits properties. So properties can be understood as monadic universals; where as relational property or relation as polyadic universals. They are polyadic since a relation holds between two things. The "non-relational property" indicates properties which are understood with regard to a single thing; for e.g. 'x is red'. Now the question may be raised as to why not a relational property which holds between x and y be understood as a property of x and y taken together or as a whole? If relations be understood as holding between pairs, why not these pairs be treated as a unit and the relation be a property of that unit. The only difference in that case would be, that when a class is formed on the basis of a single common property, the instances are single individuals; when a class is formed on the basis of a relation is common there the instances occur in pairs. Now the question arises that if relations are the property of a unit composing of a pair then why these should be treated as polyadic. Is it not plausible to call them monadic as well? In other words, is it not plausible to view them as analyzable species of monadic universals. Now if we try to explain this keeping in mind that resemblance is a relational property we arrive at the following observations-

1. We may have resemblance as a relational property;
2. X may be something that resembles Y.

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<sup>1</sup>These are what the moderns like Armstrong calls internal relations.

3. So either we keep resemblance as a monadic universal or property (just like any other property resemblance being a relational property, monadic in nature of X and Y as a whole) or
4. We can show that resemblance is a relation holding between X and Y that is, as a relation it is neither wholly in X nor is it in Y, but that X and Y can both enter into a relation of resemblance and hence exemplify a dyadic universal. Hence it is no more than a dyadic companion to a monadic notion of relational property.<sup>2</sup>

So resemblance being an internal relation can supervene on the terms it relates but it certainly is not an entity over and above the terms it relates. This is to say that the supervenient is not an addition to what it supervenes on. A supervenience thesis is thus better known as reductionist thesis (an ontologically reductionist thesis). It is a stripped down form of reductionism for it is devoid of claims of ontological priority or claims of translatability.<sup>3</sup>

The case of resemblance has perhaps proved such points. Let us examine resemblance as a relation in case it is segregated as a relational property of a unit composing of two individuals; as well in case when it is considered as a relation holding between two separate individuals. In both these cases, the theory of supervenience prevails. It will also be seen that the theory of supervenience actually prevents from making the ontology a cumbersome one. For e.g. if X and Y resembles in being white, then we may deduce the followings:-

- (a) X and Y have properties.
- (b) X and Y resemble.
- (c) The point of resemblance between them is the color white.
- (d) The other properties that they possess are not the point of resemblance between them. So we can have two schemes, either segregate resemblance as a relation and treat it as a property like the other non-resembling properties or take resemblance as a dyadic Universal, a relation which supervenes on the related terms(i.e. X and Y in this case) but deny it of giving a separate ontological status.

As far as our first scheme goes if we segregate resemblance as a relational property from its being polyadic then it is expected to act simply as a property of any individual thing. For, e.g. just as white can be a property of a thing; it can also be a relational property of a unit. In other words just as a property supervene as an explanation behind a grouping so also a relational property supervenes as an explanation behind pairing and thus grouping of like things. The explanation is not something over and above the explained. This is to say, the supervenient is not an addition to what it supervenes on. There is therefore no question of ontological priority or translatability. In fact supervenience as a theory depicts a hierarchy; where the different strata only complement each other; instead of competing with each other.

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<sup>2</sup>Three things that must be remembered are, 1. Internal relations are prominent candidates of supervenient entities. 2 It is strongly suggested that resemblance (as an internal relation) must be analyzed in terms of the nature of the resembling things and not vice-versa. 3. Internal relations are all supervenient on properties, including relational properties of the related terms. This means that such relations are not entities wholly distinct from their terms. A detail explanation of these points is given in Armstrong, D.M, *A Combinatorial theory of Possibility*, Cambridge University Press, 1989.

<sup>3</sup>Supervenience is a thesis which depicts a hierarchy, but not with the intention to prove that the one at the top, i.e. that which supervenes is more fundamental from the supervened. It does not try to establish that, which supervenes is ontologically prior. It is for the same reason that it also depicts that we need not understand the supervened in terms of that which supervenes. In other words in order to understand the supervened we need not understand explanations which translates the nature of the supervened in terms of that which supervenes.

The second scheme of ours equally proves supervenience as a factor which simplifies the whole picture. If a relation (here resemblance) holds between two things X and Y and hence is a polyadic universal then too it does not achieve a separate ontological status, and thus does not cause a cramped appearance of the ontology. Resemblance as a relation (i.e. any relation whatsoever) simply binds its relata. It is neither wholly present in X (one such relata) nor is it wholly in Y (another relata). But if we try to understand X or Y and if our intention is to give an explanation in terms of resemblance as a relation then we would find it to be present equally in the two relata. It would not be the case that the proportion in which it is present in one is in any way more or less in proportion than its present in the other. The thing that must be made clear is that even, if, relation is understood as polyadic, its polyadic nature is to be understood as encompassing two relata in terms of its tendency to bind. In other words a relation supervenes on its relata from a higher supervenience order but it nevertheless complements the supervened. It can be said that universals supervene on particulars and thus obtain an explanation of their being. This rules out any possibility of exerting any pressure by establishing itself as more fundamental or the most fundamental.

Now if the resemblance nominalist wants to prove their contention by way of supervenience theory it would go as follows; - a has the property F (a particularized Universal, for e.g. white) if and only if "a" suitably resembles a paradigm case (or paradigm cases) of an F (the paradigm case of white)<sup>4</sup>. So we have a particularized Universal which is 'white' only of 'a' (a determinate property) and the resemblance with 'the white' i.e. the determinable. Since a determinable can very well supervene a determinate property (without adding anything to the ontology) and this can be true for all such cases of white; we can well explain having of a property in terms of resemblance.

Thus far I have been talking in terms of resemblance and trying to prove how universals as such do not pose any extra burden on the ontology. Resemblance was rather made a means and it has been proved to be an effective one.

#### **4. THE QUESTION OF SIMILARITY: RECONSIDERED-**

There are three strands of answer to the question, whether the notion of similarity or kind is subjective or objective. If the notion of similarity be subjective, then a plausible explanation would suggest; that we have latent or predisposed urge towards similarity; in other words, it may be attempted that it is our natural disposition towards similarity that makes it innate in nature.

If it is taken to be objective then it may be presumed that uniformities were present already, i.e. it is not we, who cause groupings, rather it is our interest and benefit which drives us in our use of a general word or predicate. The latter explanation being, that a general word or a predicate corresponds to a natural class which again is formed on the basis of a common property. We can utmost own is the credit of re-application of a word.

The third strand of answer and perhaps the most viable one would maintain that; the question should not be wherein similarity lies; whether it lies with the subject itself or whether it lies amongst the objects grouped. The question could have been imagined or framed otherwise. Let us think this way, if we grant that the sense of similarity or the notion of kind is innate then that can be taken as its point of commencement. In other words it could very well be such that the notion of kind originated as an innate notion. At this preliminary stage it was not much workable a notion; but with experience, disposition gets polished and sophisticated and actually made its mark in explicating that objects of nature indeed had prior similarities amongst themselves.

This is as much true a fact as it is true that these objects were awaiting for their being grouped and bunched for a better recognition. So if the notion of kind and similarity be innate and its being innate carries with it the notion that it is more like an animal sense of similarity, devoid of any intellectual

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<sup>4</sup> The formulation of resemblance nominalism was originally given by Armstrong in his book *Universals and scientific Realism, vol-I*. I have tried to explain it again in terms of supervenience theory.

construction; then it is also true that such animal sense of similarity can be refined by scientific sophistication.

The sense of similarity thus completes its voyage only when it shrugs off its animal brute ness giving us a crystal clear picture of the entire process. It starts with the animal sense of repetition or imitation and ends in enabling us to reach the true destiny of similarity, i.e. the objects of this world where the similarity sort of floats amongst its instances. The effort itself of locating similarity is rather redundant. We must on the other hand know what makes it so effective and crucial.

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5. These are what the moderns like Armstrong calls internal relations.
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