

“FAMILY RESEMBLANCE” AND “RULE FOLLOWING” IN WITTGENSTEIN’S PHILOSOPHY

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ABSTRACT:

In the present paper, I will sketch the layout of Wittgenstein's notion of Family Resemblance and Rule Following as shown in the latter book of Wittgenstein, Philosophical Investigations.

With the family resemblance explanation, Wittgenstein attacks conventional views on how words can have meaning. On the one hand, it attacks the traditional view that words acquire meaning from the thoughts of the person who utters them. On the other, it challenges Wittgenstein's own concept from his earlier Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus, that words get their meaning by standing for objects in reality. These are the most important concepts in the history of Philosophy of Language. Every language consists of rule. But if we fixed the rules to the language, then it will mismatch our daily practice of language. And without the rule there will be no language. To solve this dilemma Wittgenstein introduced the concept of Family Resemblance in the language. Here I will try to show the concept of Family Resemblance and Rule Following as explained in the philosophy of Wittgenstein.

Key Words: Family Resemblance, Rule following, language, meaning.

FAMILY RESEMBLANCE IN WITTGENSTEIN’S THEORY

With the family resemblance explanation, Wittgenstein attacks conventional views on how words can have meaning. On the one hand, it attacks the traditional views that words acquire meaning from the thoughts of the person who utters them. On the other hand, it challenges Wittgenstein’s own concept from his earlier Tractatus

Logico Philosophicus that words get their meaning by standing for objects in reality; instead, Wittgenstein says that some words do not have a single essence that encompasses their definition. He uses the example of the word game. ⁱAlthough we may think of the term as having a definite meaning, Wittgenstein points out counter examples to this idea. No single thing is common to all games are played for fun or recreation, games like hockey and football are played preferable, and some casino cards are the games played for addiction. Not all games have scores or points or do they all have teams or any equipment that would define them as games and not some other activity.

According to Wittgenstein each use of the word game has a relationship to a common feature of reality or of the thoughts behind them. Briefly it is named as a single essence and this is the relationship between the uses of the word. ⁱⁱWittgenstein finds the matter very interesting, in the following passages to prove his theory of family resemblance. Wittgenstein says that the way in which the family members resemble each other is not through a specific trait but a variety of traits that are shared by some, but not all members of a family.

ⁱⁱⁱTo make this point very clear, Wittgenstein puts forth an example. Consider a family of four siblings; Jane, John, Sally and Tim.

- a. Jane, Sally and Tim all have red hair while John is brown.
- b. Jane and Tim both have all wide foreheads
- c. Tim, Sally and John all have distinctive elongated nosed
- d. John and Jane both have numerous flecks

None of the above features mentioned are common to all members of the family but they all resemble each other in some way-there are family traits that show up in multiple members of the family. For Wittgenstein, this is how 'game' and many other words have a consistent meaning. Common feature of games like recreation senses, teams, rules etc are present in various games but not others but the general overlapping much of the features is where the word gets its meaning. Therefore, the meaning of some words is a relation much like family resemblance. It is very important that Wittgenstein does not say that the family resemblance relation is not always the way that words get their meaning. Instead, words can get their meaning by picking out objects in reality as he claims in the Tractatus, but he asserts that philosophers must recognise the difference between the various methods of assigning meaning to words^{iv}.

Wittgenstein introduced this concept in order to attach the traditional doctrine that all the entities which fall under a given term must have same set of properties or features in common, the presence of which makes it correct to subsume an entity under this term. According to this doctrine all men for instance, are “rational animals”; each man is rational and each man is an animal and nothing which is not a man is both an animal and rational. There are however animals which are not men and there might be rational beings which are not men (eg angels).^v The property of being rational is common to all men but the property of being a rational animal is not only common to all men. Against this doctrine Wittgenstein argued that all the entities falling under a given term need not have anything in common but that they are related to each other in many different ways. Consider for examples, different ‘games’. What is common to them all? Don’t say ‘there must be something common, or they would not be called ‘games’- but look and see whether there is anything common to all- for if you look at them you will not see something that is common to all- but similarities, relationships will be present there. Hence it is proved that family resemblance is found in similar type of words or in other words, we can say that words with the same meaning may have different syllables.

THE REASON FOR THE TERMINOLOGY- ‘FAMILY RESEMBLANCE’

^{vi}The term ‘Family resemblance’ as feature of Wittgenstein’s philosophy owes much to its translation in English. Most of Wittgenstein’s writings were in German. He uses the compound word ‘Famillienähnlichkeit’ but as he lectured and conversed English he used ‘family likenesses. However in the “Philosophical Investigations”, the separate word ‘Ähnlichkeit’ has been translated as similarity and on two occasions it is given as ‘like’. The human family word is common and it is found in Grimm’s dictionary. The word ‘family likeness’ has been noted in a lecture by JF Mountain in 1877. So the Family Resemblance is the term derived from the German word which has the meaning of ‘family Likeness’.

In his text Wittgenstein give more importance to language games and games are the main example considered by him. In addition to that he mentions numbers and creates an analogy with a thread. He continues to argue further by writing that in some case of language games there is not a clean cut boundary but yet there comes or develops some ambiguity because indefiniteness can be separated from main point. ^{vii}Wittgenstein talks about all games like card games, ball games, board games and he indeed even games like ‘ring-o-ring-o-roses’. In all the games players can be a complicated network of similarities overlapping and criss-crossing and at time players can see even overall similarities. He states in his book,

“I can think of no better expression to characterize these similarities than “family resemblance” for the various resemblances between members of a family. Build features colour of eyes, gait, temperament etc. Overlap and criss-cross in the same way-And I shall say “games” form a family^{viii}.”

It is confirmed that “Philosophical Investigations” is the primary text used in discussing family resemblances even though the topic appears also in other works by Wittgenstein notably ‘The Rocon book’. ^{ix}The philosophical researchers approached this system with more pragmatic questions such as taxonomy or information processing. A critic named Hans Slogan observed that ‘ the notion of family resemblance draws on two quite different sets of ideas, two different vocabularies, but treats them as if they were one and the same. The first is the vocabulary kinship of descent of some sort of real and causal connection, the second is that of similarity, resemblance, affinity and correspondence. The instrument of family resemblance is the notion of similarity. This main focus of notion of similarity is badly criticized by the researchers who came after Wittgenstein. A similarity is always found for two arbitrarily selected objects or a series of intermediaries who link them into a family. The critics named this problem as understanding or open ended texture. Wittgenstein’s insistence that boundaries do not really exist but can be traced arbitrarily and he describes this as conventionalism.

^xIf Wittgenstein is right then, meanings and concepts do not necessarily work by decomposing into parts that give necessary and sufficient conditions, but by a much looser kind of structure- family resemblance. The question becomes -how far does this idea of family resemblance extend and to how many concepts does it apply? The scholars who came after Wittgenstein used his theory in a proper way and introduced that matter into various applications.

APPLICATION OF FAMILY RESEMBLANCE

One of the main points stemming from the notion of family likeness between words is that arguing from simple dictionary definiteness is meaningless and somewhat fallacious. This can be seen anyone trying to argue that atheism in a religion.^{xi} It may have some superficial similarities when people look at particular movements or media trends. Including new atheism and atheism, but otherwise atheism as a new concept has few, if any of the commonalities found in most religions. Family resemblance also more accurately models the way the mind actually think using loose resemblance over explicit rules to categorise things. This should be obvious to most people, as this happens to be exactly how the universe functions too. Given this it is a wonder that it took until the middle of the 20th century for the idea to break into philosophical mainstream.

THE RULE FOLLOWING DILEMMA

^{xii}As the rush of Wittgenstein's interpretative literature from the early 1980 onwards, it amply illustrates, the very idea of facts about what rules require seem on experiment to raise a cluster of deeply perplexing question of contradiction and epistemic access. It is very clear that wherever there are rules, there have to be facts about what their requirement are and facts moreover confirm how rules were received to fix in guidance.

If a rule is by the very notion of 'rule' - as it were-intrinsically such as to carry predominate verdicts for an open-ended range of occasions, and if grouping a rule is by definition an ability to keep track of those verdicts step by step, than the possible for there to be such things as rules, so conceived at all? Wittgenstein was conspicuously provoked by a certain way of thinking about the above issues- perhaps better a certain way of ignoring them- that he perceived as widespread in ordinary thought about logic and pure mathematics. The tendency in question could fairly be described as that of a kind of cavalier realism.

Wittgenstein's grasps to utter generality of the realist tendency and thus to notice that essentially the same way of thinking about the ordinary thinking about the mind, specifically in the seemingly common-sensual yet notoriously troublesome idea that mental states and processes are items of direct acquaintance for their subjects but are strictly inaccessible to others, by whom they are knowable only by inference. It is usually unmarked component in this to find no difficulty with the notion of simple recognition of proper classification of one's own mental states and processes^{xiii}.

To work out a conception of rules and rule governed properties which allows sufficient of a gap between the requirement of a rule and subject's reactions in any particular case to make sense of the idea of eg. ^{xiv}A whole community's mis-application of a rule they aim to follow get which stops short of any spurious, platinised idea of the autonomy of a rule and its requirements. That specifically a proposal invoking a form of response-dependence was the direction. The final truth is that it is the basic disposition to agreement which sustains all rules and rule-government institution. The requirements which our rules impose upon the readers would not be violated if there were not this basic agreement they would not so much as exists.

CONCLUSION:

Wittgenstein says that the requirements of rules exist only within a framework of ongoing institutional activities which depend upon basic human propensities to agree in judgement. But also he reminds himself that such requirements are also, in any particular case, understood as independent of our judgements even when agreed as

incorrect. It is no good searching Wittgenstein's text for a more concrete positive suggestion about the constitutive question. Indeed his entire later conception of philosophical method seems to be conditioned by a mistrust of such questions consensus cannot constitute the requirements of a rule because we leave space for- and do on occasion actually make use of the notion of a consensus based on ignorance or a mistake. Wittgenstein brings out a mythological picture of distinction content and the myth about rule-following in as the unaccountable tracking of superlative facts. Wittgenstein seems to be saying;

^{xv}“Our mistake is to look for an explanation where we ought to work at what happens as a proto-phenomenon. There is where we ought to have said the language game is played”.

No further amount of the distinction between an agreed move-and a correspond misuse of it, but it does not need an alternatively better explanation to those it up or otherwise account for the various locations and distinctions which Platonism misunderstands that it seems is his finished view.

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