VNIVERSITAT DE VALÈNCIA

PUTNAM'S INTERNAL REALISM: FROM METAPHYSICAL TO NATURAL REALISM

Tesis de Doctorado en Pensamiento Filosófico Contemporáneo

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INTRODUCCION

El objetivo principal de esta tesis es analizar el realismo interno de Hilary Putnam en comparación con el realismo metafísico y el realismo natural. La razón por la que se establece dicha comparación es que Putnam adoptó brevemente cada uno de éstos tres enfoques, y en sus últimos escritos privilegió al realismo natural (inspirado por William James), rechazando el realismo metafísico y el realismo interno. El rechazo de Putnam hacia su propia doctrina del realismo interno comienza con las "Respuestas a algunas críticas" (Putnam, 1992) y llega hasta sus últimos artículos (especialmente su 2012a). En dichos artículos Putnam reprocha al realismo interno de reproducir el modelo epistemológico Cartesiano al cual precisamente se proponía reemplazar. De acuerdo a esta crítica, el realismo interno se basa en la idea de una "interface"[1] (compuesta por esquemas conceptuales y sense-data) entre la mente y el mundo, reproduciendo así una dicotomía epistemológica tradicional.

En la tesis argumento que esta crítica no reconoce ni le hace justicia a todas las consecuencias del realismo interno, como por ejemplo, el postulado que *"la mente y el mundo conjuntamente producen a la mente y el mundo."* (Putnam 1981: xi) Esta metáfora (aunque fuera rechazada por Putnam en su período de realista natural), resume adecuadamente los propósitos dinámicos y holísticos del realismo interno: los esquemas conceptuales, más que *moldes* para interpretar una realidad independiente, son catalizadores por medio de los cuales el mundo se expresa y es experimentado. Por lo tanto, si se conciben de esta forma, los esquemas conceptuales se asemejan a las "formas de estar abiertos al mundo" defendidas por el realismo natural. Tomando esto en consideración *–y también considerando que el realismo interno posee elementos que*

[1] Esta idea sostiene que "*nuestros poderes cognitivos no pueden penetrar en la realidad de los objetos."* (Putnam, 1999: 10)

efectivamente responden a las antinomias del realismo metafísico-, el rechazo de Putnam al realismo interno en favor del realismo natural parece injustificado. Tal punto será enfatizado en la presente tesis. De manera que, la larga carrera filosófica de Putnam nos invita a preguntarnos por qué el realismo interno (que es una alternativa al realismo metafísico) debe ser abandonado en beneficio del realismo natural.

El realismo interno de Putnam (un enfoque que fue adoptado por Putnam desde su ensayo "Realismo y Razón" en 1976, hasta su libro *Realismo con Rostro Humano*, 1990), tenía como objetivo *"aclarar los problemas que ciertas dicotomías producen en el pensamiento de filósofos y hombres del común."* (Putnam, 1981: ix) De acuerdo a lo que sostiene Putnam en este período, la filosofía se ve tradicionalmente confrontada a dos "temperamentos": el realismo metafísico y el relativismo. El realismo interno surge entonces como una alternativa conciliadora entre ambos enfoques, favoreciendo algunas tesis del realismo metafísico (aunque rechazando la mayoría de éstas, particularmente la teoría de la verdad como correspondencia) y concediéndole también algunos puntos al relativista (pero negando rotundamente que un esquema conceptual sea tan apropiado como otro en relación con ciertos propósitos.)

El interés central de Putnam durante su período "internalista" fue de responder a las antinomias creadas por el realismo metafísico, la doctrina que sostiene que *"el mundo consiste de una totalidad fija de objetos independientes de la mente."* (Putnam, 1981: 49) De acuerdo a la crítica que el realismo interno hace contra el realismo metafísico, esta última doctrina sostiene que *"existe solamente una única y verdadera descripción de la 'forma en que el mundo es'. La verdad implica una cierta relación de correspondencia entre las palabras o pensamientos y los objetos exteriores."* (Putnam, 1981: 49) En oposición a esta idea, el realismo interno sostiene que la pregunta "¿de

qué objetos se compone el mundo?" *es una pregunta que sólo tiene sentido hacer al interior de una teoría o una descripción."* (Putnam, 1981: 49)

Putnam pretendió que el enfoque epistémico de la verdad (identificándola con la *idealización* de la aseverabilidad garantizada) del realismo interno fuera una alternativa a la teoría tradicional de la verdad como correspondencia del realismo metafísico. De acuerdo al enfoque de Putnam, un enunciado será verdadero si su aseverabilidad está garantizada por condiciones objetivas, no porque represente una realidad independiente de la mente, como afirma el realismo metafísico. Como se evidenciará en esta tesis, el problema de la verdad es una de las mayores preocupaciones del realismo interno. Sin embargo, la idea de la verdad como epistémica no fue la única alternativa que Putnam postula contra el realismo metafísico, pues para comprender el realismo interno también resulta necesario analizar la relatividad conceptual y los esquemas conceptuales.

En sus últimos escritos (2012a) Putnam concibió el fenómeno de la relatividad conceptual como un fenómeno exclusivamente científico que se reduce a la Mereología y le presta menos atención al fenómeno similar del pluralismo conceptual, el cual hace referencia a *descripciones no equivalentes* que pertenecen a 'esquemas' que no pueden ser sistemáticamente traducidos entre sí. Eventualmente (luego de la publicación del artículo de 1997 de Jeniffer Case), Putnam acepta que los esquemas conceptuales deben ser entendidos como lenguajes *opcionales*, lo cual permite reconocer el hecho que toda descripción permite diferentes convenciones y opciones, mientras que el pluralismo conceptual hace referencia a lenguajes naturales, los cuales no permiten una alternativa diferente a su uso.

Putnam rechaza el realismo interno pues, como él llegó a verlo, se basa en el dualismo subjetivo/objetivo, lo cual es inaceptable en la filosofía de Putnam. Sin embargo, como argumento en la tesis, esta es una crítica que no penetra en la esencia del realismo

interno, pues, por el contrario, la idea internalista que la mente y el mundo conjuntamente producen a la mente y el mundo no descansa sobre la dicotomía subjetivo/objetivo ni sobre la dicotomía entre esquema y contenido, pues rechaza tal pensamiento dicotómico. El realismo interno insiste que no hay nada acerca de lo cual se pueda decir algo, o saberse algo, o creerse, a menos que sea *lingüísticamente*. De igual forma, para que el lenguaje tenga algún significado éste debe referirse a algo sobre lo cual se ha llegado a un acuerdo, una realidad diferente del lenguaje, pero que solo puede ser referida conceptualmente y en el marco del lenguaje.

Una vez hayamos comprendido las ideas de *la verdad como epistémica, la relatividad conceptual como pluralismo,* y *los esquemas conceptuales como lenguajes opcionales*, la metáfora de Putnam que dice que *la mente y el mundo producen conjuntamente a la mente y el mundo,* tendrá más sentido.

Sin embargo, el realismo interno fue un enfoque el cual Putnam no mantuvo por mucho tiempo. Al inicio de la década de 1990 (particularmente en su "Respuesta a Simon Blackburn", en Putnam 1994b) comienza a encontrar algunas deficiencias en esta doctrina y comienza a acercarse al realismo natural, inspirado por el "empirismo radical" de William James.

Según la crítica que Putnam hiciera al realismo interno en sus *Conferencias Dewey* (1999), el realista interno insiste en la idea que la realidad se percibe por medio de una "interface", reteniendo así una característica importante de la idea Cartesiana de la percepción:

> De acuerdo a lo que decía mi propuesta, el mundo determina si se está en una condición epistémica adecuada o si simplemente se cree estarlo, reteniendo así una idea importante del realismo del sentido común. Sin embargo, la concepción de dicha situación epistémica era, en última instancia, aquella de la

> antigua tradición epistemológica. Dicha propuesta aún retenía la premisa básica de una interface entre la mente y lo que está fuera de ella. (Putnam, 1999: 18)

Putnam insiste en que el realismo interno se expone a todos los problemas que se suponía debía resolver. Por ejemplo, tal como lo afirma Putnam, la esencia del realismo interno es la semántica verificacionista, inspirada por Michael Dummett. En la versión de Putnam de esta semántica, la verdad se identifica con la verificabilidad bajo condiciones epistémicas ideales. Sin embargo, Putnam señala que existe un problema concerniente al acceso referencial a dichas condiciones ideales, pues de acuerdo al enfoque internalista, *"el mundo determina si se está en una condición epistémica adecuada o si simplemente se cree estarlo."* (Putnam, 1999: 18)

Eventualmente, Putnam critica que este tipo de verificacionismo, basado en la interacción de los esquemas conceptuales con los sense-data, permea negativamente todo el enfoque internalista:

> Según el enfoque del realismo interno, no son solo nuestras experiencias (concebidas como 'sense-data') las que son una interface entre mente y mundo; también los 'esquemas conceptuales' son concebidos como tal interface. Estas dos 'interfaces' están relacionadas en la medida en que yo creía que nuestras formas de conceptualización y juegos de lenguaje eran controlados por 'restricciones operacionales' que en última instancia se reducían a sense-data. (Putnam 2012b: 26)

De una manera bastante cercana al realismo interno, el realismo natural que adopta Putnam también es concebido como una alternativa al realismo metafísico y el relativismo. Tal enfoque es concebido como

> una forma de reivindicar el hecho que las afirmaciones epistémicas responden a una realidad, sin necesariamente caer en una fantasía metafísica. [El realismo natural es] un punto conciliatorio entre la metafísica más reaccionaria y el relativismo más irresponsable. (Putnam, 1999: 4, 5)

Es entonces bastante evidente que tanto el realismo interno como el realismo natural son concebidos como alternativas o "terceras vías" ante el realismo metafísico y el relativismo. Sin embargo, Putnam insiste en una característica del realismo natural que no hace parte del realismo interno, a saber, la existencia de una realidad independiente de su conceptualización: *"A mi forma de ver, un realista natural, sostiene que los objetos de la percepción (normal y 'verídica') son cosas externas y, generalmente, aspectos de una realidad 'externa'."* (Putnam, 1999: 10)

El realismo natural es una alternativa a la "antinomia" realista que surge cuando se intenta dar una explicación de la relación entre el lenguaje y el mundo y al mismo tiempo se acepta la doctrina Cartesiana de la percepción:

> A pesar de estar de acuerdo en que se necesita urgentemente una "tercera vía" aparte del realismo moderno y el idealismo de Dummett, tal tercera vía debe insistir, como lo ha hecho McDowell constantemente, que existe una antinomia y no simplemente mezclar elementos del realismo moderno con elementos del enfoque idealista. Ninguna concepción que retenga algo parecido a la noción tradicional de los sense-data puede permitir una salida válida, pues inevitablemente, tal concepción, siempre nos confrontará con lo que parece ser un problema sin solución. (1999: 18)

Putnam insiste entonces en que el realismo natural nos pone en contacto con la realidad y afirma que esta doctrina nos permite estar *"abiertos al mundo e interactuar con él, de manera que diferentes aspectos de éste nos sean revelados."* (Putnam 2012b: 27)

Con el objetivo de contextualizar al realismo interno y confrontarlo con el realismo metafísico y natural, haré uso de algunos argumentos que conllevan consecuencias similares y que, de cierta forma, han influenciado la filosofía de Putnam. Tales argumentos son los de William James, Wilfrid Sellars, y Donald Davidson, al igual que el argumento kantiano de John McDowell en *Mente y Mundo,* también conocido como *Conceptualismo*. Estos argumentos enfatizan la idea kantiana que las percepciones sin conceptos son ciegas[2]: cuando el lenguaje es concebido como una herramienta para interactuar con la realidad, *en vez de concebírsele como la representación de una realidad independiente de la mente,* la idea de la interconexión entre el lenguaje y la realidad se hace más clara. De acuerdo a tal idea, el lenguaje *crea* y *procesa* aquello que llamamos realidad; por lo tanto, las pretensiones del realismo metafísico de un lado, y la pretensión del empirismo de justificar la independencia de la realidad por medio de sensaciones, del otro lado, resultan injustificadas.

Las opiniones de Putnam acerca del realismo y la relación entre la mente y el mundo han cambiado tanto e implican tanta sofisticación de su parte que, para comprenderlas, es necesario analizar el tema rigurosamente y considerar los diferentes argumentos que sobre el tema se han ofrecido. El hecho de considerar los argumentos de los filósofos mencionados no significa que éstos hayan tenido razón y que Putnam se haya equivocado, ni tampoco que éstos tuvieran una visión unificada con respecto al realismo. En lugar de esto, trataré de utilizar los argumentos de dichos filósofos para entablar una discusión con Putnam, tal como éste lo hiciera. Por lo tanto, el análisis del realismo interno también se verá acompañado de una discusión que busca presentar las ventajas de este enfoque.

[2] Sin embargo, se debe enfatizar en que el realismo interno no acepta el kantianismo *tout court*. De hecho, la doctrina kantiana dela intuición y las cosas en sí mismas, y la dicotomía entre espontaneidad y receptividad son rechazadas por Putnam.

Naturalmente, los textos a los que más atención se les dará son aquellos que, de un lado, exponen la doctrina y las consecuencias del realismo interno, como lo son *Razón, Verdad, e Historia* (1981), *Las Mil Caras del Realismo* (1987), y *Realismo con Rostro Humano* (1990); y del otro lado, los textos en que se rechaza tal enfoque y se desarrolla el realismo natural, como lo son la "Respuesta a Simon Blackburn" (1994), *La Trenza de Tres Cabos* (*Conferencias Dewey*, 1999), y "From Quantum Mechanics to Ethics and Back Again" (2012a)[3].

En el primer capítulo analizo la doctrina del realismo metafísico tal como Putnam la enfrentó. De manera que se intentará mostrar una doctrina coherente frente a la cual Putnam propuso su realismo interno. En el segundo capítulo discuto el "progreso" que hizo Putnam desde sus primeros intentos por responder las antinomias del realismo metafísico, incluyendo el artículo "Realismo y Razón" y el célebre argumento de los Cerebros en una Cubeta. El tercer capítulo es un análisis de uno de los puntos centrales del realismo interno, *la verdad como aseverabilidad garantizada*. En dicho capítulo defiendo la idea que esta concepción de la verdad no es del todo contraria a la concepción de la verdad como sentido común adoptada por Putnam en las *Conferencias Dewey*. El cuarto capítulo se ocupa de analizar la relación y el lugar de los esquemas conceptuales en el realismo interno. En éste capítulo defiendo la idea (propuesta por Jennifer Case, 2001) que los esquemas conceptuales deben ser entendidos como lenguajes opcionales. El quinto capítulo es una confrontación entre el realismo interno y el realismo natural. Espero mostrar en éste capítulo que, luego del análisis de ambos enfoques, la idea de una semejanza entre éstos no es del todo obsoleta.

[3] Tanto en su 2012a, y su 2012b, Putnam de nuevo cambia su posición frente a los *qualia*. Inspirado por dos recientes artículos de Ned Block (2007, 2012), Putnam ahora admite que los qualia son necesarios para comprender la conciencia, a diferencia de lo dicho en *La Trenza de Tres Cabos*. Por razones metodológicas no consideraré esta nueva posición y me centraré en lo dicho en las *Conferencias Dewey.*

Chapter 1

THE PROBLEM OF REALISM

1.1. Introduction

Metaphysical Realism, described as *"a claim about what entities exist and a claim about their independent nature"* (Michael Devitt, 1984: 14), has been mostly understood as the thesis that *(i)* there are distinctive facts related to a certain domain, and *(ii)* that their existence and objectivity is mind-independent. As such, it has been historically opposed to all sorts of idealism, in the sense that metaphysical realism challenges the idea that all of reality is mental. Such sort of idealism finds expression in Bishop Berkeley's doctrine that all ideas -and thus all reality- depend on God's omniscient mind. However, the metaphysical realism which will concern us is the sort that opposes not Berkeley's but Kant's idealism. For Kant, what counts as an object of experience is mediated by the a priori categories of the mind. Thus, all of human knowledge is mediated and scanned through innate categories. However, such categories are limited and cannot penetrate into the ultimate reality of things in themselves; thus, human knowledge is limited to the field of *phenomena*, whereas the realm of *noumena*, the thing in itself, is unreachable for us humans.

Metaphysical realism is a qualified rejection of such idealism, since it claims that what we call reality does not depend on any mental categories or any conceptual schemes. For the metaphysical realist there are large parts of reality which do not owe their existence to any mental states or human conventions. However, some realists -most

notably Thomas Nagel (1986) - claim that truth and objectivity outstrip evidence and justification, and thus the Kantian idea of *noumena* becomes central for them.

Metaphysical realism also carries for some -notably Crispin Wright (1993, 1994) - an epistemological thesis which claims that this doctrine is also concerned with the knowledge of a mind-independent reality:

> Realism is a mixture of modesty and presumption. It modestly allows that humankind confronts an objective world, something almost entirely not of our making, possessing a host of occasional features which may pass altogether unnoticed by human consciousness and whose innermost nomological secrets may remain forever hidden from us. However, it presumes that we are, by and large and in favorable circumstances, capable of acquiring knowledge of the world and of understanding it. (Wright 1993: 1)

Putnam's internal realism can be better understood as a response to a qualified brand of metaphysical realism, namely, *minimal realism*. Such doctrine -held most notably by John Searle (1995) and William Alston (1996)- holds that there are some significant stretches of what we call reality that are brute facts, and therefore do not depend on any human conceptualization. Minimal realists accept that social reality depends mostly on human convention and language; however, as they argue, there are large chunks of mind-independent reality which allow for social reality's existence. Putnam's internal realism is taken as the most obvious opponent of minimal realism, in the sense that it is used negatively to describe such doctrine:

> We can think of metaphysical realism as defined by the denial of a semi-Kantian position paradigmatically represented by the post-1980 Hilary Putnam: '… what objects does the world consist of? Is a question that it only makes sense to ask within a theory or description….' (Alston 2002: 98)

In what follows, I will briefly discuss this brand of realism and will not be concerned with epistemological questions about realism, since for Nagel, Searle and Alston, as well as for Boyd and Devitt, with whom I will also be concerned, epistemological claims about reality come only second to ontological and metaphysical claims[4], and thus they present their realism mostly as an ontological thesis. However, after their assessment of metaphysical realism is done, I would turn to epistemological and semantic questions which, as Putnam's internal realism shows, are necessary.

1.2. Minimal Realism

a. Thomas Nagel and the view from Nowhere

In *The View from Nowhere* (1986), Thomas Nagel, characterizes thus the confrontation between realism and idealism: *"The realism I am defending says the world may be inconceivable to our minds, and the idealism I am opposing says it could not be."* (Nagel, 1986: 91) Thus, realism, as opposed to idealism, claims that

> there may be aspects of reality beyond … [human objectivity's] reach because they are altogether beyond our capacity to form conceptions of the world. What there is and what we, in virtue of our nature, can think about are different things, and the latter may be smaller than the former. (Nagel, 1986: 91)

Thus, idealism seems a limiting view of reality, a sort of Protagorean view which limits the universe to the bounds of human understanding:

> The idea that the contents of the universe are limited by our capacity for thought is easily recognized as a philosophical view, which at first sight seems

[4] The reason they give for this is that in order to know that *p*, I must first acknowledge *p*'s existence. As we shall see in what follows, this statement is not doubt-free, for it is not specified how is it that one comes to *know* about the existence of *p*.

> crazily self-important given what small and contingent pieces of the universe we are. It is a view that no one would hold except for philosophical reasons that seem to rule out the natural picture[5]… What there is, or what is the case, does not coincide necessarily with what is a possible object of thought for us. Even if through some miracle we are capable in principle of conceiving of everything there is, that is not what makes it real. (Nagel, 1986: 92)

It is clear that for Nagel, as well as for John Searle, as we shall see, external realism implies stepping out of language and our *humanity* to achieve a privileged View from Nowhere, a God's Eye View which determines the reality and existence of objects which humans cannot conceive of (Nagel, 1986; Searle, 1995).

Nagel admits, though, that external realism cannot be made sense of, at least not positively:

> My argument will be essentially negative. I believe that the statement of a realist position can be rejected as unintelligible only on grounds which would also require the abandonment of other, much less controversial claims. My position is that realism makes as much sense as many other unverifiable statements, even though all of them, and all thought, may present fundamental philosophical mysteries to which there is at present no solution. (Nagel, 1986: 95)

Thus, Nagel also shares Searle's conviction that external realism (ER) must be taken as a background premise for communication; a premise which excludes any sort of positive proof. In this respect, Nagel and Searle share a *conviction* on ER which was arrived at by realizing the necessity of presuppositions for communication -*rather than*

[5] "*That picture is that the universe and most of what goes on in it are completely independent of our thoughts, but that since our ancestors appeared on Earth we have gradually developed the capacity to think about, know about, and represent more and more aspects of reality."* (Nagel, 1986: 93)

arrived at after logical proof or rational justification. As it will be argued later, the internal realism of Hilary Putnam helps us realize that in order to achieve such conviction one must trod the path of human conventions first, and not the other way around.

For Nagel, the belief in ER is related to the possibility that reality extends beyond the reach of human understanding:

> There are plenty of ordinary human beings who constitutionally lack the capacity to conceive of some of the things that others know about. People blind or deaf from birth cannot understand colors or sounds. People with a permanent mental age of nine cannot come to understand Maxwell's equations or the general theory of relativity or Gödel's theorem. These are all humans, but we could equally well imagine a species for whom these characteristics were normal, able to think and know about the world in certain respects, but not in all. Such people could have a language, and might be similar enough to us so that their language was translatable into part of ours. If there could be people like that coexisting with us, there could also be such people if we did not exist -that is, if there were no one capable of conceiving of these things that they cannot understand. Then their position in the world would be analogous to the one which I have claimed we are probably in. (Nagel, 1986: 95)

All of this is granted and even unproblematic. Admitting that the universe might be more complex than what our limited understanding can conceive is not a metaphysical claim but simply a sign of intellectual modesty. However, that possibility doesn't imply that we must accept an *undetermined and unconceivable something* (things in themselves) as a *determined* and *conceivable* thing. Spinoza, in the 17th century, saw this very clearly when he said that Nature *might* consist of an infinite number of

attributes; however, our limited understanding only perceives the two attributes of *thought* and *extension*. What Spinoza saw as a logical and metaphysical impossibility, one can think of as a pragmatic commodity: why should we bother with a so-called "reality" which is inconceivable for us if every attempt that we do to "conceive" of such possibility we end up denying that very possibility? To think of an unconceivable something seems to be a self-refuting enterprise since the trail of the *intentional serpent* is over all.

There seem to be two different referring entities in this problem: on the one hand, -and granting the realist's point- we have "the unconceivable" as a referring possibility, in the sense that it refers *negatively* to the limits of our understanding. Such unconceivable entity is unproblematic, since it merely refers to the possibility that there might be things which are outside our current understanding. Accepting this possibility is a rational acceptance of our limited -*though ever expanding*- knowledge. The other referring entity (the "positive" entity) is the "reality" which, according to the realist, "exists" outside our conceiving capabilities, and which Searle and Nagel advocate. It is precisely this "referring entity" which I see as *un*conceivable, since -according to the realist- we refer to it not even from the perspective of any language - and yet, the realist is speaking *of* it!!-, but from a View from Nowhere which supposes that an "intentional neutrality" is possible outside of human language.

b. William Alston

William Alston championed (1996, 2002) a brand of *modest* or *minimal* Realism (mR) in which that doctrine is deprived of any epistemological claims. What is at stake for minimal realism is *what there is*, not *how we come to know it*. Alston's realism is "minimal" since, as opposed to more ambitious claims, it "modestly" acknowledges that

there are some parts of reality which are what they are due to human conventions and language; such is the case, for example, of scientific theories. However, according to Alston, much of what we find out there enjoys an *an sich* status, namely, it is what it is regardless of our conceptions. Among the many things which are supposed to enjoy an *in itself* reality we find *"familiar kinds of stuff and portions thereof- water, earth, sugar, manure, snow…"* (Alston, 2002: 99) We must stop here and anticipate a little the argument which I will pursue throughout this chapter. When I come to present Searle's realism I will discuss the cases for natural physical objects, such as mountains; however, it is interesting to reflect about Alston's example of sugar. It is nevertheless strange how it is that sugar enjoys a reality in itself, since it obviously is a human *product*. However, I think Alston is claiming that the *components* of sugar are what they are regardless of our conceptual schemes and conventions. Regardless of how we speak and how we think, sugar will always be composed by carbon hydrates. However, it is not so clear why a carbon hydrate would enjoy an *an sich* reality and be what it is independently of any conventions if one admits, as Alston has already acknowledged, that scientific theories do not have such status and that they are what they are due to human conventions. If scientific theories depend on human convention, then what they count as a carbon hydrate depends on equal conventions. The realist is committed to a rather old fashioned metaphysical picture when he claims that reality consists *necessarily* of such and such objects and ultimate components.

Alston believes that metaphysical realism, in order to stand on its own, needs to be qualified. Thus, he claims that it must be rid of the extra baggage which gets its formulation in trouble. For Alston, such extra baggage amounts to the correspondence theory of truth and the idea of a unique correct description of the world (something similar to the "Absolute Conception of the World", defended by Bernard Williams in

his 1985). Alston believes that if he can show that realism does not imply these two last doctrines, then his minimal realism becomes a good candidate for being a true description of reality. So he proceeds negatively, by trying to find flaws in Putnam's formulation of metaphysical realism.

Alston notes that Putnam describes Metaphysical Realism as the conjunction of three theses which supposedly imply each other:

M1. The world consists of a fixed totality of mind independent objects.

M2. There is exactly one true and complete description of the way the world is.

M3. Truth involves a correspondence relation between words or thoughts and external things. [6]

Alston's argument will depend on Putnam's claim that each of these theses implies the other; thus, if he can show that neither **M2** or **M3** follow from **M1**, then he would have shown that metaphysical realism survives a crucial challenge, thus getting closer to truth.

As we have seen, Alston's minimal realism is more modest than Putnam's account of realism in **M1**, for it doesn't claim that *all of* reality enjoys an *an sich* status, but only *some* parts of it. However, for argument's sake, Alston acknowledges **M1** as an appropriate and workable formulation of realism.

Through Putnam's favorite example of mereology[7], Alston argues that metaphysical realism does not necessarily imply a unique correct description of reality, for it is compatible with such alternative accounts of reality as well. Thus, metaphysical realism would be compatible with an account which divides the world into objects in different

[6] See Putnam's *Reason, Truth and History,* p. 49, and also *Realism with a Human Face*, p. 31.
[7] Since a good deal will be said about it when we come directly to Putnam's ideas on the topic, mereology will only be mentioned here in passing.

and incompatible ways: *"consistency is preserved because the bases on which each of these* [mereological] *divisions is made is itself something that exists and is what it is independently of our choices between those divisions."* (Alston, 2002: 104) To support this thesis, and to show Putnam's inconsistency, Alston brings an example from Putnam himself:

> How we go about answering the question 'How many objects are there?'- The method of 'counting', or the notion of what constitutes an 'object'- depend on our choice… but the answer does not thereby become a matter of convention. (Putnam, *The Many Faces of Realism*, 32-33, quoted in Alston 2002: 110)

However, Alston fails to see the importance of the implication between **M1** and **M2** above. Putnam's quote continues thus: *"There are 'external facts', and we can say what they are. What we cannot say -because it makes no sense- is what the facts are* independent of all conceptual choices*."* (Putnam, 1987: 33) For Putnam, mereology makes sense, since it is not tied to a metaphysical ontological thesis. Putnam's internal realism doesn't go as far as denying the existence of external facts or objects; in fact, he acknowledges that there is *something* out there. However, the answer to what is out there is a matter that depends on our conceptual choices, as mereology shows. What is *not* conventional is the very answer that each choice gives us, for each conceptual scheme responds to its own contrivances and rules. Thus, in his example of mereology, in determining whether there are on the table three or seven objects, he says that

> *If I choose Carnap's language, I must say there are three objects because* that is how many there are*. If I choose the Polish logician's language, I must say there are seven objects,* because that is how many objects *(in the Polish logician's sense of 'object')* there are. (Putnam, 1987: 33)

Again, for the internal realist there is no doubt that there is something "out there"; however, the answer to *what there is* is a matter of convention. This is pretty much the opposite of the metaphysical thesis which holds that the world consists of a fixed totality of mind-independent facts (**M1**). And such thesis is completely interrelated to (and implies) **M2**, the thesis which holds that there is a unique correct description of reality. The reason for such closed implication is that one cannot hold that reality consists of a *fixed* number of *n* objects without necessarily restricting one's account of it. So the difference between an internalist account and a metaphysical one is that this last one restricts the possibilities of descriptions to a privileged language, be it physics, theology, or what he wills[8]. So, after all, **M1** implies **M2**, restricting thus the metaphysical realist to a limited and univocal description of reality.

This same argument holds for showing that the correspondence theory of truth (**M3**) is also implied by -and in direct relation with- **M1**. Alston argues that the basic thesis of metaphysical realism, **M1**, can stand on its own without carrying the criticisms against the correspondence theory of truth; thus, Putnam's critique of metaphysical realism could be more easily discarded. However, if the realist holds **M1**, then it would become clear that any true statement must refer and correspond to the facts recognized by **M1**, not any others (since, then, such statements would be about something "unreal", and thus untrue). But Alston doesn't see matters this way. According to him, it is perfectly possible for the metaphysical realist to embrace **M1** and still hold an internalist account of reality through mereology. However, I have just argued that this is not possible: since

[8] For Putnam, as we shall see in next chapters, internal realism must keep open the options of verification, lest it becomes a metaphysical doctrine: *"I refuse to* limit in advance *what means of verification may become available to human beings. There is no restriction (in my concept of verification) to mathematical deduction plus scientific experimentation. If some people want to claim that even metaphysical statements are verifiable, and that there is, after all a method of 'metaphysical verification' by which we can determine that numbers 'really exist', well and good;… The difference between 'verificationism' in this sense and ´verificationism´ in the positivist sense is precisely the difference between the generous and open-minded attitude that William James called 'pragmatism' and science worship."* (Putnam, 1990: ix)

M1 holds that there is a restriction on what counts as an "object of reality", there is a *fixed totality* of such objects. When I come to asses Michael Devitt's version of *Realism* (3 sections below), we will meet again with the problem of the correspondence theory of truth and the realist's denial that his own doctrine doesn't need such theory. However, as we have just seen now, and as it will be argued later, Realism without correspondence is meaningless.

The metaphysical realist, then, is not burden-free. By assuming that there is a fixed totality of real objects and facts he is committed to the twin theses that there is a unique description of such reality and that true statements correspond such reality. Alston's criticism of Putnam fails to see this point, and believes that the realist can naively hold **M1**.

However, as Alston himself acknowledged, his minimal realism is much more modest than **M1**, for it only holds that there are *some* parts of reality which enjoy an *an sich* reality. And it is precisely to this sort of minimal realism which we turn our attention now.

c. John Searle

In *The Construction of Social Reality* (1995), John Searle identifies Realism as an ontological thesis instead of a necessarily epistemic thesis. For Searle, Realism states that

(1.) The world (or alternatively, reality or the universe) exists independently of our representations of it.

This is identified as *external realism*, which according to Searle is an ontological thesis, not an epistemological one, because it says that there exists a reality independent of our

representations, whereas it doesn't say anything about how we come to *know* such reality; therefore, it is not an epistemic thesis or a thesis about truth:

> Realism is the view that there is a way that things are that is logically independent of all human representations. Realism does not say how things are, but only that there is a way that they are. And "things" in the previous sentences does not mean material objects or even objects. (Searle, 1995: 155)

Searle expects to face the anti-realist epistemic claim which demands from the Realist an explanation of *why things are one way rather than another* (for example, why does the "absolute" language of physics "really" describes reality as opposed to commonsense language) by holding a non-epistemic view of Realism and thus avoiding making claims of how the world is *in fact*. According to Searle, the Realist is not saying that reality *is* one way rather than another; the Realist is simply saying (also blocking the Skeptic and Idealist, according to Searle) that *there is* a reality independent of representations:

> Realism does not say that the world had to turn out one way rather than another, but only that there is a way that it did turn out that is independent of our representations of it. Representations are one thing, the reality represented another, and this point is true even if it should turn out that the only actual reality is mental states. (Searle, 1995: 156)

However, is it necessarily so? Let's suppose a brain in vat has a representation of a chair. The supposed "reality" of this chair is nothing different from the representation of it, since the inputs for the representations of the BIV do not come from chairs out there, because there are no chairs, only mental states. It is, therefore, not necessarily true that representations are one thing and the reality represented another thing. As we shall see

in what follows, Searle takes "Reality" for granted[9], committing himself to the empiricist Myth of the Given criticized by Quine (1953), Sellars (1997), and Davidson (1974).

Taking Reality for granted also makes him suppose that idealism and anti-realism are easily blocked. He admits that *even if it happened* that material objects do not exist, still Realism would hold:

> For the antirealist it is impossible that there should be a mind-independent reality. For the realist, even if there were no material objects in fact, there would still be a representation-independent reality, for the nonexistence of material objects would just be one feature of that representation-independent reality. (Searle, 1995: 157)

So Searle's realist does not go as far as saying that material objects *do* exist and that they are better described from the absolute conception of physics[10]; Realism does not imply a View from Nowhere, Realism -as Kant correctly saw it, according to Searle- implies *no view at all*; the realist only says that there *"is something"* independent of representation.

Searle's Realism, though, seems to be such a broad theory of reality that it becomes unintelligible and finally -from a pragmatic perspective- philosophically *uninteresting*. For him, Realism *"presupposes that there is a way things are that is independent of how we represent how things are."* (Searle, 1995: 156) However, in this apparently naïve presumption we find two contradictions which refer us to the metaphysical suppositions of the View from Nowhere (Nagel, 1986): if one holds that *there is a way*

[9] For Searle it is necessary to take External Realism for granted, since it ultimately becomes a condition for meaningful communication: *"Unless we take ER for granted, we cannot understand utterances the way we normally do. Furthermore, we have to take ER for granted to engage in the sorts of discourse and thought that we have been engaging in."* Searle, 1995:182.

[10] In this respect, Searle´s Realism would be different from Bernard Williams' Realism as it is represented in his Absolute Conception. See Williams 1986.

things are (even if no humans or intentionality ever existed) one is already giving an *intentional* meaning to that sentence: *certainly, there is one way, not two ways, or n ways* for the "existence" of reality. And the second contradiction resides precisely on the expression "there is", which implies existence: if no humans or conscience ever existed, *could one think of a possible meaning for the word "existence"?* What sense does it make to refer to something we don't even know how to refer to? Such realism implies that if no conscience ever existed still the Mount Everest (Searle's example) would "exist". However, if no intentionality ever existed, could we refer to that unknown "chunk of reality" -*which we commonly refer to as "Mount Everest"*- as the "Mount Everest"? Could we even refer to it as a *mountain* or as a *physical object*? Of course, if we didn't exist at all and there wasn't any intentionality, "we" or anyone could not refer to anything. The "reality" which this Realism claims ends up being an *undetermined something* which we could not conceive or refer to.

If Searle is right, and the Mount Everest would "exist" even if no humans or intentionality existed, then this claim would need, in order to make any sense, a minimal sort of "omniscient" intentionality which would serve to describe the Mount Everest as "the Mount Everest", or at least as a physical object[11]. Indeed, the description of "the Mount Everest" implies a complicated web of beliefs which requires a background of intentionality which would be impossible to conceive of outside of human language and convention. For example, how can the *Observer from Nowhere* tell the limits between the "mountain" and the "valley" if he is not trained in human conventions? Description and reference imply our *complicated form of life,* and they are possible only through human interests and intentionality. Stripped of conventions, "reality" might look -from a God's eye perspective- like an undetermined and unlimited "something".

[11] And thus, an omniscient observer who would describe valleys and mountains, and so on.

Nevertheless, what is important in the realist argument is that there *in fact* are some parts of "reality" which are independent of how they are represented. However, my point is that one cannot have any cognition of "reality" or of "existence" if such cognition is outside of a cognitive system. Speaking of the "World out there" implies a complicated cognition system which is far from the neutral View from Nowhere which the realist claims to be possible. Such cognitive system implies language and convention, and these are ultimately what convey what we call "reality". Speaking of a reality outside language and convention not only seems nonsensical but also contradictory, for every attempt we make to speak of it we end up using *our* language and conventions.

Notice that so far I haven't mentioned the role of justification and verification in Realism. For Putnam, such role is crucial when it comes to certain beliefs: *"All I ask is that what is supposed to be 'true' be* warrantable *on the basis of experience and intelligence for creatures with a 'rational and sensible nature.'"* (Putnam, 1990: 41) When we come to the issue of *warrant* in Putnam's internal realism, we might be in a better position to understand why the realist's thesis is not warranted, for, as Putnam would say, we cannot ascertain its truth or falsity under any conditions, since such thesis outruns the very possibility of justification[12].

So far, I have not been concerned with justification for Realist beliefs, but simply with the *statement* of the Realist thesis, which I hold (following Putnam) to be unintelligible. In fact, Searle views these criticisms against Realism (which, through a syllogism, he discards as nonsensical) as the criticisms against the Kantian theory of *things in themselves*: the verificationists and internal realists (such as Putnam) claim that

[12] See Putnam's preface to his *Realism with a Human Face*.

> what external realism offers us is an unthinkable something, indescribable, inaccessible, unknowable, unspeakable, and ultimately nonsensical. The real problem with such a realism is not that it is false, but that it is ultimately unintelligible. (Searle, 1995: 174)

For Searle, these sorts of criticism against Realism are better understood as a syllogism:

"Premise: Any cognitive state occurs as a part of a set of cognitive states and within a cognitive system.

From this premise it is supposed to follow that:

Conclusion 1: It is impossible to get outside of all cognitive states and systems to survey the relationships between them and the reality that they are used to cognize.

And from this in turn it is supposed to follow that:

Conclusion 2: No cognition is ever of a reality that exists independently of cognition." (Searle, 1995: 174)

Searle accurately points out that conclusion 2 doesn't *necessarily follow* from conclusion 1 or the premise. Indeed, from the fact that cognitions occur only within cognitive systems it doesn't *necessarily follow* that no cognition is ever *of* a reality that exists independently of cognition. However, the relationship between the premise and conclusion 2 is not one of necessary deduction, but more of a relation of implication. If we accept that thought and representation are only possible within a certain framework, then one expects constraints on such framework, which imply that thought outside of that framework cannot be considered as such. Again, how can we think of and refer to "something" which is positively out of that framework? Can we even conceive it? The criticism of unintelligibility against the *Ding an Sich* makes sense and cannot be dismissed, as Searle hopes, as an insufficient logical deduction. External realism

requires something more than a syllogism to be refuted -or proved, for that matter-, it requires a logical and coherent thesis; and so far I have argued that such thesis is unintelligible and, from a pragmatic perspective, uninteresting.

After pointing to the impossibility of a positive demonstration of external realism -in the sense that Kant demanded and Moore supposedly gave[13]-, Searle advocates the thesis that realism is a *background presupposition* for intelligible discourse. Whenever anybody engages in a meaningful speech act, that person is taking ER for granted, for, according to Searle, successful communication implies an "ontologically objective" reality which is independent of any representation: *"The thesis that there is a reality independent of our representations identifies not how things are in fact, but rather identifies a space of possibilities."* (Searle, 1995: 182) For example, the utterance *"Mt. Everest has snow and ice near the summit"* holds independently of any representations, for, according to Searle, it makes reference to brute facts, which do not depend at all on representations. Such statements allow us to engage in meaningful communication, since we must take for granted a reality to which language refers to.

Searle seems to be committed to what Davidson (1974) called the *third dogma* of empiricism, namely the scheme/content distinction. For Searle, the fact that there is such thing as a "mountain" which contains a thing called *snow* and *ice* is a brute fact, something which exists independently of language and representation. As Davidson criticized this dogma, empiricists believe that there is a ready-made world out there to which conceptual schemes fit in a *one-to-one* relation. Since later I will deal with the problem of conceptual schemes, by now I just want to point what Putnam said regarding

[13] Searle reminds us how any argument or attempt to prove the existence of the external world -as Moore's famous "proof"- fails to realize that it is assuming what it needs to be proved: *"The proposition that I have two hands entails the proposition that the external world exists. The existence of the external world is a truth condition of the proposition that I have two hands in the same way that the existence of at least one hand is a truth condition of that proposition."* (180) Thus, a positive argument for ER must be given up.

this problem in *The Many Faces of Realism*, which, by the way, fits very well with Davidson's criticism of the scheme/content dichotomy:

> To talk of 'facts' without specifying the language to be used is to talk of nothing; the word 'fact' no more has its use fixed by Reality Itself than does the word 'exist' or the word 'object'. (Putnam, 1987: 36)

This position of Searle's also goes against the ontological relativity advocated by Quine, who insisted on seeing *"all objects as theoretical... Even our most primordial objects, bodies, are already theoretical"* (Quine, 1981: 20) Following Quine, one can criticize Searle's realism by pointing that reference is indeterminate in the sense that utterances are not constrained by the *world out there*; language doesn't fit the world in any way[14]; rather, language helps us cope with reality in a way which responds to our own interests. The utterance that "Mt. Everest has snow and ice near the summit" is not a brute fact, as Searle's realism supposes. Such utterance belongs to a complicated form of life which rests on an equally complicated web of beliefs; and as opposed to the thesis of external realism, such utterance (or the supposed *fact* that it states) would not exist if that form of life is removed from the picture. The efforts of such philosophers as Sellars, Quine, and Davidson were much devoted to argue that there are no such things as *brute facts* since language and human convention penetrates so deep into what we call reality.

d. Boyd and Devitt

Richard Boyd and Michael Devitt, both former students of Putnam, have devoted much of their work to criticize Putnam's version of anti-realism and develop a coherent

[14] This point, curiously enough, is also granted by Searle when he admits the impossibility of the correspondence theory of truth in his *Construction of Social Reality*.

account of metaphysical realism[15]. In what follows, I will concentrate on making sense of their claim that metaphysical realism implies *mind-independence*, and on the criticisms against Putnam which they raise concerning this issue. The problem of mind-independence is central in the discussion of metaphysical realism because it boldly dismisses the input of language and intentionality in ontology, and also because it serves as a premise for one of the other central theses of metaphysical realism, namely, that there's *one true theory with one true ontology*.

Explaining Putnam's characterization of metaphysical realism, Boyd says that for Putnam, the metaphysical realist holds that *"related to OTT* [there being one true theory, with one true ontology] *is the doctrine that both the objects in the relevant ontology and their status as appropriate objects are mind-independent."* (Boyd 2012: 40) This feature of metaphysical realism comes from *Reason, Truth, and History*, where Putnam declared that, according to metaphysical realism, *"the world consists of some fixed totality of mind-independent objects. There is exactly one true and complete description of 'the way the world is'."* (Putnam 1981: 49)

As Boyd notes, the metaphysical doctrine that holds objects as mind-independent, and that there is one true theory, is contested by Putnam's treatment of "objects": *"'Objects' do not exist independently of conceptual schemes.* We *cut up the world when we introduce one or another scheme of description."* (Putnam 1981: 52, quoted in Boyd 2012: 40) In what follows I will try to make sense of the claims advanced by materialist metaphysical realists, such as Boyd, that natural objects (*i.e.* natural kinds) are mind-

[15] See especially Boyd 2012 "What of Pragmatism with the World Here?", in Baghramian (ed.) 2012 ; Boyd 1988 "How to be a Moral Realist", in G. Sayre McCord (ed.) *Moral Realism*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press; Boyd 1991 "Realism, Anti-Foundationalism and the Enthusiasm for Natural Kinds", Philosophical Studies 61; Devitt 2012 "Hilary and Me: Tracking Down Putnam on the Realism Issue", in Baghramian (ed.) 2012; 1983 "Realism and the Renegade Putnam", *Nous* 17; Devitt 1991a "Aberrations of the Realism Debate", Philosophical Studies 61; Devitt 1991b *Realism and Truth*, 2nd ed. Oxford, Blackwell.

independent and the claim, supported by Devitt, that the ontology afforded by modern science is also mind-independent.

By developing what he calls a materialist, non-reductivist metaphysical realism, or *materialist accommodationism* (2012), Boyd argues that such doctrine, contrary to what Putnam thinks, doesn't imply reductionism of intentional concepts to physicalism. For Boyd, there are two different sorts of phenomena whose claim of mind-independence is at issue: intentional and mental phenomena on the one side, and the ontological status of natural objects on the other. For the first sort, Boyd says that:

> On the one hand, there are phenomena which are prima facie mind-dependent because they straightforwardly involve minds: minds, for example, and mental states, but also human social structures and social artifacts, semantic phenomena and the like. Putnam appears to hold that, for the fully consistent materialist metaphysical realist, such phenomena -and the concepts and language that refers to them- must be reducible to the phenomena and concepts of physics. (Boyd, 2012: 44)

Boyd, as much as he claims that his position is non-reductionist, nevertheless accepts that, ultimately, intentional concepts and reference are reducible to physics, fitting thus in the category of a materialist metaphysical realist, which Putnam opposes. In fact, his reductionism seems to be of a *tout court* character:

> All natural phenomena and all phenomena causally or otherwise determinatively related to natural phenomena are physical… In particular, all the intentional, mental and purposive phenomena referred to in the specification of the epistemic access and accommodation conditions are physical. (Boyd, 2012: 61)

As shall be seen in proper time, Putnam's internal realism is an answer to such reductionism and *pseudo*-non-reductionism, such as Boyd's. By claiming that intentional and mental phenomena can be reduced to physics, Boyd finds himself in the difficult situation, which all reductionists eventually face, of explaining how the very *definition* or *concept* of an intentional concept can be reduced to physical vocabulary. Even logical positivists such as Carnap and Reichenbach, eventually abandoned their ambitious reductionists programs when they realized that intentionality is not reducible or translatable into a supposedly privileged language such as physics[16]. Internal realism, as I will argue, steers clear from the dangers faced by reductionism, such as trying to give an account of intentionality in physicalist terms. For Putnam, as well as for the classic pragmatists like William James, the trail of the human serpent is over all, in the sense that they don't shy away from the acknowledgement of intentional and mental concepts into the fabric of what we call *reality*.

As for the second sort of mind-independence, the ontological status of natural objects, such as natural kinds, Boyd says:

> A central claim of many non-reductionist materialists is, roughly, that the naturalness of a natural object (a natural kind, relation, magnitude, thing, etc.) is discipline specific…The obvious way to understand this claim is to see it as maintaining that natural objects qua natural objects are, in some important sense, partly constituted by the relevant disciplinary practices. (Boyd, 2012: 44)

As opposed to the first sort of mind-dependence, Boyd accepts that this second sort cannot be easily rebutted by the reductionist:

[16] See Putnam "Logical Positivism and Intentionality" in his 1994a.

> Some object (say a natural kind) might be physicalistically definable, so that its inclusion in the "fixed totality of mind-independent objects" would be compatible with the first stricture against mind-dependence, but its membership in that category still might not be explicable in physicalistic terms. (Boyd, 2012: 45)

For this reason, as Boyd tells us, his materialist accommodationism is not a reductionist doctrine, since it acknowledges the causal import of intentionality.

In trying to make sense of the claim that natural objects are discipline specific, one must bear in mind that for Boyd natural kinds and reference are social constructions:

> natural kinds are features not of the world outside our practice, but of the ways in which that practice engages with the rest of the world… They are not free-standing language-independent phenomena. (Boyd, 2012: 62)

If natural kinds and reference are considered as social constructions (and thus, language-dependent), then it would not be very farfetched to consider the ontological status (the "naturalness") of natural objects as mind-*de*pendent. However, and here comes trouble, Boyd is not happy to leave his materialist accomodationism as such, since he concludes that *"the accommodationist conception is fully compatible with the view that reference and natural kinds are 'mind-independent' in whatever sense(s) are required for metaphysical realism."* (Boyd, 2012: 66) So, how are we to make sense of the second claim that the naturalness of natural objects is language-dependent, if on the other hand we have that natural kinds and reference are mind-independent? The answer that Boyd hints is that *language-dependency* is not the same as *mind-dependency*. This is probably the most appealing part of his materialist accommodationism since it emphasizes on the materialist side, namely, the claim that all mental and intentional phenomena are physical: *"all the intentional, mental and purposive phenomena referred*

to in the specification of the epistemic access and accommodation conditions are physical." (Boyd, 2012: 61) As Boyd sees it, materialist accommodationism is non-reductionist, since it acknowledges the causal import of intentional concepts in reference, making reference a language-dependent matter; but, for the materialist accomodationist, reference and intentionality are also mind-independent matters, since all mental phenomena, by being physical phenomena, are mind-independent. Thus, the motto for materialist accommodationism would be: *no reference without language* (language dependency); and *no language without physics* (mind-independency).

Materialist accommodationism relies on the empiricist picture of language which I have already criticized, in the sense that it accounts for a physical phenomenon without accounting for meaning; in other words, it supposes that meanings can be ascribed physicalistically. Saying that reference is mind-independent accounts for a belief in a functionalist picture of mind –leaving no space for meanings and intentionality-, against which Putnam opposed his internal realism, and specifically to deal with such pictures of mind he developed his Brains in a Vat Argument, which I will examine in the next chapter.

The problem of mind-independence is of equal importance for Michael Devitt, but from a perspective different from Boyd's. For Devitt, the doctrine which he calls *Realism* differs from the doctrine which Putnam criticizes, *Metaphysical Realism*, in the sense that, for Devitt, *Realism* can stand on its own as a metaphysical thesis, without the import of semantics and without concerning itself with the problem of truth. Thus, *Realism* consists of two spheres, an *existence* and an *independence* sphere:

Realism: Tokens of most commonsense, and scientific, physical types objectively exist independently of the mental (Devitt, 2012: 103)

As Devitt sees it, *Realism* is a metaphysical thesis concerned only with the objective existence of scientific ontology and with the mind-independence of such ontology; truth and justification are outside of the field of such metaphysics. Thus, by trying to put *metaphysics first*, Devitt thinks he can avoid the problem of truth, claiming that it doesn't have anything to do with *Realism*, since this doctrine talks only about the existence of certain entities and their mind-independence. Most particularly, Devitt denies that the *Realist* is committed to a correspondence theory of truth, as Putnam claims he must be, arguing that when the anti-realist criticizes the correspondence theory of truth, *Realism* is untouched.

If the doctrine of *Realism* could be detached from the problem of truth, then, as Devitt sees it, *Realism* would stand, because the relation between truth and realism has traditionally been expressed in terms of correspondence. For Devitt, the main criticisms against all sorts of realism have rested on the supposed truth of the first premise of the following argument:

1) *If the realist's independent reality exists, then our thoughts/theories must mirror, picture, or represent, that reality.*

2) *Our thoughts/theories cannot mirror, picture, or represent the realist's independent reality.*

3) *So, the realist's independent reality doesn't exist.* (Devitt, 2012: 106)

Though most of the debate has centered on *2)* above, Devitt shifts his attention toward the veracity and evidence of *1)*, which, according to him, is false: *"to question whether our theories aim at 'picturing' the world is not to question whether electrons 'really' exist."* (Stephen Leeds, "Theories of Reference and Truth", quoted in Devitt, 2012: 107) Since *Realism* is a metaphysical doctrine which centers on the existence and mind-

independence of a certain ontology, thus, for Devitt it follows that *"a metaphysical doctrine like* Realism *cannot be attacked* simply *by arguing against certain semantic theories of truth or reference."* (Devitt, 2012: 107) Devitt is right in claiming that his *Realism* might be untouched by attacking only the correspondence theory of truth, but he is wrong to think that the problem of truth can be separated so easily from realism in general.

Let's analyze *1)* more carefully. Devitt denies that *1)* above is true because he denies that *Realism* is a matter of representation or correspondence, but rather, as his own definition shows, *Realism* is a doctrine of existence and independence. However, although it is true that the existence of a mind-independent reality is not necessarily a matter of representation or correspondence, it is definitely the case that *talk* of such reality must be a matter, if not of semantics, at least of *justification*. "Surely, Devitt would retort, *Realism* is not concerned only with *talk* of an independent reality, but with its implementation": *"It is not just that our experiences are* as if *there are cats, there are cats. It is not just that the observable world is* as if *there are atoms, there are atoms."* (Devitt, 2012: 104) However, such commonsense commits Devitt to a naïve pragmatism which he surely would reject: such naiveté implies a blind and unscientific belief in the discoveries of science without justifying them or testing them as true.

Devitt, unknowingly, and most to his dismay, appears as a *naïve pragmatist*, in the sense that he doesn't rely on a theory of truth for scientific theories, but only relies on their success: *"What realists believe is that we can judge whether theories are true of reality, the nature of which does not depend on any theories or concepts."* (Devitt, 2012: 110) Devitt's pragmatic naiveté is rendered by the fact that he doesn't account for the fact of how does the realist *judge* whether theories are true of the independent reality or not: if what the realist does is to *judge* whether theories are true of reality, then an

account of such judgment is required. The verificationist and the coherentist accounts are discarded by the realist because, since he accepts the independence of reality, then internal constraints as such implemented by verificationism and coherentism would say nothing about an independent reality. On the other hand, if theory *X* works, and we claim the independence of reality, as the realist does, then our only apparent choice is to admit that theory *X represents* or *corresponds* to that reality. Devitt, of course, would not be satisfied with this, insisting that the realist's judgment of true theories says nothing about their correspondence to reality, but only to the success of science:

> Realism takes both the ontology of science and common sense, and the folk epistemological view that this ontology is objective and independent, pretty much for granted… It is not just that our experiences are as if there are cats, there are cats. It is not just that the observable world is as if there are atoms, there are atoms. (Devitt, 2012: 104)

Devitt's naïve pragmatism is reflected in the fact that even though the realist's mind-independent reality is not constituted by thoughts or theories, still he takes for granted the ontology of science and common sense as determining the entities that exist in such independent reality. But then, how does one ignore the theories which acknowledge and bring forth such ontology? Have all the items in that ontology always existed mind-independently? Had Devitt lived in the 17th century, he would have counted in his realist ontology the existence of corpuscles and would have omitted the existence of atoms. This shows that all reference to the ontology of the supposed mind-independent reality implies reference to a theory, since that reality is through and through *constituted by* such a theory.

Thus, it is very difficult to see how the doctrine of *Realism* could be established without reference to semantics, as Devitt expects. Such difficulty is shown by Devitt's portrayal

of anti-realists (like Dummett and Putnam) as denying *"that* the existence and nature *of the stars are in various ways independent of our minds."* (Devitt, 2012: 112) Devitt claims that Dummett and Putnam (making reference to Putnam 2007 and Dummett's response) failed to understand what he meant by "independent" in his doctrine of *Realism*; and emphasizes that, as opposed to *logical* or *causal* independence, he means *constitutive* independence, in the sense that reality

> is not constituted by our knowledge, by our epistemic values, by our capacity to refer to it, by the synthesizing power of the mind, nor by our imposition of concepts, theories or languages; it is not limited by what we can believe or discover. (Devitt, 2012: 104)

What does *constitutive* independence mean? As Putnam acknowledged in his response to Devitt 2012, it cannot mean a causal claim such as "to bring something into existence", because Devitt himself acknowledges that the constructivist/anti-realist doesn't go that far as claiming that; nor can it refer to a logical construction out of a primitive experience (à la Carnap), because, *"If so, the "is not constituted by" claim would be acceptable to any antirealist who is* not *a phenomenalist, in particular to Michael Dummett, as Devitt well knows."* (Putnam 2012b: 123) In his response to Devitt, Putnam says that *constitutive* independence must be understood in relation to the claim which, according to Devitt, the constructivist/anti-realist, such as Putnam, accepts, namely, *"that there* wouldn't have been *dinosaurs or stars if there* had not been *people(or similar thinkers)"* (Devitt, 2012: 111) As opposed to giving a positive argument, Devitt claims that *constitutive* independence is to be understood as the denial of what the constructivist/anti-realist says *constitutes* reality, namely thoughts and language. The problem, however, is that, as Putnam claims, the internal realist doesn't hold that *there* wouldn't have been *dinosaurs or stars if there* had not been *people (or*

similar thinkers). As opposed to this, the internal realist doesn't deny the existence of dinosaurs or stars, but rather, claims that in order to meaningfully talk about such entities one must be *justified* to do so. In other words, the internal realist doesn't necessarily deny that an independent reality exists only because our theories fail to mirror such reality; but instead, the internal realist holds that any *talk* of such reality must be *justified* on theoretical evidence and rational justification. For any token of "independent reality" there must be a theory which justifies us even to refer to such token, namely, for speaking about atoms there must be an atomic theory to justify such talk; if not, any talk of atoms outside atomic theory is sheer mysticism. If the realist's independent reality exists, as he claims, then our thoughts and theories must justify such reality; but if it's only justified and knowable through our thoughts and theories –as I've been arguing-, as well as in successful scientific experience, then one must ask if it is still worth it to call such reality "independent".

1.3. Partial conclusions of this chapter

The brand of Realism shared by Searle, Nagel, Alston, Boyd, and Devitt falls prey to what has been criticized as a commitment to the Given, namely, the empiricist claim that reality can be known directly through sensitive information.

These philosophers, though, don't go as far as claiming that *all* of reality is ready-made and thus enjoys an *an sich* status. They acknowledge that some elements of reality are social conventions, and thus wouldn't be said to exist without human language and interpretation. As representatives of metaphysical Realism, they defend the claim that reality transcends justification, and thus we might never achieve an accurate knowledge of it, since even our best theories might fail to grasp the very essence of reality; as

Nagel claims, "*What there is, or what is the case, does not coincide necessarily with what is a possible object of thought for us.*" (Nagel, 1986: 92) Reality, for metaphysical Realism, becomes a mysterious entity, something to be referred to from a View from Nowhere; in other words, something so unreachable, that it ultimately becomes philosophically uninteresting.

On the other hand, for these philosophers (particularly Searle and Devitt), the notion of truth doesn't imply the correspondence theory, since they do not claim that reality is one way rather than another[17]. So, they claim, their doctrine is ontological, rather than epistemological; Realism is more a matter of *what there is*, rather than of *how* to know it.

In direct relation with the problem of truth, these realists claim that though metaphysical Realism cannot be positively stated as a thesis, it must be accepted, nevertheless, as a condition for successful communication: thus Nagel admits that

> realism makes as much sense as many other unverifiable statements, even though all of them, and all thought, may present fundamental philosophical mysteries to which there is at present no solution. (Nagel 1986: 95)

In the same spirit, we saw that for Searle, as well as for Devitt, Realism must be taken for granted without any sort of justification: *"Unless we take ER* (external realism) *for granted, we cannot understand utterances the way we normally do."* (Searle, 1995: 182). As was shown in this chapter, all these realists demand from the anti-realist (as we also pointed out, Putnam is their preferred target) a clear statement of metaphysical realism to which he could, supposedly, criticize- instead of providing a justified and positive statement of their own doctrine. Unfortunately, in the proposals of Alston,

[17] In this respect, they do not share Bernard Williams's idea that physical science is the *Absolute Conception of the World*.

Searle, Nagel, Boyd, and Devitt –all of them reputed advocates of realism- we couldn't find a positive statement of the doctrine of metaphysical realism, one to which our standards of justification could adapt. Instead, the doctrine they offer is one in which "faith" seems to be the only argument for believing in their *an sich* reality.

Chapter 2

THE DEVELOPMENT AND SOME FEATURES OF INTERNAL REALISM

2.1. Realist Beginnings

In his article "What is 'Realism'?" (1978[18]) Putnam claims that *"whatever else realists say, they typically say that they believe in a 'correspondence theory of truth'."* (Putnam, 1978: 18) In this early *scientific-realist* phase, Putnam sees the theory of truth as correspondence to reality as a necessary means to avoid considering the success of science a *miracle*. Thus, for early Putnam, the triad of *truth as correspondence, reference,* and *the success of science* became the central tenet of the scientific realism he embraced[19]. This sort of "sophisticated realism" rests on the supposed convergence and success of science, and blames Idealism -*the opponent of Realism, and which "in our time would be positivism or operationalism"*- for being unable to account for such success and convergence, thus treating science as a miracle. However, this accountability of science depends on a qualification of reference and truth, which are not necessarily taken in a classical (metaphysical) sense.

The scientific Realist holds that terms such as "electron" and "genes" *refer* to scientific "entities"; these "entities" are precisely what allows convergence and success in science, for reference to these terms "survives" translation practices and scientific

[18] The references to this article, originally from 1976, belong to *Meaning and the Moral Sciences* (1978), where it was reprinted.

[19] Although in "What is 'Realism'?" Putnam avoids identifying his own position with scientific realism, it is clear, as it will be shown, that his early realism is *scientific*, not *metaphysical*. See Hickey 2009: 51.

revolutions, thus discarding Kuhn's claims of incommensurability[20]. However, such success of reference in the case of scientific "entities" seems only possible if we adopt a "principle of charity" or "benefit of the doubt"[21] which states that

> it is an essential principle of semantic methodology that when speakers specify a referent for a term they use by a description and, because of mistaken factual beliefs that these speakers have, that description fails to refer, we should assume that they would accept reasonable reformulations of their description. (Putnam, 1978: 23)

Early Putnam adopts a version of metaphysical Realism in his 1976 article "What is 'Realism'?" by accepting that there is a fixed relation between *referring terms* and *referred things*, between language and reality. If speakers are *mistaken* about their beliefs then their terms do not refer, since, apparently, it is only our *mature* terms which *really refer*. This is the Realist metaphysical assumption according to which there is a privileged language which represents Reality as *it really is*, and that other less privileged discourses are mistaken when they speak about reality. Take, for example, the concept of *Democracy*: according to this metaphysical assumption, the Greeks from the 4th century B.C. would have been *mistaken* when using the term *democracy* for referring to their type of government, because the extension of that term as it is used by *us* differs from how the ancient Greeks used it. According to early Putnam's metaphysical assumption, it is only our modern concept of democracy which *really* refers, while the Greeks' concept *fails* to do so (since it excluded an important

[20] Kuhn's and Feyerabend's claims against convergence on scientific theories (discussed in "What is 'Realism'?", pgs. 22-25) state that scientific terms do not refer to the same entities in different conceptual schemes, therefore the impossibility of convergence in science yields incommensurability. For a more complete criticism of incommensurability by Putnam see his *Reason, Truth, and History*, chapter 5.

[21] For an early statement of this *benefit of doubt,* see Putnam's "Language and Reality" in his *Mind, Language, and Reality*; *Philosophical Papers 2*. This principle of charity becomes a central part of Putnam's *concept/conception* distinction (chapter 5 of *Reason, Truth, and History*); which is also the main idea behind his concept of an *ideal-limit* of rationality.

percentage of the population, and "democracy", as *we* use it today is a different concept, supposedly a "correct" one).

However, the fact that our conception of "democracy" is different from the Greeks' conception of "democracy" doesn't account for saying that *they were mistaken* in using that concept, while we are correct. From a pragmatic perspective (not adopted yet by Putnam by the time he wrote "What is 'Realism'?"), such talk of speakers from other cultures being "mistaken" by using their concepts to refer to something for which we also have a similar concept, has been abandoned, in part due to Quine's indeterminacy of translation thesis (1960) and Davidson's views on conceptual schemes (1974).

Nevertheless, this metaphysical constraint on reference was partly abandoned by Putnam by the time of *Reason, Truth, and History* (1981), and from that point on, he adopts a more pragmatic "theory" of reference which depends on human interests rather than metaphysical assumptions about the accuracy of reference.

The principle of charity is used to save scientific convergence through a fixed reference relation between language and reality, which seems to be a central tenet of metaphysical Realism. However, the "entities" which are referred to are not taken to exist "realistically", as it will be pointed out in what follows, rather, their "existence" becomes intra-theoretic, which depends on a qualification of *truth*. If this is the case, early Putnam would be partially "innocent"[22] from the metaphysical charge I just made in relation to reference.

[22] His "partial guilt" would consist in supposing that past speakers' terms do not "refer," and also advocating a fixed reference relation. From the point of view of the later "pragmatic Putnam," such "partial guilt" would be metaphysically Realist enough.

Convergence on science is based upon reference practices[23], and such practices are based on a Tarskian conception of truth. Tarski's definition of truth relies on the technical term "satisfaction", in the sense of a relation between words and things:

> 'Satisfies' is the technical term Tarski uses for what I have been calling reference. For example, instead of saying '"Electron" refers to electrons', he would say 'The sequence of length one consisting of just x satisfies the formula "Electron (y)" if and only if x is an electron'… This certainly conforms to an essential part of the idea of a correspondence theory. (Putnam 1978: 30)

Putnam concludes that Tarski's definition of truth satisfies *"the formal properties we want the notions of truth and reference to have"* (Putnam, 1978: 31). Such constraints that *our Realist* conceptual schemes require have an explanatory value of the relation between words and things. The use of scientific terms such as *electrons* and *DNA molecules* is justified because the Tarskian definition of truth allows for their "existence".

The explanatory value of this qualified theory of truth as correspondence satisfies the notion of convergence adopted by early Putnam, namely, Richard Boyd's scientific Realist thesis that

1. **Terms in a mature science typically *refer*.**
2. **The laws of a theory belonging to a mature science are typically approximately *true*.**

These two sentences are accepted as parts of scientific knowledge, and are conjoined with the following notion of understanding truth realistically:

[23] Of course, not a *physicalistic* theory of reference, as Putnam says Hartry Field would demand (Putnam 1978: 32)

(A) Venus might not have carbon dioxide in its atmosphere even though it follows from our theory that Venus has carbon dioxide in its atmosphere; and

(B) A statement can be false even though it follows from our theory. (Putnam 1978: 34)

According to Putnam, (B) follows from any sentence of the general form (A), and (A) *"is itself a 'scientific' (or even a* commonsense*)* fact about the world *(albeit a* modal[24] *fact about the world)."* (Putnam 1978: 36) This leads Putnam to wonder: *"how could anyone* not *understand truth and logical connectives realistically? How could anyone not be a realist?"* (ibid.) The Realist must, therefore, take science at *face value* (*"Realism, so to speak, is 'science's philosophy of science'"*); science becomes, for the Realist, a standard of truth and justification. But again, as the Tarskian definition of truth has shown, *"the concept of truth is not philosophically neutral."* (Putnam, 1978: 37) Given the acceptance of Boyd's convergence, and accepting (B) *"as a part of science",* Putnam concludes that Realism, thus understood, depends on *"a way of understanding truth, not just a way of defining the word 'true'."* (Putnam, 1978: 37))

Instead of adopting a metaphysical definition of correspondence, early Putnam's Tarskian definition of truth allows him to describe the "real world" *"in terms of our own conceptual system (Well? Should we use someone else's conceptual system?)"* (Putnam, 1978: 32)

[24] Since my interest here (and also for matters of space and time) is not to argue the details of Putnam's early scientific Realism, but rather to *outline* it in order to assess whether it is a metaphysical doctrine or not, I shall not go into the details of modal demonstrations. For the "modal" reasons of why (A) is such a *fact about the world* see Putnam 1978: 35.

Metaphysical Realism –which, by the time of "What is 'Realism'?" Putnam had not totally differentiated from scientific Realism- is not necessarily linked to classical and physicalistic definitions of truth and reference; thus,

> abandoning realism- that is, abandoning the belief in any describable world of unobservable things, and accepting in its place the belief that all the 'unobservable things' spoken of in any generation's scientific theories, including our own, are mere theoretical conveniences, destined to be replaced and supplanted by quite different and unrelated theoretical constructions in the future- would not be a total scrapping of the predicates true and refers in their formal aspects. (Putnam, 1978: 29)

Thus, the concepts of existence and truth become *intra-theoretic,* something very close -*though not quite the same*- to what Putnam would later claim in his internal realism.

As we shall see later, in his internal realist phase (which can be traced to his 1976's "Realism and Reason") Putnam abandons the constraints on reference as a condition for truth. Instead, he adopts the view that truth is linked with justification, therefore it cannot depend on a relation of metaphysical dependence between language and reality, where the "reality" and "fixedness" of the world limit and constraint all "correct" and "accurate" discourse. The point to emphasize is that, due -in part- to his scientific and analytic background, in an early phase Putnam adopted a doctrine very close to that of metaphysical Realism in the sense that he advocated a theory of correspondence where truth depends on reference. As was pointed out, the "entities" referred to are not necessarily taken as the *ultimate* constituents of Reality[25], rather, they are seen as intra-theoretic *conveniences*. We can conclude, then, that in "What is 'Realism'?" Putnam

[25] Although the criticism raised above in relation to the principle of charity might yield a different interpretation.

swings in a middle ground, between scientific Realism (with a slight bend towards internal realism) and full blown metaphysical Realism.

2.2. Realism, Reason, and Semantics

In "Realism and Reason" (1978), Putnam further develops the consequences of a correspondence theory of truth without the metaphysical constraints of a realist (thus, fixed) reference relation. According to this early stage of internal realism, metaphysical realism, as opposed to internal realism, is not an empirical theory of language but *"a model of the relation of any correct theory to all or part of THE WORLD."* (Putnam, 1978: 123) Thus, metaphysical realism holds that understanding a term consists in *knowing* what piece of the world it refers to. This metaphysical picture is linked with a unique reference theory between words and objects to the point that the only possibility of truth is a unique correspondence theory between language and world. The main problem with metaphysical realism thus stated is that it also holds the reality of Kantian noumena, *the thing in itself*, thus supporting the thesis that truth is radically non-epistemic. Such acceptance supposes the inaccessibility to such world in itself, thus we come to know it by mere appearances; truth is inaccessible to even our best theories. Putnam argues that if such picture is accepted *"then talk of all these theories as descriptions of 'the world' is empty."* (Putnam, 1978: 133) This reminds us of the external (minimal) realism advocated by Searle and Alston, a realism which holds that reality is inaccessible to human knowledge and that it exists in itself, independent of any conceptualization.

A further problem with this statement of metaphysical realism is that, by itself, it blocks the very possibility of successful reference, a possibility it advocates by embracing the

correspondence theory of truth. By holding that truth is radically non-epistemic, metaphysical realism blocks the possibility of telling whether a reference relation between word and object is correct or incorrect, because not even our best theories have access to the world as it is in itself. Metaphysical realism, just as relativism, is a self-contradictory thesis.

Instead of this metaphysical picture, in "Realism and Reason", and as an early step in the development of his internal realism, Putnam proposes a sort of "verificationist semantics", not much unlike Michael Dummett's "non-realist semantics" (Dummett, 1978). According to this version of semantics, *"the realist notions of truth and reference come in not in explaining what goes on 'in the heads' of speakers, but in* explaining the success *of language-using."* (Putnam, 1978: 129) In this early rendering of internal realism, Putnam already embraces conceptual relativity and mereology (which will be discussed later in their more mature renderings); thus, these two features, which have remained constant in Putnam's philosophy since an early stage, are counterexamples of what at first glance would look like Putnam's *always changing* philosophy. However, I want to focus here on the verificationist semantics adopted by Putnam in this early rendering of internal realism.

According to verificationist semantics, understanding a sentence is knowing what constitutes a proof (verification) of it, as opposed to the metaphysical realist's claim that to understand a sentence one must know its truth-conditions: *"Dummett and I agree that you can't treat understanding a sentence (in general) as knowing its truth conditions; because it then becomes unintelligible what* that *knowledge* in turn *consists in."* (Putnam, 1978: 129) Instead, verificationist semantics claims that understanding a sentence is done within a theory, within a language. According to Dummett's verificationism (which is of a *Wittgensteinian* sort, as opposed to a *positivistic* sort) a

speaker is said to understand a sentence when she presents a *manifestation* of such understanding, for example, asserting the sentence "there is a cow" when in presence of a cow. The main feature of this anti-realist semantics is that the *extensional* notions of truth and reference play no part whatsoever in it, since they are replaced by *intensional* notions, such as assertibility. Then, as opposed to the realist claim, non-realist semantics claim that understanding a sentence has nothing to do with understanding truth conditions. Thus, this semantics allows avoiding the problems which come up with the realist claim that truth is bivalent: since understanding of a sentence depends on canons of verification, there seems to be no point on deciding whether unverifiable (in principle) sentences are true or false. In other words, Dummett's verificationism treats truth not as an objective relation between mind and world, but instead as a semantic verification procedure where truth is constrained by our abilities to verify.

However, since the internal realist has claimed that there isn't a unique reference relation, then, how does he know that

> 'cow' refers to cows in the sense of referring to one determinate set of things, as opposed to referring to a determinate set of things in each admissible interpretation? (Putnam, 1978: 135)

Putnam's answer is that *within* the theory "'Cow' refers to cows" is a logical truth. It is only a theoretical truth, not a metaphysical *unrevisable* truth about an unchanging world; thus, adopting a theory is adopting a *version* of the World[26]. Versions are revisable, and since they do not assume the question whether there is a theory-independent fact of the matter as to what a term in a given theory corresponds to, then one can have that "'Cow' refers to cows" is a *contextually a priori* truth.

[26] See Nelson Goodman, *Ways of Worldmaking* (1978), and Putnam's "The Way the World is", in his 1990.

Thus, as early as 1976, Putnam had already figured out the seeds of his internal realism and had noticed the inconsistencies of metaphysical realism. Since that point on, his philosophy starts to resemble more and more to what he himself called a *demythologized Kantianism*, a coherent and strong version of social knowledge:

> Kant's image was of knowledge as a 'representation' - a kind of play. The author is me. But the author also appears as a character in the play (like a Pirandello play). The author in the play is not the 'real' author - it is the 'empirical me'. The 'real' author is the 'transcendental me'. I would modify Kant's image in two ways. The authors (in the plural- my image of knowledge is social) don't write just one story: they write many versions. And the authors in the stories are the real authors. This would be 'crazy' if these stories were fictions. A fictitious character can't also be a real author. But these are true stories. (Putnam, 1978: 138)

2.3. Models and Reality

Putnam's early critique of metaphysical realism is further developed in his "Models and Reality" ([1977] 1983), where he deploys a model-theoretic argument against the realist claims that model theory can be used to show that there is a unique reference relation which can thereby establish the truth of a theory. Since "Models and Reality" is a highly technical essay whose consequences and form of argumentation were later abandoned by Putnam, here I will be concerned only with its conclusions against metaphysical realism, and will not go into all its important technicalities[27].

[27] For a very complete analysis of the technicalities of Putnam´s model-theoretic arguments, besides his own "Models and Reality", and the second chapter of *Reason, Truth, and History*, see Taylor, 2006, chapter 3.

a. Indeterminacy of Reference and Completeness

The philosophical lesson Putnam draws from the "Löwenheim-Skolem paradox", which he discusses in "Models and Reality", is that there are simply too many ways in which our mental symbols can be mapped onto the world; thus, in such "paradox" one finds the seeds for internal realism. The philosophical side of the "Löwenheim-Skolem paradox" points that the realist must agree that:

1. What our symbols refer to is massively indeterminate.

2. Even an ideal theory might be false.

As we have seen, *2.* is accepted by metaphysical realism, and it was precisely this feature of realism which Putnam attacked in "Realism and Reason", to the effect that metaphysical realism -due, in part, to its commitment to *things in themselves*- becomes an untenable position from its very statement. However, in "Models and Reality", Putnam arrives to *2.* through *1.*, which is fiercely opposed by metaphysical realism. Indeterminacy (at least in its ontological aspect) is one of the tenets of the supposed "relativism" which metaphysical realism sets to oppose and it is precisely to this ontological indeterminacy which Putnam points out through the Skolem argument. The reason that indeterminacy of reference (*1.* above) brings as a consequence that *even an ideal theory might be false* (*2.* above) is because the first claim undermines realism's commitment to the idea that truth can be established through a unique and adequate reference relation, such as the correspondence theory of truth. Thus, not even a formalization of total science (a finished and ideal limit of enquiry, according to Peirce) would render ideal theories true –'true' in the sense that the realist demands. Then, we have that the sense of 'true' which we obtain through the Skolem argument (the only apparently verifiable sense) is a very different sense of 'true' as the realist demands. The realist idea of truth refers to its epistemic independence, in the sense that truth is

verification transcendent; whereas the sense of 'true' which we have through the Skolem argument is a sense which is theory and language dependent.

Barry Taylor in his *Models, Truth, and Realism* (2006) identifies this argument as the *Argument from Completeness*, which is (as opposed to its cousin arguments from Cardinality and Permutation (Taylor, 2006, chapter 3)) the main model-theoretic argument against the tenets of realism. The Argument from Completeness rests on Gödel's COMPLETENESS THEOREM: any consistent first-order theory has a model (and a normal model) (Taylor, 2006: 51). The Argument from Completeness claims that -as opposed to the realist claim of truth's epistemic independence- every theory can be constructed in a model in which all of its theses are true:

> Consider an ideal theory T*, crafted by generations of super scientists. Being ideal, T* accords at least as well as any competitor with the methodological constraints on theories […]; further, it meets all 'operational constraints. Then by the Completeness Theorem, T* has a model M*. So, though realism holds that T*, for all its ideality, may be false, we have established that all of its theses are true, in one clear sense of 'true'; for all of them are true-on-M*. (Taylor, 2006: 51)

Bearing in mind that one of the central tenets of realism is truth's supposed epistemic independence -thus even an ideal theory might be false-, the Argument from Completeness stands as a strong criticism of metaphysical realism, since it attacks that very notion. As Taylor puts it:

> The Argument from Completeness confronts us with a model M* which renders true all the theses of the ideal theory T*, and, hence, with a sense of 'true' -true-on-M*- according to which all the theses of T* are guaranteed to be

> true, apparently conflicting with realism's commitment to objectivity of truth, specifically to its epistemic independence. (Taylor, 2006: 59)

The Argument from Completeness shows us that there is no room for an ideal theory to be false in the sense that the realist requires. Through model-theoretic arguments, ideal theories are proven to be 'true' in a very different fashion from realist standards, which, *a fortiori*, shows that no ideal theory can be proved to be false under the same standards. That is how we arrive to the claim that *even an ideal theory might be false* (*2.* above) from the claim that *what our symbols refer to is massively indeterminate* (*1.* above): metaphysical realism claims that there must be a unique truth-making state of the world and that (sometimes -if we discard things in themselves-) ideal science can lead us to such states (the *Absolute* description of reality from a *View from Nowhere*). Now, the Model-Theoretic Argument shows that such unique and accurate truth-making state of the world is an illusion, since there is no established norm in any language or metalanguage which renders a specific interpretation as *the* "intended" interpretation (indeterminacy of reference). When presented with indeterminacy, the realist must explain what constraints a model has to satisfy for it to be the "intended" interpretation of a set, to the effect that the model stands in a determinate and *true* reference relation with the objects of the set:

> the argument that Skolem gave, and that shows that 'the intuitive notion of a set' (if there is such a thing) is not 'captured' by any formal system, shows that even a formalization of total science (if one could construct such a thing), or even a formalization of all our beliefs (whether they count as 'science' or not), could not rule out denumerable interpretations, and, a fortiori, such a formalization could not rule out unintended interpretations of this notion. (Putnam, 1983: 3)

What is at stake here is the realistic belief that there can be a unique reference relation between words and world, namely, a Platonic belief in the unexplained and unnatural "grasping" of forms. Through the model-theoretic argument Putnam shows that there are models of sets in which "'Cat' refers to cats" is true in the same sense in which "'Cat' refers to cherries" is also true. There is nothing in the formal system itself which fixes with metaphysical glue the extension of the word "cat" to a particular set of objects.

Thus, the Model-Theoretic Argument shows us that the truth or falsity of theories depend on a certain model and conceptual scheme (Argument from Completeness), and not on the realist's fictions of truth's epistemic independence and ultimate reality. The collapse of the realist's claim that there is a unique reference relation renders impossible his belief that one can pick an "intended" and correct interpretation of a theory; thus, the realist is mistaken to adopt model theory as a feasible program to argue in favor of the correct relation between language and extralinguistic structures.

b. Non-realist semantics, again

Models don't take into account a key element in the understanding of language, namely, interpretation:

> If we are told 'axiomatic set theory does not capture the intuitive notion of a set', then it is natural to think that something else -our 'understanding'- does capture it. But what can our 'understanding' come to, at least for a naturalistically minded philosopher, which is more than the way we use our language? And the Skolem argument can be extended […] to show that the total use of the language (operational plus theoretical constraints) does not 'fix' a unique 'intended interpretation' any more than axiomatic set theory by itself does. (Putnam, 1983: 4)

There must be *something* outside the formal system which allows for interpretation, and which is not necessarily the use of language, thus, something *outside* the use of the language which *comes in*. However, in this "non-realist semantics/intuitionist" phase, Putnam links interpretation with the very idea of the use of language, thus it is necessary to show that the use of language necessarily amounts to methods of verification plus interpretation. In other words, there is nothing in the way between interpretation and verification which separates them from the use of language.

Following Dummett (which was also his strategy in "Realism and Reason"), Putnam adopts the strategy of non-realist semantics and intuitionism, where

> knowing the meaning of a sentence or predicate consists in associating the sentence or predicate with a procedure which enables one to recognize when one has a proof that the sentence is constructively true […] or that the predicate applies to a certain entity […]. The most striking thing about this standpoint is that the *classical notion of truth is nowhere used*… (Putnam, 1983: 20)

One advantage of this non-realist semantics over realist semantics is that the problem of a unique reference relation (and thus the problem of a unique "intended" interpretation) doesn't arise: *"reference is given through sense, and sense is given through verification procedures and not through truth-conditions."* (Putnam, 1983: 21)

Non-realist semantics abandons the idea of understanding as *knowing* the truth-conditions of a sentence, for such alternative implies *already* (and mysteriously) knowing the intended interpretations of a metalanguage, and so on. Instead, non-realist semantics views *"the understanding of the language as consisting in the fact that speakers possess (collectively if not individually) an evolving network of verification procedures."* (Putnam, 1983: 22) Such network amounts precisely to the notion of *use of the language*, which comprises also the notion of interpretation. The problem of a

unique intended interpretation doesn't arise under this picture since the use of a language fixes the interpretation, language use *becomes* the interpretation itself:

> To adopt a theory of meaning according to which a language whose whole use is specified still lacks something -namely its 'interpretation'- is to accept a problem which can only have crazy solutions. To speak as if this were my problem, 'I know how to use my language, but, now, how shall I single out an interpretation?' is to speak nonsense. Either the use already fixes the 'interpretation' or nothing can. (Putnam, 1983: 24)

Through model-theoretic arguments Putnam showed that the social aspect of language cannot be overlooked when it comes to meanings. This conclusion is in line to the semantic externalism developed in his "The Meaning of Meaning" (1975), which claimed that "meanings ain't in the head."[28] The model-theoretic argument developed in "Models and Reality" takes further this semantic externalism by showing that it doesn't make sense to talk about interpretation and meaning outside of their relation with the use of a language, since they all are intertwined.

2.4. Brains in a Vat

The Brains in a Vat (BIV) Argument was put forward by Putnam in his *Reason, Truth, and History* (1981) as a criticism to the realist claim that mental images and signs *necessarily* refer to mind-independent objects. Together, the BIV Argument and the Model-theoretic Argument, form Putnam's early attack on metaphysical realism and its confidence in the referential relation between mind and world.

[28] The idea of semantic externalism, developed in that article is discussed in the next chapter.

Through the skeptical supposition that we all could be brains in a vat -thus, all of what we call *reality* might be merely inputs from a computer connected to our brains-, Putnam seeks to show that there is a fundamental problem about realist ("magical") theories of reference. The core of the argument is this: in order to show the inconsistencies of the realist's theory of reference, Putnam –for the sake of argument- accepts a "causal constraint" on reference, to the effect that *"a term refers to an object only if there is an appropriate causal connection between that term and the object."* (Hickey, 2009: 80) When a BIV utters the words "there is a tree in front of me", all the language "inputs" come from the computer to which the BIV is connected to, not from actual trees out there. Therefore, the BIV is not in a proper causal relation with the world, to the effect that none of its words refer to it; they refer to the "mental images" which are being fed by the computer. For the sake of the argument, Putnam asks us to imagine a situation where all human beings are BIV, thus, the evil scientist, or the machine, makes us have the illusion that we are actually speaking to and hearing each other, when in fact, all we perceive and think of are the inputs from the machine.

Is this skeptical scenario possible? The answer, for Putnam, is '*No'*:

> [T]he supposition that we are actually brains in a vat, although it violates no physical law, and is perfectly consistent with everything we have experienced, cannot possibly be true. It cannot possibly be true, because it is, in a certain way, self-refuting... The answer is going to be (basically) this: although the people in that possible world can think and 'say' any words we can think and say, they cannot (I claim) refer to what we can refer to. In particular, they cannot think or say they are brains in a vat (*even by thinking 'we are brains in a vat'*). (Putnam, 1981: 7, 8)

To argue for this option, Putnam brings the example of *Turing's Test*, where a computer is said to be conscious only after a person fails to determine *who is who* in a conversation with a computer and with another person [29]. For Putnam, a variant of Turing's test *(Turing Test for Reference)* can be used to determine the existence of shared reference, and thus determine if our partner uses the same words to refer as we do. The scenario for this test of reference is similar to that of the BIV, since in it machines produce meaningful sentences in any given natural language and interact (via linguistic responses) with speakers of such natural language. Naturally, for Putnam this test is not a proof that the discourse of such machines refers in the same way that human discourse refers (the same is true of the sentences of the BIV, and the ants who "draw" the face of Winston Churchill). From this comes the important conclusion that *"words (and whole texts and discourses) do not have a necessary connection to their referents."* (Putnam, 1981: 10) The reason for this is that, whereas our discourse about the world implies some non-verbal interaction with it, the BIV's and machine's discourses do not bear any sort of such interaction. Putnam defines such interaction as "language *entry/exit* rules":

> There are 'language entry rules' which take us from experiences of apples to such utterances as 'I see an apple', and 'language exit rules' which take us from decisions expressed in linguistic form ('I am going to buy some apples') to actions other than speaking. Lacking either language entry rules or language exit rules, there is no reason to regard the conversation of the machine […] as more than syntactic play. (Putnam, 1981: 11)

[29] *"The conversations are not to be carried on face to face, of course, since the interlocutor is not to know the visual appearance of either of his two conversational partners. Nor is voice to be used, since the mechanical voice might simply sound different from a human voice. Imagine, rather, that the conversations are all carried on via electric typewriter."* (Putnam 1981: 9)

As it is clear, the main thrust of the BIV argument is that mental images and words do not bear a necessary referring relation with the world. However, as Putnam points out, some philosophers *("most famously Brentano")* claim that the mind refers by means of concepts instead of mental images. Nevertheless, *"when we introspect we do not perceive 'concepts' flowing through our minds as such. Stop the stream of thought when or where we will, what we catch are words, images, sensations, feelings."* (Putnam, 1981: 17) The supposed "intentional" concepts of the phenomenologist are not to be found inside the mind, but rather in a social context of communication:

> [T]o attribute a 'concept' or a 'thought' to someone is quite different from attributing any mental 'presentation', any introspectible entity or event, to him. Concepts are not mental presentations that intrinsically refer to external objects for the very decisive reason that they are not mental presentations at all. Concepts are signs used in a certain way… [A]nd signs do not themselves intrinsically refer. (Putnam, 1981: 18)

As Putnam sees it, there must be, in order to there being understanding of a language, a "causal" relation between words and objects which is constructed by the way of concepts, and not through the presence of a mental image. Thus, according to the last quotation, concepts are *abilities*, rather than merely mental images, as the realist (and phenomenologist) claims they are; thus, they do not necessarily refer to a determined object.

When I hear the words "point to a tree", or if I'm showed an image of a man pointing to a tree, I cannot understand such utterances and images unless I have constructed and achieved the *ability* to point to trees when asked to point to trees:

> A man may have all the images you please, and still be completely at a loss when one says to him 'point to a tree', even if a lot of trees are present. He may

> even have the image of what he is supposed to do, and still not know what he is supposed to do. For the image, if not accompanied by the ability to act in a certain way, is just a picture, and acting in accordance with a picture is itself an ability that one may or may not have. (Putnam, 1981: 19)

In order for there being reference, meaning, and understanding, there must be a causal interaction between mind and reality; such causal interaction refers to the linguistic abilities afforded through concepts. Thus, concepts are not mental images or occurrences, but abilities to use language in a certain way, a meaningful way.

The BIV Argument seems like a very adequate response to Searle's and Alston's minimal Realism (mR) which was presented earlier. According to mR, there are significant parts of reality which are mind-independent, such as mountains, trees, sugar, and so on. mR holds that, for example, Mount Everest is Mount Everest even if no humans ever existed, and thus no words would ever be uttered to refer to it. In the sections above, I presented arguments against such claim, to the effect that, ultimately, mR refers to an undetermined "something", which is, from a pragmatic perspective, philosophically uninteresting. Now, I would like to claim that the BIV Argument points in a similar direction.

mR operates with a commitment to what Davidson called the "third dogma of empiricism", namely, the scheme/content distinction (Davidson, 1974). Before Davidson, Wilfrid Sellars had already pointed to this empiricist fallacy by referring to it as "The Myth of the Given" (Sellars, 1997). The argument from Sellars/Davidson claims that Empiricism operates with a ready-made theory of sense-data, to the effect that it supposes that reality consists of objects which are ready to be organized naively and objectively by the mind; as Locke saw it, the mind was a *tabula rasa*, upon which ideas are impinged. According to Davidson, there is not a fundamental divide between

the contents of perception and conceptual scheme, since language itself conveys the "reality" of such content, thus, reality is as it is only through language. For Davidson, the idea of a language which *organizes* experience doesn't make sense; rather, language *faces* experience (Davidson, 1974).

On the same vein, Sellars argued that the empiricist justifies a particular belief through the possession of a general concept: he justifies "*p* believes that x is red" through *p*'s acquaintance with redness; however:

> [I]n characterizing an episode or a state as that of knowing, we are not giving an empirical description of that episode or state; we are placing it in the logical space of reasons, of justifying and being able to justify what one says. (Sellars, 1997: 76)

For Sellars, just as the BIV Argument also claims, understanding a concept refers to the ability of using language in a certain way, not in possessing a mental image or sense-data. So, *p's* belief that "x is red" must be understood in relation with *p's* ability to use language in a certain way (namely, a way which justifies his belief), instead of understanding it in the language of sense impressions. The Sellarsian idea of the "logical space of reasons" characterizes knowledge as a social phenomenon, instead of a solipsistic enterprise, as the empiricist and realist would have it.

Now, mR operates with the idea that mental images and words refer *no matter what*. The ontology proposed by mR supposes the independent existence of things in themselves; however, they can be perceived, known, and referred to[30]. Thus, Mount Everest -as an object which enjoys an ontologically *an sich* reality- "causes" a person to magically refer to it every time that the words "Mount Everest" are uttered by that

[30] If mR is to be consistent, it must hold a dual theory of the thing in itself: Mount Everest is supposed to be ontologically a thing in itself (it exists and is what it is independently of human cognition); whereas epistemically it necessarily doesn't carry *an sich* features, thus the possibility to be known.

person (or when a person is shown an image of it). As the BIV Argument showed, this doctrine *"is not only bad natural science, it is also bad phenomenology and conceptual confusion."* (Putnam, 1981: 21) It is so, because it commits the blunder of adopting a magical theory of reference, pretending that a person would correctly refer to Mount Everest without possessing the concept of it[31]. But even if the person possessed the proper concepts to refer to mountains, and referred to the, so far unknown by him, Mount Everest, as "that mountain", by pointing to it, even then, that person would not be referring to Mount Everest as the realist claims. Mount Everest is Mount Everest after the conventional process of *naming it* so, and thus establishing its name as a concept. Similarly, if I'm walking in the streets of Berkeley, California, and point to a random person and refer to it as "that man", I am not referring to the famous philosopher John Searle, for it is possible that my conceptual scheme lacks the concept of "philosopher", and so on; and, even if I had such concepts, it is still possible that I don't recognize his face; thus, when I refer to Searle as "that man", it cannot be meaningfully said -according to the BIV Argument- that I am *referring* to John Searle[32].

It can be objected that this argument carries the spell of Kuhnian incommensurability; after all, I am interpreting Putnam as saying that one can only *meaningfully* refer to something after one has acquired its concept, and thus the *ability* to refer to it. Thus, the objection of incommensurability would run like this: *"If one can only meaningfully refer to conceptually-known entities, then, one cannot say that pre-atomic-theory scientists in the 19th century were meaningfully referring to atoms when they observed atoms, since they didn't have such concept; thus, one is tempted to say that such scientists lived in a different world than atomic scientists do."* This criticism of

[31] And thus, without necessarily possessing the concepts of "mountain", "valley", "division", "proper name", and so on.

[32] I acknowledge, however, that this claim extends the BIV Argument to essentialist discussions -such as the concept of a person- which are not the point here.

incommensurability vanishes by pointing that, certainly, pre-atomic-theory scientists could not have referred to atoms, since such concept wasn't implemented yet -as if Adam Smith could meaningfully have referred to the International Monetary Fund! However, one cannot accept that this implies that they lived in different worlds and that a rational dialogue between different scientific paradigms is impossible. Simply, their words and theories didn't share the same concepts and conceptions that ours do. The fact that someone's words do not meaningfully refer exactly as ours do doesn't mean that eventually she cannot achieve the ability to use our concepts meaningfully and establish successful communication. Reference, *pace* the realist -and as opposed to merely pointing to something or having a mental image-, if anything at all, is a social practice.

2.4. Partial conclusions of this chapter

Putnam's early efforts to oppose metaphysical realism, though not totally devoid of metaphysical presuppositions, stressed that the notion of truth, though is not exhausted by the notion of justification, still, cannot be independent from it. Thus, his Model-theoretic Argument strives to show that under realist standards there is a gap between what is true and what is ideally warranted by our best theories, an alternative a non-realist cannot accept. In "Models and Reality", Putnam deploys the Skolem argument to show that model theory is not an appropriate tool for the realist to argue in favor of the correspondence relation between language and extralinguistic structures. As the Argument from Completeness showed, the truth of a theory may be constructed depending on a model, to the effect that the sense of "truth" thus acquired makes no reference whatsoever to anything outside the model itself; thus undermining the realist

claim that truth is non-epistemic. The Skolem argument also points to the indeterminacy of reference, attacking the realist claim that one can pick out an "intended" interpretation for a theory. If such picking is rendered impossible by means of model-theoretic arguments, then model theory becomes a very doubtful candidate for showing that the objectivity of truth and the world can be demonstrated through formal models.

On the other hand, the BIV Argument is embedded in the tradition of Quine, Sellars, and Davidson, a tradition which unmasked the "dogmas" that made empiricism a metaphysical doctrine, and thus paved the way for a more pragmatist approach. What is most valuable in these arguments against metaphysical realism is the attack on the idea of the *Given*, namely, the claim that language *organizes* reality. As was pointed out, the empiricist (and realist) takes reality to consist of ready-made objects which are presented to the mind, ready to be correctly perceived. For philosophers such as Quine, Sellars, Davidson, and Putnam, this claim doesn't acknowledge an important feature of language, namely, that of *coping* with experience. Instead, the empiricist and realist are concerned with the *representational* aspect of language, thus, for them it makes sense to talk about sense-data and mind-independent reality. Summing up, the BIV Argument relies on the critique of magical theories of reference to show the impossibility to *refer* to anything without deploying a conceptual use of language.

The BIV Argument responds to the metaphysical realist's claims by pointing that reality is what it is only after one has acquired the ability to use language through concepts; only then, one's words are meaningful. If concepts are not deployed, as Metaphysical Realism's ontology supposes, one ends up not only with an uninteresting *"something",* but also with an undetermined and meaningless *"that".*

By the time Putnam wrote *The Many Faces of Realism* (1987), he had realized a certain inadequacy to rely on model-theoretic arguments to argue against metaphysical realism,

since such arguments relied on a theory of meaning and language which retained functionalist presuppositions. As opposed to this strategy, from *The Many Faces of Realism* on, Putnam pays more attention to conceptual relativity and pragmatism rather than model-theoretic arguments and metaphysical theories of the mind, such as functionalism.

Chapter 3

TRUTH AS IDEALIZED WARRANTED ASSERTIBILITY

3.1. Introduction

Reflecting on his philosophical development and his former attachment to Realism, Putnam acknowledges that a radical change came with his reconsideration of the problem of the correspondence theory of truth:

> The issue which first made uncomfortable with my hard-line realist position was one with which every philosopher is familiar: the notion that our words 'correspond' to determinate objects (where the notion of an 'object' is thought to have a determinate reference which is independent of conceptual scheme) had long seemed problematical, although I did not see any alternative to accepting it. (Putnam, 1983: viii)

The problem is linked to the determination of reference, how to fix the correspondence between words and objects: *"how can a determinate correspondence between words or mental representations and external objects ever be singled out? How is the correspondence supposed to be fixed?"* (Putnam, 1983: viii) As we have seen, the model-theoretic argument advanced in "Models and Reality" showed that there is no way to single out a definite and unique correspondence between words and objects- at least not in the way the realist demands. But model theory confronts only a partial aspect of the concept of truth, namely truth in a specific metalanguage; besides, the Tarski-inspired model-theoretic argument affords only a formal definition of truth, and not an informal elucidation of this notion. Given this limitation, and given the fact that

we are concerned with the assesment of internal realism in comparison to metaphysical and natural realism, it is necessary to consider that which is probably the most valuable insight of internal realism: truth as *idealized warranted assertibility*. In this chapter I explore this pivotal element of Putnam's internal realism and contrast such approach with the common-sense notion of truth adopted by Putnam since his *Dewey Lectures*. The main goal of this chapter is to show that internal realism (at least in its conception of truth) is not contrary to a common-sense view of truth in which truth is not identified with justification.

3.2. Coherence as rational acceptability

A starting point to understand truth as idealized warranted assertibility is to consider the idea that the rational acceptability of a set of statements depends on a "sort" of coherence with certain experiences:

> 'Truth', in an internalist view, is some sort of (idealized) rational acceptability-some sort of ideal coherence of our beliefs with each other and with our experiences *as those experiences are themselves represented in our belief system*. (Putnam, 1981: 49-50)

This "sort" of coherence is expressed in two levels: *consistency between beliefs* in a web of beliefs and *consistency of experiential inputs* with such web of beliefs. Without this second level of consistency, internal realism could very easily be blamed of idealism and solipsism. The consistency of experiential inputs with beliefs points to a relation not of causality but of interdependence: the inputs are not the neutral matter of sense-data, nor are beliefs isolated concepts. The appeal of internal realism is that it avoids the dichotomies between mind and world and belief and fact, and instead it proposes that

experiential inputs are, at least to some extent, *shaped* by our concepts. Thus, internal realism denies that

> there are any inputs *which are not themselves to some extent shaped by our concepts*, by the vocabulary we use to report and describe them, or any inputs *which admit of only one description, independent of all conceptual choices*. (Putnam, 1981: 54)

Conceptions of coherence –as opposed to *the concept of coherence itself-*, are contingencies created by culture and they reflect our values:

> Our conceptions of coherence are deeply interwoven with our psychology. They depend upon our biology and culture; they are by no means 'value free'. But they *are* our conceptions, and they are conceptions of something real. (Putnam, 1981: 55)

It is important to remark, then, that what depends on our culture are *our conceptions* of coherence, not *the concept* of coherence as a whole. Culture can shape what we accept for a belief to be consistent with other beliefs, in other words, culture determines the contents of beliefs. For exemple, one can accept that culture determines the consistency that beliefs must have with each other in a 21st century scientific image: they must admit and incorporate the paradigmatic facts and theories of modern science. However, the internalist conception of coherence doesn't admit the idea that the *very concept* of consistency is a cultural product, rather, all rational acceptability of beliefs is mediated by consistency. This point is illustrated by Putnam by his advocay of a limit-concept of an ideal truth, a *Grenzbegriff*. In the last page of *Reason, Truth and History* (1981), Putnam defends the idea that cultures and traditions produce different conceptions of rationality (our own conception created by the Greek tradition and modern science),

however, *"the very fact that we speak of our different conceptions of rationality posits a* Grenzbegriff, *a limit-concept of the ideal truth."* (Putnam, 1981: 216)

This limit-concept, as we shall briefly see, is not to be identified with Peirce's ideal-limit of science, the utopic situation in which all true sentences would eventually converge. For the internalist, there are objective features concerning truth and justification, for example, even though truth is related to justification, there might be truths which transcend justification. A similar point applies to rationality, according to the internalist: even though what we consider rational might change (our conceptions of rationality), it is still a *fact* that consistency is a condition for rational belief.

Coherence, as opposed to correspondence, is a matter as much of consistency as of interdependence, since the acceptability of a statement depends on other statements, experiences and states of affairs. As this shows, the idea of truth as warranted assertibility points to the metaphor that the mind and the world jointly make-up the mind and the world, since truth is conceived as unified coherence between mind and world (as opposed to the metaphysical notion of truth as the correspondence of theories to a transcendent reality).

Putnam's conception of coherence as consistency and interdependence of statements is in line with coherentist theories developped in the 20th century, most notably by some of the members of the Vienna Circle and the Oxford Neo-Hegelians[33]. Otto Neurath defended coherentism by claiming that

> statements are compared with statements, not with 'experiences', not with a 'world', nor with anything else. Each new statement is confronted with the totality of existing statements that have already been harmonized with each other. (*'Soziologie im Physikalismus'*, quoted in Kunne, 2003: 381)

[33] See chapter 7 of Kunne 2003.

Neurath's condition for the coherence of a set of beliefs is *consistency*: a new statement can be added to a set of staments only if the set remains consistent after the new statement is added. However, this conception of coherence as consistency between statements is open to the criticism (advanced by Bertrand Russell and Moritz Schlick, see Kunne 2003) that a set of statements might be consistent and yet be false. In response to this, coherentists, such as Neurath, maintained that the only type of statements which have truth claims are judgements and beliefs, thus, *"if we have excogitated something, we cannot simply decide to believe it."* (Kunne, 2003: 382)

Coherentists, such as the Oxford Neo-Hegelians (Bradley, Joachim), denied that conherence is limited *only* to consistency, and advocated the idea that a set of beliefs, in order to be coherent, must also be *comprehensive* and *come to terms with perceptual judgements*. A set of beliefs *x* is more comprehensive than a set of beliefs *y* only if *x* answers not only all questions answered in *y* but also at least one further question which remains unanswered in *y* (Kunne, 2003: 383) This idea of comprehensiveness is also conditioned by the tribunal of perceptual judgements which the set of beliefs must come to terms with; thus, *"a set of beliefs is maximally coherent if it is consistent and second to none as regards comprehensiveness, perceptual control, and tight justificatory unification."* (Kunne, 2003: 385)

This brief review of coherentism shows that Putnam's idea of warranted assertibility as coherence is conceived in the tradition of 20th century coherentism, since it advocates consistency between statements, as well as consistency between statements and perceptual judgements. As a consequence, Putnam's coherentism withstands the same criticisms faced by Neurath and the Oxford Neo-Hegelians, but, as has been argued, it relies upon the consistency between mind and world to answer such criticisms.

3.3. Truth as justification under ideal epistemic conditions

But truth, according to the internalist picture, cannot be identified with rational acceptability (justification) *tout court*, since truth is a necessary property of a statement[34] which cannot be lost, whereas rational acceptability is relative:

> The statement 'The earth is flat' was, very likely, rationnally acceptable 3,000 years ago, but it is not rationnally acceptable today. Yet it would be wrong to say that 'the earth is flat' was true 3,000 years ago; for that would mean that the earth has changed its shape. (Putnam, 1981: 55)

Therefore, an important feature of internal realism is the emphasis on the close relation between truth and justification: truth is independent of justification here and now, but not *independent of all justification*. Rather, for the internalist, truth is an *idealization* of rational acceptability: we conceive an statement as being true when it can be asserted under *ideal* epistemic conditions.

As has just been pointed, by identifying truth with justification under ideal epistemic conditions, Putnam was wrongly understood as equating such conditions with Peirce's ideal limit of science, the utopic situation in which science could justify every true statement. However, Putnam's linking of truth to justification under ideal epistemic conditions is very far from Peirce's metaphysical yearning: an epistemic condition is ideal if it is appropriate to a context and is *coherent* with a particular statement. For example (and following Putnam's example), the statement "There is a chair in my study" is true (rationally acceptable) only if the conditions in which it is stated are appropriate for such statement, namely, if there is good light in the room and if my vision is not impaired. In other words, *"there are better and worse epistemic conditions*

[34] Internalism accepts a bivalent logic according to which statements have the property of being true or false. Bivalence is a fact of our conceptual schemes, just as independence from our cultural peers' opinion is a fact about the notion of warrant.

with respect to particular statements." (Putnam, 1990: viii) The epistemic conditions advocated by internalism make reference to experiential inputs as well as the language in which such conditions are stated.

Therefore, to a certain extent, truth understood as justification under ideal epistemic conditions is *language-dependent:* when I am justifying an statement about physical objects, the rational and sensible process to follow is to assert my justification using material object language, and the same applies for every instance of truth as justification:

> [O]ne cannot say what are good or better or worse epistemic conditions in quantum mechanics without using the language of quantum mechanics; one cannot say what are good or better or worse epistemic situations in moral discourse without using moral language; one cannot say what are good or better or worse epistemic situations in common sense material object discourse without using commonsense material object discourse. (Putnam, 1990: viii)

This is a very important point of Putnam's conception of truth as warranted assertibility since it stands in stark contrast to the metaphysical doctrine of truth as correspondence. As we have seen, the idea of truth as correspondence confronts chunks of Reality with statements, affirming that the statement is a true reflection of the Reality in question. This position, as was showed in the first and second chapters, breeds the anxiety of determining how language hooks on to the world, *the dichotomy of mind and world*. As opposed to this metaphysical stand, Putnam's idea that truth as justification is language-dependent doesn't confront *Facts of Reality* with statements, instead, it proposes the idea that such "facts" are incomprehensible if described in a language not appropriate to

their context. Such context, and such *coherence of discourse and reality* is determined by our "rational and sensible nature."[35]

An important difference, then, between the metaphysical doctrine of truth as correspondence to reality and Putnam's truth as justification under ideal conditions, is that, as opposed to the doctrine of correspondence, when we identify truth as warranted assertibility we don't dichotomize between *fact and convention*. Acording to this view, there are no finished and transcendent facts on the one hand and a set of statements on the other hand waiting to be confronted. Instead, Putnam challenges us to conceive such facts as *unintelligible* without a coherent statement to describe them.

Therefore, the "sort of coherence" which Putnam compares to truth and rational acceptability is an interplay between concepts and experiences. But this interplay is not dualism all over again. Instead, internal realism claims that it doesn't make sense to speak of pure facts (stripped of conceptualisation) on the one hand, and of concepts which don't relate to an objective reality, on the other.

3.4. Epistemic conditions are world-involving

Against the criticism that internal realism might be an idealistic doctrine (due to the acknowledgement that elements of mind create an important part of what we call reality), Putnam insisted in his internalist period that the notion of ideal epistemic conditions is a *world-involving* notion. We have already seen that Putnam acknowledged that rational acceptability as coherence implies consistency between beliefs and consistency between beliefs and experiential inputs. In what follows I show

[35] Putnam here cites Kant's words (Putnam, 1990: ix).

further how this consistency between beliefs and experiential inputs is developped in Putnam's internalism.

For the internal realist, there are two senses in which the world (external reality) is said to determine epistemic conditions:

1) Even though truth is identified with justification, there are cases when truth is evidence-transcendent: *"the totality of actual human sense experiences does not determine the totality of truths, even in the long run."* (Putnam, 2000: 18) This first sense of "world-involving" is a clear retort against the objection that, since it is speakers themselves who determine whether a statement is true in sufficiently good epistemic conditions, internal realism can easily fall prey of solipsism: for the internal realist, truth trascends experience and justification; therefore, there might be truths which are unverifiable in principle, and thus we cannot conceive of any epistemic conditions to justify them. This is, of course, a negative sense of *world-involvement* concerning epistemic conditions, but it shows how knowledge of reality is conditioned by the world.

2) The second sense of "world-involving" regarding epistemic conditions is clear from Putnam's insistence on the "*rational* and sensible nature" of speakers when it comes to ascertain the truth or falsity of any statement: it is *not* only empirically that a speaker can verify a statement under ideal epistemic conditions, justification is also a *rational* matter, a matter of *coherence* and *fit*, as we have seen in the last sections. When we verify and try to justify statements such as "There's a chair in my study", or "There was a dinosaur in North America less than a million years ago" (both examples come from Putnam 1990), we are not giving a report of what our sense-data perceive, nor are we

supposing that such are the statements of a Brain in a vat[36]; but rather, we are expressing beliefs which fit our experience and are rational for *us*.

Epistemic conditions are world-involving in the measure that, in order to justify a statement or belief, one needs to rely in a complex web of beliefs which is articulated by *reasons* and *concepts*. When the internalist affirms that the mind and the world jointly make the mind and the world, he is contrasting the mind with *a world of beliefs and experiences, not only sense-experiences*.

This internalist doctrine echoes Wilfrid Sellars' criticism of empiricist epistemology, known as The Myth of the Given, which was briefly mentioned in the previous chapter. To better understand Putnam's position and contextualize it, it might help to analyze it in the light of a very similar doctrine advanced by Sellars and, more recently, by John McDowell.

In his seminal article "Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind" (Sellars, [1956] 1997), Sellars sets to criticize modern empiricism as represented by sense-data theorists, and points that such theorists must choose between two contradictory options:

> a) It is *particulars* which are sensed. Sensing is not knowing. The existence of sense-data does not *logically* imply the existence of knowledge.
>
> b) Sensing *is* a form of knowing. It is *facts* rather than *particulars* which are sensed. (Sellars, 1997: 16)

Sellars is interested in the difference of knowing something non-inferentially and the process of arriving to knowledge by the acquisition of concepts. Empiricism, according to Sellars, is commited to the Myth of the Given by trying to admit both alternatives,

[36] The Brains in a Vat experiment, as shown in the previous chapter, is Putnam's response to the brands of solipsism and idealism which believe in "magical" theories of reference and the possibility of a private language.

namely, by defending the idea that sense-data are particulars (not facts) and that sensing such particulars is an instance of knowledge. By taking sense-data to be the foundations of knowledge, empiricists *"have taken givenness to be a fact which presupposes no learning, no forming of associations, no setting up of stimulus-response connections."* (Sellars, 1997: 20).

Thus, for sense-data theorists and empiricists alike, to see a color as *red* is a non-inferential instance of knowledge which doesn't require any process of conceptualization. Such is the Myth of the Given: the conflation of the views that knowledge is founded upon episodes of sensing which don't imply inferences, and that the awareness of such episodes doesn't imply concept formation. For Sellars, such views are incompatible since only what is *conceptually* and *linguistically* structured counts as an episode of knowledge.

That knowledge is justified and structured conceptually is an idea which Sellars develops in what he calls the logical space of reasons:

> in characterizing an episode or a state as that of knowing, we are not giving an empirical description of that episode or state; we are placing it in the logical space of reasons, of justifying and being able to justify what one says. (Sellars, 1997: 76)

As is the case for the internal realist, Sellars' "psychological nominalism" (the doctrine which holds that all awareness is a linguistic affair), defends the view that justification is not possible outside of a linguistic and conceptual framework.

In his *Mind and World* (1996), John McDowell develops further the idea of Sellars' logical space of reasons. For McDowell, the Myth of the Given is

> the idea that the space of reasons, the space of justifications or warrants, extends more widely than the conceptual sphere. The extra extent of the space of reasons is supposed to allow it to incorporate non-conceptual impacts from outside the realm of thought. (McDowell, 1996: 7)

Such non-conceptual impacts are identified with sense-experience, and belong to a realm different from the conceptual one. In his reading of Sellars, McDowell contrasts the space of reasons with the *logical* space of reasons. The space of reasons (or the logical space of nature) is the space in which natural science functions. It is in this space that sense-impressions belong to, thus, the description for such space is an empirical description because it describes transactions in nature.

On the other hand, talk of knowledge and justification belongs to the logical space of reasons, the space which allows for descriptions of how things are interconnected:

> On these principles, the logical space in which talk of impressions belongs is not one in which things are connected by relations such as one thing's being warranted or correct in the light of another. (McDowell, 1996: xv)

Empiricists commit a fallacy by supposing that elements of the logical space of nature suffice *in themselves* to serve as a tribunal for knowledge, thus, extending the space of reasons beyond the conceptual space:

> [W]e cannot really understand the relations in virtue of which a judgement is warranted except as relations within the space of concepts: relations such as implication or probabilification, which hold between potential exercises of conceptual capacities. The attempt to extend the scope of justificatory relations outside the conceptual sphere cannot do what it is supposed to do. (McDowell, 1996: 7)

Thus, for Sellars and McDowell justification and knowledge are only possible within the sphere of the conceptual, the sphere which affords us the intelligibility of warranted judgements. In the same way, when the internalist admits that epistemic conditions are *world-involving*, he is not simply admitting a fact about empirical knowledge, namely, that episodes of knowledge aren't merely a fiction created by the mind; what he really is aiming at is that what we call reality is a complex web of beliefs which can only be warranted and understood in the framework of language and concepts.

3.5. Semantic externalism

The idea of fitness and rationality concerning truth and justification is best understood when compared with the relation between language and reality. Putnam's theory of meaning and reference, known as "semantic externalism," deserves more than a chapter of its own[37], however, something must be briefly said about meaning and reference regarding the notion of "world-involving" epistemic conditions.

Internal realism is linked to the doctrine of semantic externalism in the sense that the verificationism advocated by internal realism is *social* and not *individualistic* in nature. Putnam's internal realism rests on an externalist theory of reference which insists on the transactional and social character of reference[38], thus avoiding solipsism and approaching pragmatism.

In "The Meaning of 'Meaning'" (1975), Putnam challenges the idea that the two following assumptions can be held together:

[37] See "The Meaning of 'Meaning'", in Putnam 1975; and also *The Twin Earth Chronicles*, ed. by Andrew Pessin, 1996, a collection of essays discussing Putnam's semantic externalism.
[38] See particularly Putnam 1981, chapters 1 and 2.

1. **That knowing the meaning of a term is just a matter of being in a certain psychological state.**
2. **That the meaning of a term (in the sense of "intension") determines its extension.**

To challenge these assumptions, Putnam develops an approach to meaning which came to be known as semantic externalism. This approach rests on the convergent ideas of the linguistic division of labor and the role of the environment to define reference.

The linguistic division of labor defends the idea that experts in a community have a role in defining the reference of terms. As opposed to a traditional and metaphysical theory of reference according to which a term is defined a priori in each individual's mind, this doctrine states that in our linguistic practice we defer to the authority of experts to define certain concepts, such as natural kind terms. For example, most of us know the meaning of the term "gold"; however, when it comes to decide which objects does the term apply to –the extension of the term-, most of us defer to the authority of experts. Or, to give the most popular example, let's suppose that there is a planet called Twin Earth, which resembles our planet in everything, except that the liquid which they call water has the chemical formula XYZ, as opposed to Earthian water, whose chemical formula is H_2O. When a person in Earth says "this is water" he is in the same psychological state as when the Twin Earthian says "this is water"; however, and regardless of both being in the same psychological state, the meaning (and the extension) of both expressions is not determined by such state. The meaning of such natural terms as "water" or "gold" is not a fixed entity which lies in the mind, but rather, is the result of a communal effort:

> Language is not a tool like a hammer, that anyone can use by him- or herself. It is a tool like a large ship, which it takes many people working together to

> operate. I can refer to gold, talk about gold, purchase gold, etc. perfectly well without being able reliably to distinguish gold from non-gold because there are others in the community -experts- upon whom I can rely. In short, there is a *linguistic division of labor.* (Putnam, 1996: xvi)

On the other hand, semantic externalism states that meanings and references are related to the environment due to the rigid indexicality of some words:

> Words like 'water' have an unnoticed indexical component: 'water' is stuff that bears a certain similarity relation to the water *around here*. Water at another time or in another place or even in another possible world has to bear the relation sameL to our 'water' *in order to be water*. Thus the theory that 1) words have 'intensions,' which are something like concepts associated with the words by speakers; and that 2) intension determines extension- cannot be true of natural kind words like 'water'[39][…]" (Putnam 1975:234)

Semantic externalism (a doctrine which implicitly supports internal realism) is a response against metaphysical realism in the sense that this last doctrine (ever since Plato) thought of meanings as transcendent entities which were grasped by the mind. The semantic externalism advocated by Putnam argues that the meaning of sentences and terms is a complicated process which can only be accomplished when done in a linguistic community, in other words, when it's done in relation *with the world*.

The concept of *world-involving* ideal epistemic conditions far from being a solipsistic concept is a concept which conceives the meaning and justification of words in a social

[39] However, by the end of the essay, Putnam admits that *"meaning determines extension- by construction, so to speak."* (1975:270). This is the case when we construct the meaning of a term by a description consisting of four columns of components: syntactic markers, semantic markers, stereotypes, and extension: *"the representation of the words 'water' in Earth dialect and 'water' in Twin earth dialect would be the same except that in the last column the normal form description of the twin earth Word 'water' would have XYZ and not H_2O. This means that we are ascribing the same linguistic competence to the typical Earthian/Twin Earthian speaker, but a different extension to the word, nonetheless."* (Putnam, 1975:270)

context, or as Sellars put it, in the logical space of reasons. Doctrines such as Empiricism, Metaphysical realism, and Idealism, reflect two mistaken philosophical tendencies:

> [T]he tendency to treat cognition as a purely individual matter and the tendency to ignore the world, insofar as it consists of more than the individual's 'observations'. Ignoring the division of linguistic labor is ignoring the social dimension of cognition; ignoring what we have called the indexicality of most words is ignoring the contribution of the environment. (Putnam, 1975:271)

The doctrine of internal realism, as based on semantic externalism, acknowledges that the sister notions of truth, justification, and meaning depend on the interaction between individuals and communities, between mind and world.

3.6. Features of warranted assertibility

To say that truth is identified with rational acceptability under ideal epistemic conditions is not the same as saying that truth *depends* on communal agreement (majority opinion). Warranted assertibility (the term that Putnam uses instead of justification and rational acceptability) has certain features which differentiate it from the "everything goes" so dear to the relativist. In his "Realism with a Human Face" (1990), Putnam identifies five principles concerning warrant which help us understand the centrality of this term in relation to the doctrine of internal realism:

1. There is a fact of the matter as to whether the statements people makes are warranted.
2. Whether a statement is warranted or not is independent of whether the majority of one's cultural peers would say is warranted or unwarranted.

3. Our norms and standards of warranted assertibility are historical products; they evolve in time.
4. Our norms and standards always reflect our interests and values.
5. Our norms and standards are capable of reform.

(Putnam, 1990: 21)

The first two principles are a counter to relativism, in the sense that they postulate the idea of objective conditions for the assertibility of statements, independently of majority opinion. Relativism[40], on the other hand, is the Protagorean view according to which a statement is warranted only if one's cultural peers say it is. As Putnam rightly points out, one cannot defend the independence of warrant from majority opinion as a fact of a transcendent reality, but rather, the internal realist should defend warrant's independence from majority opinion as *a feature of our idea of warrant*. This point was emphasized above by pointing that the *different conceptions of coherence* are determined by culture, whereas the *very idea of coherence* is independent of culture: *"Our conceptions of coherence are deeply interwoven with our psychology. They depend upon our biology and culture; they are by no means 'value free'. But they* are *our conceptions, and they are conceptions of something real."* (Putnam, 1981: 55) This is also supported by principles 3 and 5, namely that our standards of justification are historical products capable of reform.

Even though culture and history determine what is rational and consistent in particular cases and traditions, coherence and consistency are keys to the picture of warranted assertibility and rationality:

[40] Putnam directs his two first principles to Rorty's relativism.

> [T]he very fact that we speak of our different conceptions of rationality posits a *Grenzbegriff*, a limit-concept of the ideal truth. (Putnam, 1981: 216)
>
> Rather than viewing the fact that warrant is independent of majority opinion as a fact about a transcendent reality, one should recognize that it is nothing but a property of the concept of warrant itself. (Putnam, 1990: 22)

Finally, principle 4, stating that our norms and standards always reflect our interests and values, is a clear example against metaphysical realism and a defense of the idea that it doesn't make sense to speak of facts as independent of language:

> [E]*lements of what we call 'language' or 'mind'* penetrate so deeply into what we call 'reality' that the very project of representing ourselves as being 'mappers' of something 'language-independent' is fatally compromised from the very start. (Putnam, 1990: 28)

This interconnectedness between mind and world is an invitation to abandon the dichotomies of "convention/fact" and "fact/value", and embrace the idea that what we call "reality" is not, as Quine once put it, a grey fabric, *"black with fact and white with convention"*[41], but rather, a reflection of our interests and needs. This is of course not relativism revamped in an analytic guise, because Putnam is not saying that *"we make the world"*; rather, internal realism is an effort to show that it is not possible to speak of brute facts which are not a reflection of human interests.

The idea of warranted assertibility is a compromise between objectivity and conventionality. As opposed to other doctrines such as Realism, Relativism and Idealism, the warranted assertibility afforded by internal realism, insists that we cannot dichotomize reality between "pure facts" and "conventions", because such "purity" and objectivity will always be permeated by language and interests, as William James put it,

[41] "Carnap and Logical Truth", quoted in Putnam 2004: 44.

"the trail of the human serpent is all over." Empiricism (due to the "Myth of the Given"), just as Realism, is also the idea that facts can be stripped of language and intentionality, and can thus constitute the basis of knowledge. Such assumptions, empiricists and realist alike, embrace a conception of truth as correspondence, according to which true sentences reflect brute facts. As I have been trying to show in this chapter, internal realism conceives truth not as a representation of facts, but as close interdependence of beliefs and experiential inputs, to the point that it doesn't make any sense to draw a limit between the two.

3.7. Can truth transcend justification?

For the internalist, unverifiable or meaningless statements are those which *outrun* the capacity of any rational individual to verify: for example, questions of the type "Are there *really* numbers?", are meaningless questions which don't allow us to imagine any rational conditions for verification. As Putnam rightly points out, this verificationism differs from positivism in the extent that for the internalist there isn't a restricted way to verify statements; whereas for the positivists a statement is verifiable only analitically or empirically.

This internalist conception of truth differs a great deal from the metaphysical conception of truth, according to which truth is a property of statements which is not linked with justification but rather with correspondence between the statement and reality; thus, for the metaphysical realist truth is *justification transcendent*.

However, truth, from an internalist perspective cannot be *totally* identified with justification and rational acceptability: *"Truth cannot simply be rational acceptability for one fundamental reason; truth is supposed to be a property of a statement that*

cannot be lost, whereas justification can be lost." (Putnam, 1981: 55) There are statements which are rationally acceptable when viewed from the available evidence, but which might turn out to be false.

The relation between truth and verification for the internalist, is one of *availability*: even though internal realism rejects the idea that truth must be identified with justification, it nevertheless suggests that the truth of a proposition requires that evidence of its truth be *available in principle*. This, as we have seen, is not to be understood as conclusive evidence; instead, internalism admits that evidence of a statement's truth must be available at some time or other and to rational beings whose cognitive powers might exceed ours. It is only when justification is *in principle* available that the internalist can claim that truth sometimes outruns justification.

In his article "Truth as sort of epistemic: Putnam's peregrinations" (2000), Crispin Wright endeavors to find when this sort of justification transcendence stops being "benign" and becomes part of the doctrine of metaphysical realism. Wright's article is important for the purposes of this investigation because it claims that Putnam's internalist doctrine of truth can be accommodated also in his reversion to the natural realism developed in his *Dewey Lectures*.

The "benign" justification transcendence of the internalist doctrine of truth, according to Wright, is found in Putnam's identification of truth with justification under ideal circumstances. Wright emphasizes that such identification acknowledges that truth, *even though is identified with ideal assertibility*, can nevertheless outrun justification. Such episodes are called by Wright *contingencies of epistemic opportunity*:

> [I]n all cases where we have a conception of this kind of how the truth value of a particular statement could be unverifiable, a developed specific account of that conception will consist in detailing limitations of opportunity, or

> spatiotemporal situation, or perceptual or intellectual capacity, which stops us getting at the relevant facts but to which we, or others, might easily not have been subject- or at least, to which we can readily conceive that an intelligible form of investigating intelligence need not be subject. (Wright, 2000: 360)

Benign justification transcendence is, according to Wright, favored by the fact that if we, or beings with superior cognitive powers, had access to the evidence of a true proposition, we would *recognize it* as such. But it just happens that certain propositions are constrained by epistemic contingencies which, for the time being, don't make that evidence available to us.

On the other hand, as Wright tells us, there is the "malign" evidence-transcendent conception of truth which is advocated by metaphysical realism. This type of evidence-transcendence is not afforded by contingencies of epistemic opportunity, but by the metaphysical division between mind and reality, a division which brings forth the "interface" picture criticized by internal realism:

> The essence of metaphysical realism, we might say, is thus *interface realism*. And the evidence-transcendent conception of truth which metaphysical realism brings in train is of a malignant kind, the kind that goes with an interface conception of mind's interaction with the world. (Wright, 2000: 361)

A paradigm statement which displays contingencies of epistemic opportunity- *and thus benign recognition-transcendence*- is of the form ***(Ff)*** *Q and no one will ever rationally believe that Q*[42]. In Putnam's reply to Wright's article, "When evidence transcendence is not malign: a reply to Crispin Wright" (Putnam, 2000), he emphasizes the fact that ***(Ff)*** is not *verifiable*, but only *falsifiable*:

[42] This type of statements, referred to by Wright and Putnam as "Fitch propositions" is discussed by F.B. Fitch in "A Logical Analysis of Some Value Concepts", *Journal of Symbolic Logic*, xxviii, 1963, quoted in Wright 2000.

> there are only two sorts of circumstances in which it is possible to 'appraise' the truth value of ***(Ғ)***: these are (1) circumstances in which it is possible to know that *Q* is false, and (2) circumstances in which it is possible to know that someone rationally believes that *Q* is true, and in both sorts of circumstances ***(Ғ)*** is false. (Putnam, 2000: 595-96)

As Putnam argues, if Wright's moderate internalist conception of truth accepts some recognition-transcendent truths, it must do so not because such propositions display contingencies of epistemic opportunity, but because of their logical structure:

> Just as the logical structure of a Fitch example makes it clear that what is supposed in such an example […] is something that, if it happens, we cannot verify, so the logical structure of [the sentence "there are no intelligent extraterrestrials"] makes it clear that what is supposed in this example –say, that something improbable (if it *is* improbable) simply happens- is something that, if it happens, we cannot verify. (Putnam, 2000: 598)

Contrary to Wright, Putnam doesn't see the proposition "there are no intelligent extraterrestrials" as implying the "malign" sign of recognition-transcendence favored by metaphysical realism, but sees it, just as ***(Ғ)*** above, as another example of falsifiable sentences which *"spell disaster for any elucidation of truth in terms of rational acceptability."* (Putnam, 2000: 599) For the Putnam of the natural realism period which starts with the *Dewey Lectures*, the recognition transcendence of truth is reframed in the context of common-sense:

> How, then, do we understand "recognition transcendent" uses of the word true, as, for example, when we say that the sentence "Lizzie Borden killed her parents with an axe" may well be true even though we may never be able to

> establish for certain that it is?... If we accept it that understanding the sentence "Lizzie Borden killed her parents with an axe" is not simply a matter of being able to recognize a verification in our own experience -accept it, that is, that we are able to conceive of how things that we cannot verify *were*- then it will not appear as "magical" or "mysterious" that we can understand the claim that that sentence is *true*. What makes it true, if it is, is simply that Lizzie Borden killed her parents with an axe. The recognition transcendence of truth comes, in this case, to no more than the "recognition transcendence" of some killings. And did we ever think that all killers can be recognized as such? Or that the belief that there are certain determinate individuals who are or were killers and who cannot be detected as such by us is a belief in magical powers of the mind? (Putnam, 2000: 65)

The fact that we can understand statements which we cannot verify is not to be explained, as metaphysical realism does, as a fact of a transcendent reality which exists independently of concepts and theories; but instead, according to the late natural realism of Putnam, such ability is acquired when we learn a language. When we learn the rules and the uses of our language we learn too that there are some sentences which we accept as true regardless of the fact that we are not directly acquainted with such facts. However, it is worthwhile to consider Wright's concern:

> [M]ust a conception of truth which is tolerant of this commonsensical conception be one about which Putnam's middle period denial 'that we have…a notion of truth that totally *outruns* the possibility of justification' is simply mistaken? (Wright, 2000: 341)

Wright's answer is *no*: the "benign" recognition-transcendence of some true statements which are accepted by the internalist conception of truth approaches this doctrine to

Putnam's recent reversion to common-sense realism. However, as we have seen from Putnam's answer to Wright's article, Putnam doesn't admit that the benign character of recognition-transcendence rests on the contingencies of epistemic opportunity displayed by statements of the type ***(Ff)*** above, but rather, as the Lizzie Borden example shows, by the logical structure of statements.

Given this scenario, it is worthwhile to ask if the idea of justification being available *in principle* (Wright's benign case of recognition-transcendence) can be accommodated in an account of recognition-transcendence based on the logical structure of statements (Putnam's latest reversion to common-sense realism). In what follows, I will lead my argument in a similar direction as does Wright: like him, I will defend the idea that Putnam's later natural realism is not contrary to some tenets of internal realism; more specifically, I will defend the idea that verificationism (as embraced by internal realism) is not contrary to common-sense realism.

3.8. Warranted assertibility and justification transcendence

In his article "Corresponding with Reality", Putnam claimed that his internal realism, due to the solipsism of its "verificationist semantics", *"far from being an intelligible alternative to a supposedly unintelligible metaphysical realism, can itself possess no public intelligibility."* (Putnam 2012a: 80) The reason is that, as Putnam came to see the issue after his *Dewey Lectures*, verificationist semantics restricts the range of truth value to those sentences which can be verified, leaving no room for intersubjectivity. As he admits, though, in *Reason, Truth, and History* he was already aware of such danger, and thus, in that book he defined *"an intersubjective notion of truth in terms of verification*

("justification") thus: S is true if and only if believing S would be justified if epistemic conditions were good enough." (Putnam 2012a: 79)

However, as Putnam's later self-criticism goes, according to this sort of verificationism, understanding a sentence amounts to understanding a conditional statement that confirms it:

> Let us suppose, as seems reasonable, that whatever makes it rational to believe that S makes it rational to believe that S would be justified were conditions good enough. If my understanding of the counterfactual "S would be justified if conditions were good enough" is exhausted by my capacity to tell to what degree it is justified to assert it, as my "verificationist semantics" claimed, and that is always the same as the degree to which it is justified to assert S itself, then I might as well have simply said that my understanding of S is just my capacity to tell what confirms S. (Putnam 2012a: 79)

By equating the understanding of a sentence to the "internal" capacity to decide on its confirmation, verificationst semantics, the core of internal realism, becomes a solipsistic option. Thus, as Putnam came to see it, internal realism is a solipsistic doctrine because it accepts that what makes a statement true is also supposed to be what the statement means, in other words, my understanding of S is just my capacity to tell what confirms S to what degree. It is in this way that, according to Putnam, internal realism (and verificationism) conflates meaning and justification: if the meaning of a statement is exhausted by my capacity to tell what justifies it, then, by restricting the meaning of sentences to individual means of justification, one falls into solipsism.

Both, in the above cited article, as well as in his article "Between Scylla and Charybdis: Does Dummett Have a Way Through?" (2007) published in the volume *The Philosophy of Michael Dummett*, Putnam conflates the meaning of the conditional statement *(1)* "S

would be justified if epistemic conditions were good enough" with the meaning of S, which is obviously not the case. To see how he comes to this conclusion, let's inquire what does it mean that the verificationist, according to Putnam, is trapped by solipsism by accepting that his understanding of S is the same as his capacity to tell what confirms S.

For Putnam it is reasonable to suppose *"that whatever makes it rational to believe that S makes it rational to believe that S would be justified were conditions good enough."* (Putnam 2007: 162) But, he continues, this apparently "reasonable" claim leads the verificationist straight into solipsism:

> If my understanding of the counterfactual "S would be justified if conditions were good enough" is exhausted by my capacity to tell to what degree it is justified to assert it, and that is always the same as the degree to which it is justified to assert S itself, why did I bother to mention the counterfactual at all? Why did I not just say that my understanding of S is just my capacity to tell what confirms S to what degree, *full stop*? (Putnam 2007: 162)

According to this, the conditional statement *(1)* "S would be justified if conditions were good enough", is equated to S itself, which is a very long stretch. What Putnam fails to see is that (1) is a *condition* for S, not the other way around: let us suppose that S stands for the belief in the existence of saber-toothed tigers 30.000 years ago (an example of Putnam's). Then, according to verificationist semantics, S would be true if it is justified by epistemic conditions such as the acceptance of archeological evidence, the fossil record and all the scientific knowledge which surrounds such evidence. However, at the same time, S is *indirectly justified* by the understanding and acceptance of *(1)* as an epistemic principle, not the other way around: the capacity to tell to which degree it is justified to assert *(1)* is not the same as the degree to which it is justified to assert S.

That *(1)* is a condition of S, and not the other way around, is clear because one cannot meaningfully say that "The belief in the existence of saber-toothed tigers 30.000 years ago would be justified if epistemic conditions were good enough" is true if and only if the belief in the existence of saber-toothed tigers 30.000 years ago is true.

What makes the belief in the existence of saber-toothed tigers 30.000 years ago true – according to the verificationist– is the understanding that such belief would be true if and only if epistemic conditions were good enough.

Then, as was shown, the capacity to tell to which degree it is justified to assert *(1)* is not exhausted by the capacity to tell to which degree it is justified to assert S. The verificationist expects that all true beliefs are justified; but what justifies my belief in a fact S is not the same as that which justifies my belief in conditional *(1).* Ultimately, of course, both are justified linguistically, but that is not what is at stake here. What is at stake is the charge that verificationism is solipsistic because it equates the meaning of sentences with their internal justification, which, as we have seen, amounts to the conflating of the capacity to tell to which degree it is justified to assert S with the capacity to tell to which degree it is justified to assert *(1).*

Now, however, we must face the question whether verificationist semantics is itself justified according to its own standards[43]. In other words, since what renders true and justifies the belief in every sentence S is the acceptance of the conditional statement *(1),* which asserts that S is justified if conditions are good enough; then, what justifies the belief in conditional *(1)*? It seems rather strange to justify the statement "a sentence is justified if epistemic conditions are good enough" by saying that what justifies it is that

[43] Putnam has enquired in a similar fashion the question whether the positivist's principle of verification is itself verifiable according to positivist standards. See "Philosophers and human understanding", in Putnam 1983; and Putnam 1992.

a statement is justified if epistemic conditions are good enough! Thus, trying to justify *(1)* by appealing to *(1)* itself leads us to a circular argumentation.

In *Reason, Truth, and History,* Putnam says that *"a non-realist or 'internal' realist regards conditional statements as statements which we understand (like all other statements) in large part by grasping their justification conditions."* (1981: 122) Therefore, like all other statements which are justified by their epistemic conditions, we accept *(1)* for its epistemic conditions. The problem is that *(1)* is itself the very "principle" which says that a statement is justified due to its epistemic conditions. We are facing here something similar to a Convention-T sort of sentence: "S is justified if conditions are good enough" is true if and only if S is justified if conditions are good enough. It is this sort of coherentism –criticized by Putnam in his Model Theoretic Argument (Putnam, 1983) – which convinced him that his former doctrine of internal realism is solipsistic. Thus, in his latest writings, Putnam has found that for the verificationist there is no way out of this coherentism, and therefore verificationism amounts to solipsism. In what follows, I will argue that statements such as *(1)* are not to be understood as principles in need of verification, but rather as *conditions* for our linguistic practices; then, the only possible option that the verificationist has for her belief in *(1)* is a non-verificationist way.

3.9. Conditional statements and common-sense

As we have just seen, the conditional statement "S would be justified if conditions were good enough" is not to be understood as the meaning of S itself, as the later Putnam pretends, but rather, as a *condition* for the meaning of S. Such move, as was explained above, avoids the charges of solipsism which Putnam levels against his former doctrine

of internal realism. However, as was just pointed out, such conditional cannot be itself understood in a verificationist way, since it would lead to a circular argumentation.

Both, in his 2007 and his 2012a, Putnam reminds us that by the time he wrote *Reason, Truth, and History*, and defined truth as idealized justification, he wasn't aware of the solipsist "dilemma" of conflating the meaning of a sentence with its assertibility conditions. Nevertheless, in that book, not only he mentions that the *"'internal' realist regards conditional statements as statements which we understand (like all other statements) in large part by grasping their justification conditions"* (Putnam, 1981: 122), but also emphasizes that such justification conditions are *objective*: as opposed to the "methodological solipsist" and relativist, the internalist position

> assumes an objective notion of rational acceptability. The non-realist rejects the notion that truth is correspondence to a 'ready-made world'. That is what makes him a non –(metaphysical)– realist. But rejecting the metaphysical 'correspondence' theory of truth is not at all the same as regarding truth or rational acceptability as subjective … The whole purpose of relativism, its very defining characteristic, is, however, to deny the existence of any intelligible notion of objective 'fit'. Thus the relativist cannot understand talk about truth in terms of objective justification-conditions. (Putnam, 1981: 123)

The internalist understanding of conditionals depends on an objective notion of rational acceptability, which, of course, is different from a correspondence theory of truth. However, we may ask, if the internalist is not assuming a metaphysical correspondence between language and reality, then, what is this notion of "objective fit" which he assumes and the solipsist and relativist deny?

Unfortunately, in *Reason, Truth, and History*, Putnam doesn't give a clear and satisfactory answer to this question. The closest he gets is by emphasizing that truth,

rather than correspondence to facts, is idealized assertibility. But, since the notion of idealized assertibility implies the very notions of verificationist semantics and conditionals which we are trying to understand, it seems that such an answer won't take us very far. However, in his *Pragmatism: An Open Question* (1995), Putnam rehearses an answer which might be on the right track. In the chapter called "Was Wittgenstein a Pragmatist?", Putnam criticizes philosophers like Richard Rorty, Michael Williams, and Paul Horwich, who, according to him, read Wittgenstein as supporting the idea that language use is based on definite criteria. Thus, *"the heart of Rorty's reading of* [Wittgensteinian language games] *is his comparison of criteria with programs… Rorty sees language games as virtually automatic performances."* (Putnam, 1995: 33-4) Although not very far from Rorty's approach to language games,

> [o]n Horwich's view, a language game is to be understood as consisting of sentences for which (if we confine attention to assertoric language) there are 'assertability conditions'. These conditions specify that under certain observable conditions a sentence counts as true or at least as 'confirmed'… Note that this account differs from Rorty's only in that the 'criteria' which govern our use of words provide (in some cases) for degrees of assertability less than certainty. Still, speakers who understand their language in the same way and who have the same evidence should all agree on the degree of assertability of their sentences, in this model, just as in Rorty's. (Putnam, 1995: 45-6)

This paragraph makes us wonder if, due to the emphasis on the degree of assertibility of sentences, such positivistic interpretation of Wittgenstein (as Putnam calls it) parallels the internalist account. The main difference between this positivistic reading of Wittgenstein and Putnam's own reading is that the first account takes sentences as

marks and noises, for which assertibility is separated from truth: under certain observable conditions a sentence counts as true. As opposed to this, Putnam's reading of Wittgenstein insists on the idea that *"the use of the words in a language game cannot be described without using concepts which are related to the concepts employed in the game."* (Putnam, 1995: 46) This means that language games are not ruled by a definite set of criteria, a set which, if one pays attention enough, one would learn how to use; but rather, that language games are self-contained forms of life:

> Someone who doesn't see the 'point' of the language game, and who cannot imaginatively put himself in the position of an engaged player, cannot judge whether the 'criteria' are applied reasonably or unreasonably… Understanding a language game is sharing a form of life. And forms of life cannot be described in a fixed positivistic meta-language. (Putnam, 1995: 47-8)

Whereas the positivistic reading of Wittgenstein takes criteria to be exterior to the language game, as some external aid we use when it comes to understand language games, Putnam's reading of Wittgenstein sees language games as forms of life which cannot be described without using the same concepts which are internal to the game itself. That is why someone who cannot imaginatively put himself in the position of an engaged player cannot judge whether the 'criteria' are applied reasonably or unreasonably. Under this interpretation, the idea that assertibility conditions are external to the truth of statements is ruled out. For Putnam, assertibility and truth are internally related notions:

> To know under what conditions a statement (not a 'sentence') is assertable is to know under what conditions it is true or liable to be true. The idea that assertability conditions are conditions for making a noise is a total distortion of Wittgenstein's meaning. 'Assertability' and 'truth' are internally related

> notions: one comes to understand both by standing inside a language game, seeing its 'point', and judging assertability and truth. (Putnam, 1995: 48-9)

If the assertibility conditions of a statement are not separated from its truth, then, it doesn't make sense trying to apply separate criteria to statements in general, which would be an unnecessary and artificial move. In order to understand the statements of every language game one must *stand inside it* and know that the truth of one's words is related to their assertibility conditions, to the effect that both are to be judged uniformly. Of course, as verificationist semantics shows, every language game has internal rules which one must follow, and one such internal rule of our language game is that we accept that a statement is justified if conditions are good enough. This rule of our language game, together with all our other cognitive ideals, *"only makes sense considered as part of our idea of human flourishing"* (Putnam, 1995: 43)

3.10. Partial conclusions of this chapter

Now we are in a better position to understand Putnam's internalist conditional that "S is justified if epistemic conditions are good enough". I remarked above that such conditional couldn't be understood in a verificationist fashion, since it would imply a circular argumentation. In the same way, the positivistic reading of Wittgenstein which Putnam criticizes doesn't help in understanding sentences like "S is justified if epistemic conditions are good enough" because the meaning of the sentence itself makes reference to a principle of justification conditions for sentences. As was pointed above, establishing assertibility conditions or criteria for such statement leads us into a circular argumentation; thus the need to understand such sentence *non-criterially*: one can only understand the conditional that a statement is justified if conditions are good

enough if one *shares* a certain language game. Strangely enough, in "Corresponding With Reality" (Putnam, 2012a), the very article in which Putnam charges internal realism of being solipsist, he himself, towards the end, reminds us the importance of Wittgensteinian "imponderable evidence" (as he did in his *Pragmatism: An Open Question*) when it comes to justification. As Putnam sees it, *"*[not] *only what is shaped like a proposition can justify a proposition."* (Putnam, 2012a: 89) Thus, the verification criteria for the internal realist are not limited only to propositions, but open to other means of verification. By asking to criterially justify the convention of our language game, which asserts that a statement is justified if conditions are good enough, Putnam seems to ignore his own reading of Wittgenstein. This interpretation seems to be also in line with Putnam's approval[44] of what Stanley Cavell (in a very pragmatist tone, reminiscent of Peirce) has said about skepticism and justification, namely that in order to understand language games and avoid skepticism, one must be *attuned* to them.[45]

This is actually not very far from Michael Dummett's account of justification through language learning: *"when we acquire the practice of using language, what we learn is what is taken to justify assertions of different types."* (Dummett, 2004: 114) However, in spite of the acknowledged influence of Dummett's work, Putnam's internal realism doesn't accept the idea of necessarily identifying truth and justification, for the reason that, according to Putnam, Dummett believes in the possibility of specifying the justification conditions for *all sentences* in a natural language. Truth, for the internal realist is idealized warranted assertibility (*idealized justification* as opposed to *justification-on-present-evidence:* the difference resides in the *knowledge of the language game, knowing what would ideally be like to assert a certain sentence as*

[44] *"I follow Stanley Cavell that for most of our beliefs about the quotidian objects and goings-on around us, the question 'Is that justified?' does not arise."* (Putnam 2012a: 61)
[45] For a fuller development of this idea, see Putnam, 2012a "Philosophy as the Education of Grownups: Cavell and Skepticism".

opposed to an standardized formalization of assertibility). So the difference between Putnam and Dummett is Putnam's rejection of the idea that one can formalize the assertibility conditions of all sentences in a natural language. The notion of idealized warranted assertibility is a notion which is not formalizable and which takes into account every sentence piece-meal.

Internal realism, far from being the solipsist doctrine which the Putnam *post-Dewey Lectures* claims it to be, gives us a clue to *our* justificatory practices by pointing out to one of *our* more accepted rules of justification, namely, the condition that a statement is justified if the conditions for stating it are good enough. This, indeed, is an indicator of the proximity (or at least the "tolerance") between internal realism and Putnam's later common-sense realism: some basic statements of our language game are not to be understood in a verificationist fashion because some such statements form the *logical structure* of the language game itself. In the *Dewey Lectures*, Putnam himself seems to agree with this interpretation:

> The right alternative to thinking of truth as a "substantive property" á la the metaphysical realist is not to think of our statements as mere marks and noises that our community has taught us to associate with conditions for being conclusively verified (as in the account of Dummett's "global antirealist") or to associate with "betting behavior" in a way that is "a function of observable circumstances" (as in Horwich's account). The right alternative is to recognize that empirical statements already make claims about the world -many different sorts of claims about the world- whether or not they contain the words *is true*. (Putnam, 1999: 55)

Thus, the understanding of conditional statement *(1)* is not metaphysical bedrock, a condition for understanding language *in general*; but rather, it makes part of what it is to

share a form of life. It would indeed be natural for a skeptic who didn't share our language game to doubt this conditional. Such a skeptic would probably not be satisfied until one provides him an argument similar to Descartes's *cogito* argument, an argument where, only apparently, the metaphysical bedrock of certainty was reached. Such a skeptic, naturally, would not be satisfied with the argument that I am associating Putnam with (as he himself associated it with Wittgenstein) either; which shows that, after all, Putnam's interpretation of Wittgenstein still seems to the point when he says that *"the possibilities of 'external' understanding of a deeply different form of life are extremely limited."* (Putnam, 1995: 50)

Putnam's latest choice of trying to understand the conditional "S is justified if conditions are good enough" by applying criteria, (as his 2007 and 2012a show), seems to be a recoil to the metaphysical realism which he has so much criticized. The idea that such conditional statement stands for justification as any other statement of our language game does is a recoil to metaphysical realism because it asks us to justify certain cognitive norms of *our form of life* which only a skeptic or an alien to such form of life would bring into question.

CHAPTER 4

CONCEPTUAL RELATIVITY

4.1. Introduction

Conceptual relativity is Putnam's internalist doctrine which aims to show the unintelligibility of Metaphysical Realism. Since for the metaphysical realist *"the world consists of some fixed totality of mind-independent objects",* and *"there is exactly one true and complete description of 'the way the world is'"* (Putnam, 1981: 49), internal realism retorts that the question *"what objects does the world consist of? is a question that it only makes sense to ask within a theory or description."* (1981: 49) Thus, *"internal realism is, at bottom, just the insistence that realism is* not *incompatible with conceptual relativity."* (Putnam, 1987: 17) As we have seen in the previous chapters, internal realism claims that all talk about reality cannot be done from a *view from nowhere*; that one cannot step out of theories and languages to describe reality, as Metaphysical Realism hopes to do.

The doctrine of conceptual relativity has been ubiquitous in Putnam's writings, and it can be found not only in those writings representative of his internalist period, but also in some post-*Dewey Lectures* writings such as *Ethics without Ontology* (2004), and his "Reply to Jennifer Case" (2001). Thus, as Putnam acknowledged in his "Reply to Simon Blackburn" (1994b) this claim of internal realism is *"one I have not at all given up; the one I have increasingly emphasized in my writings."* (Putnam, 1994b: 243) As it will be argued, this is a sign that elements of internal realism are not contrary to *-and are compatible with-* Putnam's latest natural realism.

In this chapter I analyze Putnam's doctrine of conceptual relativity taking into account his interpretation of conceptual schemes as *optional languages*. As was pointed in the Introduction to this thesis, Putnam's rejection of internal realism was in part due to the fact that he came to consider conceptual schemes as an *interface* which puts us in touch with reality, thus retaining the dualist Cartesian picture. However, if we interpret conceptual schemes as optional languages we could make more sense of Putnam's internalist metaphor that *the mind and the world jointly make up the mind and the world*, since optional languages are means by which "reality" is expressed and natural language extended.

4.2. Defining conceptual relativity

In *The Many Faces of Realism* (1987), Putnam defines internal realism as *"the insistence that realism is not incompatible with conceptual relativity."* (Putnam, 1987: 17) As opposed to Metaphysical Realism, internal realism doesn't view the world as consisting of a unique and restrictive ontology, describable in the privileged language of science. The internalist doctrine of conceptual relativity is illustrated by the *non-classical* phenomenon of there being *"ways of describing what are (in some way) the 'same facts' which are (in some way) 'equivalent' but also (in some way) incompatible."* (Putnam, 1987: 29)

Elsewhere, in "Equivalence" (1983), Putnam argues that such phenomenon is the scientific realist's[46] alternative to avoid skepticism and transcendental metaphysics because, by accepting equivalent descriptions of the same phenomena, one avoids the question of how do we know with certainty (and on extra-scientific evidence) which version of the world is true (whether it be treating space-time points as real or as logical

[46] Apparently by the time this article was written Putnam hadn't come up with the term *internal realism*.

constructions). In that article, Putnam insists that the importance of equivalent but incompatible descriptions of the same phenomena comes from the philosophy of science, focusing on examples by Hans Reichenbach and the special theory of relativity. For the metaphysical realist theories are copies of the world, and a true description of the world doesn't accept equivalent descriptions of it. Therefore, the importance of cognitive equivalence of theories is not a matter of just *semantic conventionality*, but it's a phenomenon with consequences for metaphysics and the philosophy of science.

The phenomenon of there being incompatible and yet equivalent true descriptions of the same facts yields the *doctrine* of conceptual relativity, which holds that *"the notions of object and existence, have a multitude of different uses rather than one absolute 'meaning'."* (Putnam, 1987: 19) However, in the Preface of *Realism with a Human Face* (1990), Putnam also defines conceptual relativity as holding that

> [W]hile there is an aspect of conventionality and an aspect of fact in everything we say that is true, we fall into hopeless philosophical error if we commit a "fallacy of division" and conclude that there must be a part of the truth that is the "conventional part" and a part that is the "factual part." (Putnam, 1990: x)

Thus, we have a doctrine which holds the twin theses of:

(1) the diversity of uses for such terms as "object" and "existence", and

(2) the *interpenetration* of fact and convention.

Both theses, I hold, are central to internal realism, since they stand as an alternative to the metaphysical realist theses that *"the world consists of some fixed totality of mind-independent objects",* and that *"there is exactly one true and complete description of 'the way the world is.'"* (Putnam, 1981: 49)

However, we must ask if this definition of the doctrine of conceptual relativity is consistent. To give an answer we must look to the relation between theses *(1)* and *(2).*

In her article "The Heart of Putnam's Pluralistic Realism" (2001), Jennifer Case points that the *doctrine* of conceptual relativity holds only thesis *(2)* above, the interpenetration of fact and convention, and that the plurality of uses of the word object (thesis *(1)* above), is part of the *phenomenon* of conceptual relativity, namely, the fact that there can be true but in some sense *incompatible* descriptions of the same state of affairs such that they cannot be conjoined into a more complete description.

According to Case, the fact that the notion of "object" is *extendible* elucidates the doctrine of the interpenetration of fact and convention because what counts as an object is not restricted to facts, but it's also enrichened by conventions:

> To say that there are distinct senses of "object" is not to say that the syntactic string "object" is ambiguous, expressing different words with different meanings. Rather, it is to say that the concept of an object is extendible. The concept of an object is an "open-textured" one whose uses diverge as we find and create new contexts for our linguistic commerce with the word "object." (Case, 2001: 428)

As opposed to this, for the metaphysical realist there is a fact of the matter as to whether theories "describe" or "correspond" to theory independent objects; therefore, the realist notion of "object" cannot accept the fact that under one description, for example, points be treated as real objects, and under another description as logical constructions:

> Any sentence that changes truth value on passing from one correct theory to another correct theory –an equivalent description- will express only a *theory-relative* property of the WORLD. And the more such sentences there are, the

> more properties of THE WORLD would turn out to be theory relative. For example, if we concede that [treating points as real objects or as logical constructions] are equivalent descriptions, then the property *being an object* (as opposed to a class or a set of things) will be theory relative. (Putnam, 1977: 491)

From this early statement of the first thesis of the doctrine of conceptual relativity (*(1)* above), the *theory-relativity* of objects and their existence, Putnam's conception of an object has been committed to the idea that what counts as an object is directly linked to a theory and a description:

> [A]ll situations have many different correct descriptions, and even descriptions that, taken holistically, convey the same information may differ in what they take to be "objects"; this was part of my case against the idea of a Totality of All Objects. If there isn't one single privileged sense of the word "object" and one privileged totality of "intrinsic properties," but there is only an inherently extendable notion of "object" and various properties that may be seen as "intrinsic" in different enquiries, then the very notion of a totality of all objects and of the *one* description that captures *the* intrinsic properties of those objects should be seen to be nonsense from the start." (Putnam, 1994: 304-5)

This *open-ended* conception of objects as "inheritably extendible" was even embraced in the *Dewey Lectures*, where Putnam officially gave up on his internal realism:

> [Q]uantum mechanics is a wonderful example of how with the development of knowledge our idea of what counts as even a *possible* knowledge claim, our idea of what counts as even a *possible* object, and our idea of what counts as even a *possible* property are all subject to change. (Putnam, 1999: 8)

Such acceptance of the diversity of uses for words such as "object" and "exists" is illustrated by Putnam's favorite example of mereology[47]. This example involves a hypothetical Polish Logician and a Carnapian. The Polish Logician defends the idea of mereological sums, i.e., the idea that *the sum of any two things is itself an object*, whereas the Carnapian denies the existence of such objects. If asked to count the number of objects when presented with what Putnam calls three "individuals," x1, x2, x3, the Carnapian says, "There are three objects," and the Polish Logician, ignoring the null object, says, "There are seven objects." That is, the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd objects are each of the three individuals, the 4th the sum of x1 and x2, the 5th the sum of x1 and x3, the 6th the sum of x2 and x3, and the 7th object is the sum of x1, x2, and x3.

Mereology, the study of parts and wholes, is *"a very simple, elegant and surprisingly powerful theory"* (Koslicki, 2008: 15), first formulated by polish logician Stanislaw Lesniewski and further developed by Nelson Goodman, among many others. In its standard formulation, mereology consists of three main axioms, from which all the other principles follow:

> Axiom 1 (Unrestricted Composition): Whenever there are some things, then there exists a fusion of those things.
>
> Axiom 2 (Uniqueness of Composition): It never happens that the same things have two different fusions.
>
> Axiom 3 (Transitivity): If x is part of some part of y, then x is part of y. (Koslicki, 2008: 17)

[47] The same point, though, has been shown by other examples, such as the ones given in "Realism and Reason" and "Equivalence" (Putnam, 1983) which deal with special relativity and space-time points. However, the example of mereology is repeatedly used by Putnam from *The Many Faces of Realism* (1987) until *Ethics without Ontology* (2004).

Being conceived with nominalistic motivations, mereology quantifies the lowest logical type, namely *individuals*. However, mereology rests neutral as to what is taken to be an individual:

> [The Calculus of Individuals] performs the important service of divorcing the *logical* concept of an individual from metaphysical and practical prejudices, thus revealing that the distinction and interrelation of classes and wholes is capable of a purely formal definition, and that both concepts, and indeed all the concepts of logic, are available as neutral tools for the constructional analysis of the world. Then, for example, it becomes clear that the practice of supposing that *things* are what the x's and y's of *Principa Mathematica* denominate and that qualities are necessarily to be interpreted as logical predicates thereof, rather than vice versa, is purely a matter of habit. The dispute between nominalist and realist as to what actual entities are individuals and what are classes is recognized as devolving upon matters of interpretative convenience rather than upon metaphysical necessity. (H. Leonard and N. Goodman, "The Calculus of Individuals and Its Uses" quoted in Koslicki, 2008: 16)

Similarly to the uses of the word "object," the uses of the concept of "exists", as Putnam claims, depend on conventions:

> What logicians call the "existential quantifier", the symbol "(∃x)", and its ordinary language counterparts, the expressions "there are," "there exists" and "there exists a," "some," etc., *do not have a single absolutely precise use but a whole family of uses* [...] [T]here is nothing in the logic of existential and universal quantification to *tell us* whether we should say that mereological sums exist or don't exist; nor is there some other science that answers that question. I suggest that we can *decide* to say either. We can, in short, create

> divergent uses of the existential quantifier, and, to some extent […], we have always invented new, and in some cases divergent uses of existential quantification. (Putnam, 2004: 37)
>
> To suppose that points "are really individuals" has an unknowable truth value would be to suppose that "individual" has its meaning somehow fixed apart from its use, counting all the causal facts there are about the contexts in which we use it as a part of its "use." But there is nothing that dictates a sublime "right sense" upon words like "individual," "object," "exist" in that way… [W]e should, as we did in the mereological sums case, see the choice between these optional languages as a matter of convention. (Putnam, 2004: 47)

In other words, the meaning of logical terms such as "(∃x)" is not to be found by asking whether it's an analytic truth –as *pre-Quinian* philosophers would say- or a necessary truth which refers to an intangible and transcendent object. The meaning of such expression is given by the way we *use it*. However, such uses are not simply a *façon de parler* or a convenient fiction, but they reflect the phenomenon of conceptual relativity, the possibility to *extend* natural languages via optional languages.

The "open texture" of the definition of terms like "object" and "exists" allows us to conceive the *existence of objects* which (besides mereological sums), would not be considered in more traditional ontologies. The doctrine of metaphysical realism, in its Platonist guise, defends the idea that every true statement must correspond with an object, be it a natural or *non-natural* entity. Putnam's doctrine of conceptual relativity defends the idea that one can have objectivity and truth without postulating platonic entities.

One way to talk about *objectivity without objects* is by recognizing that truth and objectivity in logic are not to be understood as descriptions of intangible entities but as

inferential relations between statements that must meet, in order to be called "true", the standards *proper* to logic: *"Logic is neither a description of non-natural relations between transcendent 'objects' nor a description of ordinary empirical properties of empirical objects."* (Putnam, 2004: 59) The truth and objectivity for logical statements, more than a matter of *analyticity* or *necessity*, is a matter of *interpretation*, which, as opposed to those more transcendental and metaphysical concepts, accepts the ideas of *relevance* and *corrigibility*:

> What makes a truth a conceptual truth is that it is impossible to make (relevant) sense of the assertion of its negation… The conception of conceptual truth that I defend recognizes the interpenetration of conceptual relations and facts, and it grants that there is an important sense in which knowledge of conceptual truth is corrigible. (Putnam, 2004: 62)

As Putnam recognizes, conceptual relativity doesn't suppose –as Metaphysical realism does- that conceptual truths are incorrigible foundations of our knowledge or simple "ways of speaking" –as Quine would have it-, but rather, they are holistically intertwined in our whole linguistic and justificatory practices: *"I have arrived at the rock bottom of my convictions. And one might almost say that these foundation walls are carried by the whole house."* (Wittgenstein, 1968: §248, quoted in Putnam 2004).

The phenomenon of objectivity without objects is not only elucidated by the case of conceptual truths in logic, but also complemented by the case of mathematical truth and the fact that *"we learn what mathematical truth is by learning the practices and standards of mathematics itself."* (Putnam, 2004: 66) Such practices and standards show us that the notion of "existence" in mathematics doesn't make reference to intangible objects, but rather, it is related to the idea of *possibility*:

> Every statement about the "existence" of any mathematical entities is equivalent (equivalent mathematically, and equivalent from the point of view of application as well) with a statement that doesn't assert the actual existence of any mathematical objects at all, but only asserts the *mathematical possibility* of certain structures. (Putnam, 2004: 67)

Therefore, nothing is gained in mathematics, or philosophy, by postulating intangible entities which serve as truth makers of statements.

Therefore, the metaphysical doctrine that if a statement is true then it must be a description of some part of reality is, according to Putnam, a *pseudo-explanation* because:

> (i) It posits something we have found no other need to posit (and which is not, of course, observable by the senses –otherwise it wouldn't be a posit);
>
> (ii) It does no work for us, because we derive nothing from it but the very phenomenon we posited it to explain (it lacks "surplus meaning") –this also makes it unfalsifiable, of course; and
>
> (iii) Those who defend it do not suggest any way of extending it so that it *will* have surplus meaning –in short, it lacks fruitfulness *ab initio*. (Putnam, 2004: 60)

4.3. Conceptual schemes as optional languages

In her article "On the Right Idea of a Conceptual Scheme" (1997), Jennifer Case interprets Putnam's doctrine of conceptual relativity as claiming that conceptual schemes are to be understood not as *natural* but as *optional* languages. The advantage

of such interpretation, as Case claims, is that it allows us to keep the idea of a conceptual scheme while honoring what Simon Blackburn called the "imperative towards unity", *"according to which the conjunction of any two true descriptions of reality must itself be true."*[48] (Case, 1997: 1)

According to Case, in the examples of conceptual relativity given by Putn*am, one is not expressing the same meaning of words in an strict linguistic sense –a criterion of sameness of meaning as translation practice*,- nor expressing different meanings with the same syntactic forms –*whereby one would follow the same Davidsonian criterion of meaning*. What conceptual relativity, by adopting the idea of conceptual schemes as optional languages, do give speakers is,

> to use Putnam's words, different *"ways of describing what are (in some way) the "same facts" which are in (some way) "equivalent" but also (in some way) "incompatible.""* What distinguishes optional languages (and conceptual schemes) from one another is, according to Putnam, different uses of the same words. (Case, 1997: 14)

Case proposes a *criterion of consistency* which allows conceptual relativity to honor Blackburn's imperative towards unity:

> Two apparently inconsistent statements expressed by, respectively, sentence *p* and sentence *q* are consistent if and only if (1) *p* is formulated in an optional language L_1 and *q* is formulated in a different optional language L_2, and (2) either (a) *p* and an acceptable relative interpretation of *q* in L_1 do not express apparently inconsistent statements, or (b) an acceptable relative interpretation

[48] *"If we learn that there is a true description of reality from one point of view, and another true description from another, then we must in principle be able to conjoin them, and enjoy the fact that reality can truly be described in way A, and truly be described in way B. There is no problem, provided, of course, that A and B are consistent."* (Simon Blackburn "Enchanting views", in Hale, B. and Clark, P. (eds.)(1994) p. 16)

> of *p* in L_2 and *q* do not express apparently inconsistent statements. (Case, 1997: 14)

As Putnam later admitted (2001, 2004), conceptual schemes must be understood as optional languages because they are extensions of natural languages. Therefore, as he makes it clear, conceptual schemes are not to be understood as *any* type of talk which has an equivalent alternative which is incompatible with it. Again, conceptual schemes are not natural languages –*which leave the speakers no choice but to speak them*-, but optional languages which present an incompatible alternative:

> There is *no* interesting sense in which the truth of "There is a computer on this desk" is "relative to the conceptual scheme", as opposed to depending (trivially) on what content those words are being used to express — which of course depends on the language the words are in and the context of their use. It was never part of my doctrine of conceptual relativity that *every* statement is an example of it, and while the relativity of the content of our utterances to the context of their use is indeed something that interests me very much the importance of the context-sensitivity of utterance-content...), it is *not* an example of what I called conceptual relativity. (Putnam, 2001: 432)

4.4. Fact and Convention

In "Convention: a theme in philosophy" (1983), Putnam says that Quine's idea of describing knowledge as a grey fabric in which one cannot quite discern the white elements of convention from black factual ones[49], lands us in metaphysical realism because, by accepting that knowledge is formed by two transcendent elements (fact and

[49] WV Quine, "Carnap and Logical Truth", in *The Philosophy of Rudolph Carnap,* p. 405.

convention), one also postulates a *world-in itself*, a fact stripped of all conventions. A similar stand is the one taken by John Searle in *The Construction of Social Reality* (1995), the book which was discussed in the first chapter. According to Searle, conceptual relativity *"presupposes a language-independent reality that can be carved up or divided up in different ways by different vocabularies."* (Searle, 1995: 165). This way of conceiving the phenomenon of conceptual relativity is what Putnam calls the "cookie cutter metaphor", a metaphor that, nevertheless, *"is of no real assistance in understanding the phenomenon of conceptual relativity. Take it seriously and you are at once forced to answer the question, 'What are the various parts of the dough?'"* (Putnam, 1987: 33)

As opposed to this way of conceiving reality, Putnam proposes that what is seen as a gap between facts and conventions should rather be seen as a *continuum*, to the point that *"elements of what we call 'language' or 'mind' penetrate so deeply into what we call 'reality' that the very project of representing ourselves as being 'mappers' of something 'language-independent' is fatally compromised from the very start."* (Putnam, 1990: 28)

In her article "The heart of Putnam's pluralistic realism" (2001), Jennifer Case continues the discussion of conceptual relativity that she had started with her 1997 article - *which was very influential on Putnam's conception of this matter* (Putnam 2001, 2004)-, and elucidates Putnam's conception of the interdependence of fact and convention in different conceptual schemes:

> There is an element of conventionality in what counts as fact within a scheme, both because what counts as fact within a scheme counts as fact *within a scheme* and because to adopt a scheme of concepts is not thereby to settle every question about how those concepts are to be used. (Case, 2001: 421)

In her article, Case cites several examples of the interpenetration of fact and convention in Putnam's writings and shows how such examples point to the idea of continuity between both elements of reality:

> [E]ven when we see such a "reality" as a tree, the possibility of that perception is dependent on a whole conceptual scheme, on a language in place (one which may or may not legislate an answer to such questions as "Is the tree identical with the space time region that contains it?" and "Is the tree identical with the mereological sum of the time-slices of elementary particles that make it up?"). What is factual and what is conventional is a matter of degree. We cannot say, "These and these elements of the world are the raw facts, the rest is the result of convention." (Putnam, 1988: 113, quoted in Case 2001)

> [W]e didn't make Sirius a star. Not only didn't we make Sirius a star in the sense in which a carpenter makes a table, *we didn't make it a star.* Our ancestors and our contemporaries (including astrophysicists), in shaping and creating our language, created the concept *star*, with its partly conventional boundaries, with its partly indeterminate boundaries, and so on. And that concept *applies* to Sirius. The fact that the concept *star* has conventional elements doesn't mean that we make it the case that that concept applies to any particular thing, in the way in which we made it the case that the concept "Big Dipper" applies to a particular group of stars. The concept *bachelor* is far more strongly conventional than the concept *star*, and that concept applies to Joseph Ullian, but our linguistic practices didn't make Joe a bachelor. (They did make him "Joe Ullian".) General names like "star" and "bachelor" are very different from proper names like "the Big Dipper" and "Joe Ullian" (Putnam, 1992: 114-115, quoted in Case 2001)

The first passage, as Case points out, illustrates the doctrine of conceptual relativity, the interpenetration of fact and convention. However, in the second passage such interpenetration is illustrated from a different perspective: the *factuality* of general names shows that *"within a conceptual scheme, the conditions that govern the applicability of a concept are by no means absolutely conventional: they are more or less conventional."* (Case, 2001: 421) The factuality of conventions is, in a sense, the "realist" answer to the supposed relativism of the conventionality of facts. Thus, the doctrine of conceptual relativity might be criticized as advocating the relativist idea that there are *no facts but only interpretations*. However, as the passage just quoted shows, the doctrine of conceptual relativity also advocates the idea that there is a factual and objective side in conventions. Once a convention is established (like a general name is) the use of such convention becomes objective. This point is also elucidated by the example of mereology:

> Given a version, the question, "How many objects are there?" has an answer, namely "three" in the case of the first version ("Carnap's World") and "seven" (or "eight") in the case of the second version ("The Polish Logician's World"). Once we make clear how we are using "object" (or "exist"), the question "How many objects exist?" has an answer that is not at all a matter of "convention". (Putnam, 1987: 20)

The interpenetration of fact and convention must be understood, as was already said, as a continuum. In such a continuum it is difficult and problematic to trace a dividing line between fact and convention. Given the fact that *"the idea of a 'point at which' subjectivity ceases and Objectivity–with-a-capital-O begins has proved chimerical"* (Putnam, 1987: 28), Putnam's suggestion is that we classify statements either closer to the factual end of the continuum or nearer to its conventional end. Such suggestion not

only eliminates the dichotomy between fact and convention, but also other traditional dichotomies –*such as the dichotomy between properties of things and projections, and the dichotomy between truth and justification*- which have marked the history of philosophy.

4.5. Partial conclusions of this chapter

As this chapter has shown, the doctrine of conceptual relativity proves to be an essential part of internal realism, and it's not a minor detail that in various places Putnam acknowledges such doctrine as the "heart" of his internal realism (Putnam, 1991: 404). For example, in *The Many Faces of Realism* he claims that *"Internal realism is, at bottom, just the insistence that realism is* not *incompatible with conceptual relativity."* (Putnam, 1987: 17) In fact, the very doctrine of conceptual relativity, *the interpenetration of fact and convention*, which dissolves the traditional dichotomies which have plagued the history of philosophy, is considered by Putnam as the "essence" of his internal realism (1987: 28). In the Preface to *Realism with a Human Face* (1990) he admits that the doctrine of conceptual relativity has been pervasive in his writings since the publication of *The Many Faces of Realism*. In fact, after his full embrace of conceptual relativity Putnam's approach has experienced *"a shift from emphasizing model-theoretic arguments against metaphysical realism to emphasizing conceptual relativity."* (Putnam, 1990: xi) However, this claim must be nuanced: as was shown in this chapter, as early as "Realism and Reason" (1978) –considered as the article that sets the course of internal realism,- we already found the doctrine of conceptual relativity under the guise of the *theory-relativity* of the concept of "object": *"*[I]*f we concede that* [treating points as real objects or as logical constructions] *are equivalent descriptions,*

then the property being an object *(as opposed to a class or a set of things) will be theory relative."* (Putnam, 1978: 491)

As the different examples of Putnam's writings quoted in this chapter show, the doctrine of conceptual relativity is not a change of emphasis starting after *The Many Faces of Realism* (1987), but rather, it's been a continuous approach to the understanding of reality that Putnam has embraced in his internalist period as well as in his natural realist latest period.

In analyzing the doctrine of conceptual relativity, in this chapter I have pointed that it is a doctrine formed by two theses, namely, *(1)* the diversity of uses for such terms as "object" and "existence", and *(2)* the interpenetration of fact and convention. For Jennifer Case (1997, 2001), however, the doctrine is formed only by thesis *(2)*, the interpenetration of fact and convention, and thesis *(1)* would be a *consequence* of it. This need not be controversial; the reason why I chose to include the diversity of uses for such terms as "object" and "existence" in the definition of the doctrine of conceptual relativity is because Putnam himself defines it as such (1987: 19). On the other hand, as Jennifer Case shows, thesis *(1)* would be more like a *consequence* of conceptual relativity, especially when it comes to understand conceptual schemes as optional languages. As she argues in her articles, there is a relation between the "inheritably extendible" notion of objects, on one side, and the diversity of uses of the notion of "existence," on the other, with the idea of conceptual schemes as optional languages: since optional languages extend natural languages, therefore they also extend what we normally conceive as an object and its existence.

Whether a consequence of conceptual relativity or a central thesis of it, the "open texture" of objects is in close relation with the interpenetration of fact and convention, as was shown in this chapter. It would be impossible to conceive facts and conventions

as a continuum (as Putnam suggests we should do) if the notion of "object" is closed and transcendental. It is, in part, due to the "open texture" of terms like "object" and "exists" that we can think of facts and conventions as permeating each other. On the other hand, it is, in part, due to such interpenetration of fact and convention that we can think of objects as having an "open texture." The case of mereology –*Putnam's favorite example of the phenomenon of conceptual relativity*- is a good example of the interdependence of the twin theses of the doctrine of conceptual relativity. On a superficial perspective, it might seem that someone who accepts mereology (a doctrine which advocates the "open texture" of objects) might not necessarily embrace the idea that fact and convention interpenetrate; after all, counting the Eiffel Tower and Putnam's nose as one object only requires to quantify "openly" and tolerantly over different objects. However, in order for such quantification to be possible one shouldn't conceive of facts and conventions as a dichotomy, because such way of conceiving reality wouldn't allow for a tolerant quantification over objects.

Putnam has warned that a criticism against conceptual relativity is that when one is quantifying over objects in the case of mereology one is giving a *different meaning* to words in this optional language; thus the incompatibility between conceptual schemes would be caused by giving different meaning to words. According to Davidson, the criterion as to whether two expressions have the same meaning is translation practice. But the doctrine of conceptual relativity, as was pointed, is linked to the Wittgensteinian conception of meaning as use, according to which the *elucidation* of the meaning of words comes from the uses such words have in a language game. The meanings of "exists" and "object" in mereology are not translations of Carnapian language, but they reflect a certain way to use these words. Therefore, according to this view, we leave it open as to whether "there really are" mereological sums.

As was pointed out in this chapter, the different conceptual schemes of mereology and traditional set theory are not necessarily conceptual schemes in the guise of natural languages, but rather, are to be interpreted as *optional languages* which extend the possibilities of natural language:

> Conceptual relativity holds that the question as to which of these ways of using "exist" (and "individual," "object," etc.) is right is one that the meanings of the words in the natural language, that is, the language that we speak and cannot avoid speaking every day, simply leaves open… The optional language of set theory and the optional language of mereology represent possible extensions of our ordinary ways of speaking. (Putnam, 2004: 43)

In finishing, something must be said of the related phenomenon of conceptual pluralism. In *Representation and Reality* (1988), Putnam gives as an example of the doctrine of conceptual relativity the fact that one can describe the contents of a room by using either everyday object language (chairs, tables, lamps) or the language of particle physics. However, as Putnam later[50] admits -*thanks to Jennifer Case's article* "On the Right Idea of a Conceptual Scheme" (1997)-, this is an example of the doctrine of *conceptual pluralism*, the doctrine which, as opposed to the similar doctrine of conceptual relativity, affords *compatible* but *inequivalent* descriptions of the same phenomenon. As Putnam admits (2004), conceptual relativity implies conceptual pluralism, but not the other way around: conceptual relativity involves the denial of a single fundamental ontology and thus implies conceptual pluralism. But the denial of a single fundamental ontology does not require conceptual relativity, the truth of incompatible descriptions of the same state of affairs. Conceptual pluralism, as opposed to conceptual relativity, is linked to natural languages as opposed to optional languages:

[50] In "Reply to Jeniffer Case" (Putnam, 2001), and in *Ethics Without Ontology* (Putnam, 2004).

common talk of chairs and tables not necessarily has an equivalent alternative to it, therefore, such talk is part of a natural language which we have no choice but to use. However, the phenomenon of conceptual pluralism is connected to conceptual relativity in the sense that sometimes natural languages are enriched by other natural languages, extending their own ontology:

> While the "ontology" of a given natural language, ignoring the optional sublanguages that we sometimes add to it, is for the most part obligatory for speakers of that language, and while virtually all natural languages have terms for tables and chairs, etc., certain natural languages do sometimes quantify over "objects" which are unique to those languages. In this way, they illustrate the possibility which we have seen to be demonstrated by conceptual relativity, the possibility of different *extensions* of our ordinary notions of *object* and *existence*. (Putnam, 2004: 49)

CHAPTER 5

NATURAL AND INTERNAL REALISM

5.1. Introduction

Since the publication of *Realism with a Human Face* (1990) Putnam started to pay attention to William James's writings, particularly his doctrine of radical empiricism. What Putnam finds interesting in those late essays is that they serve as a *propaedeutic* to pragmatism, and not the other way around as is commonly assumed:

> We cannot suppose that all of James's grand remarks about life, morality and religious belief are a mere propaedeutic to a discussion of the really interesting question of whether two different people see the same Memorial Hall. (Putnam, 1990: 233)

In the essays collected posthumously as *Essays in Radical Empiricism* (James, 1910), James presents what is called a natural or direct realism, *the realism of the common man*. This doctrine hopes to save material objects and direct perception of them from the entanglement between reality and appearance produced by traditional epistemology (both rationalist and empiricist). For James, the traditional epistemic approach, by advocating the perception of sense-data, falls itself prey of the problem it is supposed to solve, namely, the sense-data epistemologist, by following its own demands, is not able to discriminate between a real perception and a hallucination.

Radical empiricism is relevant to the doctrine of internal realism also in the sense that, by abandoning talk of transcendent reality and clear-cut ontology, James provides a common-sense answer to skepticism. This answer is linked to James's experimentalism,

because he doesn't look for foundations of knowledge, but descriptions of experiences which help us to cope with reality.

It was particularly in the *Dewey Lectures* (1999) that Putnam fully embraced this doctrine of natural realism and abandoned internal realism. Putnam referred to his new approach as a "conceptual reorientation" which attacks the view that holds that *"whenever we perceive anything what is really 'present to the mind' is a little picture, and that whenever our perceptions are 'the same', the 'numerically identical' little picture is present to the mind."* (Putnam, 2002b: 125) For Putnam, this "disastrous" view is committed to the existence of sense-data and their identification to neural events (the *so-called* "identity theory"). As will be discussed below, this approach to perception dates back to the early-modern conception of the mind as a *thing*, which strictly confined cognitive processes to the brain.

Nevertheless, as it will be argued in this final chapter, there are striking similarities between the two doctrines of internal and natural realism (especially with the shared interest for conceptual relativity, not to mention the shared disdain for metaphysical realism). Such similarities are not only expressed under the guise of technical arguments and doctrines, but also under the guise of the whole purpose of philosophy advocated by both doctrines.

5.2. James's theory of perception

A striking similarity between Putnam's doctrine of conceptual relativity and James's theory of perception is expressed by the latter's conception of reality, which holds that what we call "reality" is not "*all there is, that there is also unreality, or rather, that there are, 'intentionally, at any rate', unreal entities."* (Putnam, 1990: 236)

James includes in his ontology the term "pluriverse," in addition to the term "universe," because he wants to include elements which traditionally one wouldn't count as real; more specifically, he differentiates between "intentional" and "adjectival" properties o objects. When one imagines or hallucinates a fire, for example, one can say that this fire has certain "intentional" properties of being "hot", but such properties are different from the "adjectival" properties of the physical real fire, the one that one would see in a normal situation. This is a similar approach to the one used by Putnam in the doctrine of conceptual relativity, particularly the first thesis of it –the "open texture" of the term "object"- which was discussed in the previous chapter. Similarly to conceptual relativity, James's radical empiricism admits that *"there are a lot of things in the pluriverse which aren't 'real' but which are still in some sense there."* (Putnam, 1990: 239) Just like the doctrine and the phenomenon of conceptual relativity (exemplified by mereological sums), the radical empiricism of James admits objects and "realities" which are not recognized by the traditional epistemology which divides mind and matter in a clear-cut fashion.

A very important part of James's theory of perception is the thesis that we perceive *directly* the material world, but as opposed to Descartes and traditional epistemology -*who conceives the knowledge of the world as incorrigible subjective information*-, for James the immediacy of perception doesn't imply *incorrigibility*. In other words, James defends the idea that we *do* perceive material objects directly, but there is always the possibility of error in such knowledge. The reason that the tradition which spans since Descartes believes that we don't perceive immediately the material world is because there's error and deception in immediate perception (we don't perceive incorrigibly), and this tradition insists that if we could perceive immediately there wouldn't be corrigibility. In the same way, according to Berkeley and the epistemic tradition which

followed after him, *"if there is something you immediately perceive, it must have all and only the properties it seems to have."* (Putnam, 1990: 242) For the metaphysician – *someone who believes in a dichotomy between mind and matter*- then, immediacy is incorrigibility. As opposed to this view, James wants to maintain the idea that we do perceive immediately (without the help of sense-data) but *not* incorrigibly.

Putnam stresses the fact that, to argue his point, James gives an answer to the problem of sense-data: *"I immediately perceive something subjective –the sense-data- even when I see a real fire; and I might perceive qualitatively identical subjective objects if I were to hallucinate a fire."* (Putnam, 1990: 243) The point that Putnam wants to stress in James's theory of perception is that according to the sense-data epistemologist one wouldn't be able to discriminate between the subjective perception (hallucination or optical illusion) of an object and the "real" perception of it:

> This is why the traditional view is correctly described as a mind-body dualism. The sense data I have in the case of veridical perception as well as in the case of hallucination are mental, and the physical chair is material. So the traditional cut is not between real objects and unreal objects that have some kind of existence […] rather, the cut is between mind and matter. In sharp contrast to all this, James's picture is that when I see a veridical perception of a fire I don't see a private sense datum of a fire and infer the fire; I just see the fire. When I have a hallucination, in James's picture, what I see is a fire that isn't really there. (Putnam, 1990: 242)

Thus, when one has the hallucination of a fire one thinks that such perception has "adjectively" the properties of being hot, for example, but one can confuse a private experience with a real one simply because both *look alike*. However, James insists that

in the case of a hallucination one thinks that such perception has "general validity," that it conforms to shared standards of validity and justification.

For James, *"the word 'reality" is correlative to the word truth,"* (Putnam, 1990: 241), in the sense that he advocates the idea that, in order to be real, "pure experiences" must fit descriptions: if I have a hallucination of a fire and I describe such experience as "real", such experience is false and not real, *it doesn't belong to reality*. However,

> if you describe what is in a sense the same "pure experience" as a psychiatrist would describe it, as John Smith's hallucination, then under that description the same pure experience is a piece of reality –albeit a member of the class "hallucinatory experience" and not a member of the class "fire." So basically the word "reality" is correlative to the word "truth." (Putnam, 1990: 241)

What is striking in James's radical empiricism for our present interests is the idea that *"every pure experience is a part of reality under some description."* (Putnam, 1990: 241) Just as Putnam's doctrine of conceptual relativity, James's radical empiricism is tolerant and inclusive of a diversity of objects and descriptions. Now we have a good perspective to appreciate how far this doctrine is from the doctrine of metaphysical realism that we discussed in the first chapter: for the metaphysical realist there is a unique ontology and a unique description of it expressed in scientific language; James's pluriverse is much richer than this, and in a sense, it is more appropriate to account for the different phenomena of human experience.

This plurality in the conception of objects of perception shows that, for James, the divide in perception is not due to real or unreal things, or material or inmaterial things, but is due to the properties things have (not *in themselves*, but as they *come to be perceived*). As Putnam puts it, *"What looked initially like 'Meinongian objects' turn out*

to be real (albeit 'subjective') objects that possess properties 'intentionally' which they do not possess adjectively." (Putnam, 1990: 241)

Such natural realism, as Putnam signals, is an alternative to traditional empiricist and Cartesian epistemology:

> So James was saying, "Here is an alternative hypothesis: sometimes we see real chairs and real fires, and I don't mean that we directly see something mental and do some inferring. Sometimes we see objects which are -under some description- private. And a private object can *resemble* a public object." (Putnam, 1990: 245)

Summing up, then, James's theory of perception is attractive to the internal realist, among other things, because it opposes–*just as internal realism does*- the metaphysical idea that reality is composed of a clear-cut ontology describable in only one way. It is also attractive for the internalist because it rehearses an answer to solipsism –just as Putnam did with his Brains in a Vat argument:

> [For the Berkeleyan school]…our lives are a congeries of solipsisms out of which in strict logic only a God could compose a universe even of discourse… If the body that you actuate is not the very body that I see there, but some duplicate body of your own with which that has nothing to do, we belong to different universes, you and I, and for me to speak of you is folly. (James, *Essays in Radical Empiricism*, p. 37, quoted in Putnam, 1990: 246)

5.3. Natural realism

Before abandoning his doctrine of internal realism, Putnam defined it in *The Many Faces of Realism* (1987) as *a way to save commonsense* from metaphysical realism:

"the key to working out the program of preserving commonsense realism while avoiding the absurdities and antinomies of metaphysical realism in all its familiar varieties is something I have called internal realism." (Putnam, 1987: 17) It is, nevertheless, striking that both, internal realism and the natural realism advocated in the *Dewey Lectures*, are doctrines meant to preserve commonsense realism.

In those lectures, Putnam denounced a tendency of recoil in the history of philosophy:

> Philosophers who recoil from the excesses of various versions of metaphysical realism have recoiled to a variety of very peculiar positions -deconstruction being currently the most famous, but one could also mention Nelson Goodman's "irrealism" or Michael Dummett's "antirealism" as examples of a similar recoil on the part of some analytic philosophers. (Putnam, 1999: 4)

As an alternative to this, Putnam believes in

> a way to do justice to our sense that knowledge claims are responsible to reality without recoiling into metaphysical fantasy… […] the search for a middle way between reactionary metaphysics and irresponsible relativism. (Putnam: 1999: 4,5)

This middle way, as was pointed in the previous section, finds its inspiration, among other approaches, in James's radical empiricism. Putnam insists on the fact that James rejects the metaphysical yearning of neutral descriptions, descriptions which do not reflect a particular interest:

> James insists that there is no such thing as a description that reflects no particular interest at all. And he further insists that the descriptions we give when our interests are not theoretical or explanatory can be just as *true* as the ones we give when our interests are "intellectual." (Putnam: 1999: 5)

As was discussed in the previous section, the criterion for truth according to James is not the metaphysical correspondence of words to "reality." Though James believed in *some sort* of correspondence, his idea of "reality" was much wider than the traditional conception of it. As we saw, James included in his ontology the concept of "pluriverse", a concept which allows for the possibility of an object having both "adjectival" and "intentional" properties. Such properties, allows us to speak in an inclusive way for conceiving the existence of objects which one would normally not include in a traditional ontology. Putnam defends this idea against the "metaphysical fantasy" of believing that there exists a fixed totality of properties which determines thoughts. This ontological pluralism is also advocated in his internalist writings, where he opposes the idea that the world consists of a fixed totality of objects and that it doesn't make sense to pretend to be "mappers" of a theory-independent reality (Putnam 1981, 1990). Just as internal realism did, Putnam's later direct/natural[51] realism defends the idea that instead of conceiving reality as a fixed totality one should look *"at the ways in which we endlessly renegotiate and are forced to renegotiate our notion of reality as our language and our life develop."* (Putnam, 1999: 9)

The natural realism that Putnam advocates in the *Dewey Lectures*, besides James's inspiration, is also inspired by John McDowell's *Mind and World* (1994). What appeals to Putnam in McDowell's approach to perception is his rejection of the "interface" picture of perception, namely, the idea that *"our cognitive powers cannot reach all the way to the objects themselves."* (Putnam, 1999: 10) As opposed to traditional epistemology, a natural realist believes that in successful perception one is *directly* affected by aspects of external reality, and not simply that one has a subjective

[51] Putnam admits that this doctrine is usually known as "direct" realism, but, since such name involves some problems pointed by Austin, and since Putnam wishes to do justice to James's terminology, he defines his new approach to realism as "natural" instead of "direct". See Putnam, 1999:10.

experience caused by such aspects (Putnam, 1999: 10). In this way, James's and McDowell's conception of perception as a direct sensing of reality affords Putnam's base for his natural realism. Such brand of realism, following James, insists that the idea of conceiving sensory experiences as intermediaries of experience "*has no sound arguments to support it and, worse, makes it impossible to see how persons can be in genuine cognitive contact with a world at all."* (Putnam, 1999: 11)

The issue of perception as Putnam sees it in the *Dewey Lectures* is not an isolated problem; instead, it is an issue linked with philosophy of mind and language. Putnam admits that he came to think of problems of perception via the antinomies of realism with which he had been interested since the middle of the 1970s, in writings such as "Realism and Reason" and "Models and Reality". In these articles Putnam was not directly concerned with problems about perception, but rather, with problems about meaning: *meaning is use*. However, this idea of meaning as use was not the Wittgensteinian notion which Putnam later adopted, but a "cognitive scientific" notion in which *"use was to be described largely in terms of computer programs in the brain."* (1999: 11) According to this functionalist approach, internal programs in the brain arrange external causal information which affords knowledge and perception.

However, with his rejection of functionalism also came the adoption of a Wittgensteinian approach of meaning as use. According to such approach,

> [T]he use of words in a language game cannot, in most cases, be described without employing the vocabulary of that game or a vocabulary internally related to the vocabulary of that game. If one wants to describe the use of the sentence "There is a coffee table in front of me," one has to take for granted its internal relations to, among others, facts such as that one perceives coffee tables. By speaking of perceiving coffee tables, what I have in mind is not the

> minimal sense of "see" or "feel" (the sense in which one might be said to "see" or "feel" a coffee table even if one hadn't the faintest idea what a coffee table is), I mean the full achievement sense, the sense in which to see a coffee table is to see that it is a coffee table that is in front of one. (Putnam, 1999: 14)

In this quote we find a very complete exposition of Putnam's approach to natural realism: it is a *second naïveté* (as Putnam calls it in the *Dewey Lectures*) according to which one accepts that what causes knowledge of tables and chairs are *actual tables and chairs out there*, and not their sense-data or hallucinations of them. Such perceptions are perfectly expressed in language, and the relation of language and reality (the timeless metaphysical question *"how does language hooks on to the world?"*) is not one of correspondence, but one of *complementarity* between language and facts. A statement about the perception of a chair makes only sense if it is used in a context in which one takes for granted that we *actually* see chairs, and where most of our perceptions are not thought to be produced by hallucinations. This approach tries to make genuine sense of the contact of persons with the world, as Putnam described it, it see us as *"open to the world, as interacting with the world in ways that permit aspects of it to reveal to us."* (Putnam, 2012a: 61-62)

However, Christopher Norris (2002) insists that Putnam's second naïveté –understood as a *"physicalist appeal to those sensory stimuli that impact on our nerve-ends from one moment to the next"* (Norris, 2002: 25)-, must satisfy certain realist conditions which counter skepticism. Such conditions should:

> 1) Avoid any recourse to "sense data" or other such redundant intermediary terms; 2) put us back in "unmediated contact with our environment" and thereby restore our "natural cognitive relations to the world"; 3) nonetheless reject any version of the Sellarsian "myth of the given", or the idea of a world

> that offers itself up for some privileged range of correct descriptions; 4) provide something more substantive (epistemologically speaking) than the bare-bones physicalist "realism" proposed by Rorty[52]; and 5) move somewhat in a Kantian direction in order to achieve these aims while renouncing Kant's entire metaphysical apparatus and all the problems that go along with it. (Norris 2002: 26)

As Norris assesses Putnam's natural realist project, he concludes that neither he nor McDowell *"have made-out a fully convincing case for this scaled-down (de-transcendentalised) version of Kant as a means of overcoming the "interface" myth or of bridging the illusory gulf between mind and world."* (Norris, 2002: 26) On top of that, Norris thinks that Kant is a rather odd choice for inspiring such de-transcendentalised naturalism. Kant's project is charged with metaphysical assumptions without which the entire project would seem empty. Among such assumptions one finds the appeal to things in themselves, an appeal rejected by the realism of the common man. Also, the notions of "receptivity" and "spontaneity" are linked to a transcendental argument which affords a general concept and limits for experience, something which is not accepted by Putnam or McDowell's commonsense realism.

5.4. Varieties of sense-data theories: Identity Theory and second qualities

Besides James and McDowell, Putnam's natural realism is highly influenced by John Austin's *Sense and Sensibilia*, where the British philosopher advocated a return to commonsense realism and attacked the idea that perception is afforded by sense-data.

[52] Rorty's "physicalism", as Norris understands it, consists of *"severing the link between a causal account of knowledge-acquisition through direct exposure to sensori stimuli and those kinds of normative justification which we standardly provide in accordance with this or that language-game, social practice or cultural form."* (Norris, 2002: 16)

One of the features of Austin's argument which Putnam uses for his own approach is Austin's insistence that the inference from "perception is fallible" to "direct perception is impossible" is a very far-fetched and problematic one. However, ever since Descartes, such inference has been used as an answer to the typical examples of fallibility in perception (the stick in the water that looks bent but is straight, the mirror image that is mistaken for the object itself, etc.). Such examples have led sense-data epistemologists to advocate the idea that *at least sometimes* (in the case of dreams and hallucinations) what we perceive is something mental. However, given the fact that sometimes what we perceive is something mental, such epistemologists jump from that thesis to the generalization that what we perceive is *always* something mental, namely, sense-data.

As Putnam argues in the *Dewey Lectures*, sense-data epistemologists do not provide an argument to the effect that even if one grants that the experience of a dream and a real object are qualitatively the same, such an experience cannot be produced by the real object[53]:

> [B]oth James and Austin argue that even if cases of dreaming, illusion, etc., were perceptions of something nonphysical, and the experience of someone who dreams were more or less exactly like a "veridical experience" of, say, Harvard's Memorial Hall (one of James's favorite examples), there is simply no argument that the object of the veridical experience cannot be Memorial Hall itself. (Putnam, 1999: 27-28)

The sense-data epistemologist's rejoinder is based on the facts of immediacy of perception and similarity of experiences: it might well be the case that one couldn't find

[53] It should be noted the inconsistency of the argument here: the sense-data theorist admits the possibility of the existence of material objects, thus admits there being *some kind of evidence* for them. Therefore, why insist that such objects aren't what we directly perceive?

an argument that contradicts the claim that the object of a veridical experience is a material object (Austin and James's point above), however, the hypothesis that in both cases the same (or at least similar) sense data are immediately perceived explains why the experiences are similar (Putnam, 1999: 29). Therefore, in his opinion, as opposed to the commonsense philosopher, the sense-data epistemologist is *actually providing an argument* for similarity of experiences, namely, the immediacy of perception. Nevertheless, the point of the Natural Realist still holds: from the fact that experiences are similar, one cannot jump to the conclusion that perception is mentally caused and that experiences are not caused by material objects.

Sense-data theories in their modern guise are related to the "identity theory", which holds that sensations and thoughts are brain processes. This theory defends the assumption

> that there is a self-standing realm of experiences or mental phenomena; that these phenomena take place in the mind/brain; that the locus of this drama is the human head; and, finally, that perception involves a special cognitive relation to certain of these "inner" experiences as well as the existence of "causal chains of the appropriate type" connecting them to "external" objects. (Putnam, 1999: 30)

However, one must ask, *does the identity theory avoid the traditional objections to the sense-data theory?* Concerning this question, Putnam points that talk of sense-data and its "immediate perception" is an unexplained process which still survives in the materialist version of the theory. In the 1950's, as Putnam reminds us, the "grain argument" against the identity theory was put forward, and it held that

> sense data (the typical example was a visual sense datum of a homogeneous kind, say, the appearance of a large area of blue sky) and neural processes have

> a very different "grain"- neural processes are discontinuous, have many different parts of many different sorts, and the blue sky sense datum is utterly uniform and undifferentiated. It makes no sense, it was claimed, to say that things so different are "identical." (Putnam, 1999: 31)

Even though this argument by itself wasn't enough to eradicate talk of sense-data from philosophy, it helped to question the supposed identity between sense-data and brain states. However, the identity theory is not the only modern guise of sense-data approaches to perception; as Putnam reminds us,

> [t]here is another strategy employed by traditional epistemologists from the seventeenth century to Russell's *The Problems of Philosophy* and after; the strategy of denying that most of the properties of external things we ordinarily think of ourselves as perceiving (in particular the so-called secondary qualities of color, texture, warmth, and coldness, etc.) are really "out there" to be perceived. From the (alleged) fact that these qualities are not "properties of the things as they are in themselves," it was traditionally concluded that they are "in the mind." (Putnam, 1999: 38)

One can easily recognize in this strategy some of the main claims of Metaphysical Realism: the objective existence of things in themselves with defined and transcendent properties. Anything which is not describable in a mathematical fashion is said to be the mind's projection. This early modern strategy survived well into the 20th century, and as opposed to the strategy of the identity theory –which works from "inside out"-, this strategy

> works from "outside in"; it argues against natural realism as an account of what is "out there." Both strategies, of course, flow from the background

> assumptions bequeathed to us by the metaphysical pictures of early modern realism (and its materialist and "neutral monist" variants.) (Putnam, 1999: 38)

According to Putnam, Natural Realists such as James, Dewey, Husserl, Wittgenstein, and Austin, have responded differently to the varieties of sense-data theories. For example,

> [W]hen Husserl denies that the primary qualities are properties, he does not mean to deny that physical objects really have, say, mass and charge, but does mean to deny that the notion of a "perfectly precise mass" and a "perfectly precise charge" (or position, etc.) is more than a useful idealization. (Putnam, 1999: 38)

Another answer of Natural Realism to sense-data theories is to be found in "a proper understanding" of Wittgenstein's Private Language Argument as a predicament against the famous "inverted spectrum" puzzle". The puzzle, as Putnam tells us,

> is traditionally supposed to be that someone with normal eyesight, brain, optic nerve, etc., might have different "visual qualia"-and this supposed possibility depends entirely on the conception of the mental as a self-standing realm (sealed off within the head), a conception encouraged by the questionable assumptions drawn from the philosophy of perception that it has been my concern to combat here. If we adopt the natural realist account and reject the traditional modern realist account, then the supposed sceptical possibility seemingly forced on us by this puzzle does not arise. (This is, I think, a consequence of a proper understanding of the Private Language Argument. If this is right, it is an unnoticed way in which Austinian concerns about perception are relevant to Wittgensteinian ones about the nature of mental states.) (Putnam, 1999: 41)

As this example shows, the strategy of sense-data theories is directly linked to the main presuppositions of Metaphysical Realism, in the sense that the mental is conceived of as self-standing realm separated from the outside world. A dichotomist thought which finds its highest expression in the Cartesian *res cogitans* and *res extensa*. Against this metaphysical picture, the natural realism that Putnam advocates defends the idea of conceiving the mind in a social environment:

> [S]ensory experiences are not passive affectations of an object called a "mind" but (for the most part) experiences of aspects of the world by a living being. Mind talk is not talk about an immaterial part of us but rather a way of describing the exercise of certain abilities we possess, abilities that supervene upon the activities of our brains and upon all our various transactions with the environment but that do not have to be reductively explained using the vocabulary of physics and biology, or even the vocabulary of computer science. The metaphysical realignment I propose involves acquiescence in a plurality of conceptual resources, of different and not mutually reducible vocabularies (an acquiescence that is inevitable in practice, whatever our monist fantasies) coupled with a return not to dualism but to the "natural realism of the common man." (Putnam, 1999: 38-39)

Putnam's contribution to the answers to sense-data theories is related to the perception of colors. According to Russell, the different shades of colors we see when we look at a table cannot be properties of the table in *itself*, but can only be *dispositions* of the material object to produce certain sense data "under normal conditions": *"On the traditional view the 'subjective' table, the phenomenal table, has color properties, while the 'objective' table has only dispositions to produce color sensations."* (Putnam, 1990:

243) It is because of this that Putnam says that metaphysical realism stripped science of its data and leaves common objects devoid of any objective properties.

Putnam's answer is that *"colors are more abstract than traditional writers on perception-including Russell-generally acknowledge."* (Putnam, 1999: 39) One cannot trace a line to divide conditions of seeing and describe an objectively ideal condition for them. As Putnam, points out, colors *look different* when seen in broad daylight and when seen under artificial light, and we cannot refer to any of these conditions as abnormal. From this Putnam concludes that "*every color has a number of different 'looks.'"* (Putnam, 1999: 40) Such property of colors is describable in public language, as opposed to the solipsism afforded by the sense-data theories, which renders natural realism, at least epistemologically, a more advantageous alternative:

> Is the situation, then, a "standoff" in the sense that it is equally metaphysically advantageous (1) to think of the looks of things as irreducible (though relational) aspects of reality that depend upon the way those things reflect light, the conditions under which they are viewed, etc., or (2) to think of the looks of things as dispositions to produce certain sense data, and to think of sense data as irreducible aspects of reality correlated to brain states? No, because colors and the looks of colors, thought of in the first way, are perfectly describable (public), and so are the empirical dependencies in question, while if they are thought of in the second way, all of the skeptical problems described in my first lecture inevitably arise. Epistemologically, we have every reason to prefer an account under which our experiences are ab initio encounters with a public world. (Putnam, 1999: 40)

Sense-data theories lack scientific weight, since they postulate entities whose behavior is unexplained and inexplicable. Such theories, in the end,

> provide us with no more than an alternative jargon in which we can restate such garden variety facts as the fact that on certain occasions it seems to one that one is seeing (hearing, feeling, smelling, etc.) something that is not there, and the fact that the look of something is not a property it has independently of the conditions under which it is perceived. (Putnam, 1999: 41)

5.5. Internal vs natural realism

In the *Dewey Lectures* Putnam sees his former doctrine of internal realism as an approach which ultimately falls in the same dichotomies as the traditional epistemology it was meant to counter: *"My picture still retained the basic premise of an interface between the knower and everything 'outside.'"* (Putnam, 1999: 18) The reason for this is that by postulating "ideal epistemic conditions" the internalist retains the traditional "interface" approach to epistemology. According to the Putnam of the *Dewey Lectures*, internal realism, conceived as a *third way* between realism and relativism, doesn't undercut the dichotomist approach between language and reality:

> [W]hile the need for a "third way" besides early modem realism and Dummettian idealism is something I feel as strongly as ever, such a third way must, as McDowell has repeatedly urged, undercut the idea that there is an antinomy and not simply paste together elements of early modern realism and elements of the idealist picture. No conception that retains anything like the traditional notion of sense data can provide a way out; such a conception must always, in the end, leave us confronted by what looks like an insoluble problem. (Putnam, 1999: 18)

Putnam's internal realism, while inspired by Dummett's "global antirealism," tried to avoid the idealist consequences of Dummett's strong anti-realism by postulating the notion that, as opposed to Dummett's notion of being able to unalterably verify or falsify empirical propositions, a speaker has rational abilities to decide whether a statement is true or false under ideal epistemic conditions. As we have already seen in previous chapters, against the criticism that such position implies idealism, Putnam replied that the notion of sufficiently good epistemic conditions is a "world involving" notion. However, in the *Dewey Lectures*, where Putnam officially abandoned his former internal realism, he charges this doctrine as reflecting the same antinomy of metaphysical realism, namely, the dividing line between mind and world:

> If, on the picture we have inherited from early modern philosophy, there is a problem about how, without postulating some form of magic, we can have referential access to external things, there is an equal problem as to how we can have referential or other access to "sufficiently good epistemic situations." On my alternative picture (as opposed to Dummett's) the world was allowed to determine whether I actually am in a sufficiently good epistemic situation or whether I only seem to myself to be in one -thus retaining an important idea from commonsense realism- but the conception of an epistemic situation was, at bottom, just the traditional epistemological one. My picture still retained the basic premise of an interface between the knower and everything "outside." (Putnam, 1999: 18)

Throughout this thesis, and particularly in the previous chapter, I have questioned this criticism against internal realism. I insisted on the *social character* of the doctrine of truth as warranted assertibility, according to which to recognize the truth of a statement one must share a public language and master the abilities that this implies (cf. previous

chapter). However, one must seriously consider Putnam's warning against internal realism, to the effect that *"[n]o conception that retains anything like the traditional notion of sense data can provide a way out; such a conception must always, in the end, leave us confronted by what looks like an insoluble problem."* (Putnam, 1999: 18) We have already seen the vast array of problems that bring sense-data theories, however, we must see to what extent internal realism depends on such theories.

In *Reason, Truth, and History* (1981), while characterizing his former approach to functionalism as an identification of mental properties with computational properties of the brain, Putnam also stated that in his view *"sensations have a 'qualitative' aspect that cannot be characterized functionally, and that aspect was to be identified with some physically characterized aspect of our brain functioning"* (Putnam, 1999: 19) Thus, in the *Dewey Lectures*, Putnam characterizes internal realism as *Cartesianism cum materialism*. In the same vein, in his article "Corresponding with reality" (2012a), when assessing the problems of functionalism and defending his new approach of Liberal Naturalism, Putnam insists on the reductionist aspect of his former doctrine: *"an up-to-date liberal functionalist should not think that she has to* reduce *all the notions she uses to nonintentional notions."* (Putnam, 2012a: 82) Thus, the latter Putnam (post *Dewey Lectures*) came to see the functionalism of internal realism as a reductionist doctrine which hoped to give a physicalist account of intentionality and rely only on sense-data as the vessels of perception. In what follows, I will assess the relationship of internal realism to functionalism and assess whether such criticisms are to the point.

To begin with, one must stress the point that according to functionalism, psychological properties are *functional* properties: different organisms may exhibit the same functional properties regardless of their material composition. In *Reason, Truth, and History*, Putnam acknowledged that functionalism is the right naturalistic description of

the mind/body relation and that he was *"attracted to the idea that* one *right version* [among the many right versions of reality] *is a naturalistic version; in which thought-forms, images, sensations, etc.,* are *functionally characterized physical occurrences."* (Putnam, 1981: 79) Even though the functionalism advocated in *Reason, Truth, and History* identified mental states to physical occurrences, it also emphasized the fact that psychological properties are *functional* properties. One must remember that the doctrine of functionalism was put forward as an alternative to materialism and reductionism, and that it advocated the notion that what matters in understanding mental states is the function they satisfy, not their physical composition; in other words, mental states are *compositionally plastic*.

In *Reason, Truth, and History*, Putnam already had serious doubts about the plausibility of functionalism's accounting for the qualitative character of sensations. Making reference to the famous "Inverted Spectrum" hypothesis, Putnam wanted to show in his early book the impossibility to account for qualitative character of sensations in a reductionist fashion; thus, according to the functionalist approach:

> '[A] sensation is a sensation of blue (i.e. has the *qualitative character* that I *now* describe in that way) just in case the sensation (or the corresponding physical event in the brain) has the role of signaling the presence of objective blue in the environment'. This theory captures one sense of the phrase 'sensation of blue', but not the desired 'qualitative' sense. If this functional role were *identical* with the qualitative character, then one couldn't say that the quality of the sensation [for the person with inverted spectrum] has changed. (Putnam, 1981: 80-81)

For someone with inverted spectrum the quality of the sensation of colors has changed, and this quality doesn't seem to be a functional state. The problem with functionalism

that Putnam already identified in *Reason, Truth, and History* is that, regardless of its insistence on the compositional plasticity of mental states, it identifies "qualitative character" with "physical realization." Here we recognize the aforementioned identity theory, which leads us once again to the question whether the sensation-state is identical with the brain-state. The argument that Putnam deploys in *Reason, Truth, and History* against the identity theory is to question the possibility of *correlation* between brain events and sensations. Instead of defining *a priori* the correlation between events, "Functionalist Putnam" admitted that the relation between mental and computational properties is a "kind of synthetic identity." Such a notion, allows the functionalist

> to be able to say that not only is light passing through an aperture the same *event* as electromagnetic radiation passing through the aperture, but that the *property of being light* is the very same property as *the property of being electromagnetic radiation of such and such wavelengths*. (Putnam, 2012a: 610)

This synthetic identification of properties, of course, rejects the idea that properties can be said to be identical a priori, and such identification *"enables us to explain phenomena we would not otherwise be able to explain."* (Putnam, 2012a: 610) Thus, the failure of the identity and correlation theories to specify their results yields the conclusion that one cannot know objectively (as the metaphysical realist requires) if two thinking organisms share the same qualia. This is a feature of functionalism that Putnam clearly opposed during his internalist period, namely, because during this period he came to believe that *"mental states are not only compositionally plastic, but also* computationally plastic*."* (Putnam, 1988: 15) The *compositional* plasticity of mental states advocated by functionalism refers to the idea that feelings and emotions are not identical with brain states. The *computational* plasticity of mental states –which is not a feature of functionalism-, refers to the hypothesis that thinking creatures may have an

indefinite number of different programs, as opposed to the functionalist idea that our functional organization is limited to the program of a Turing machine. In other words, the fact that thinking organisms are computationally plastic has as a consequence that it is not possible for two organisms to share the same physical computation of a belief, which, amounts to a denial of the identity theory (that emotional and feeling episodes would have a brain physical correlative.) Thus, the criticisms put forward in the *Dewey Lectures* and after are not wholly to the point, since it is very clear in two of Putnam's main internalist writings (1981, 1987) that the functionalist aspects embraced by internal realism are not reductionist: *"The 'intentional level' is simply not reducible to the 'computational level' any more that it is to the 'physical level.'"* (Putnam, 1987: 15)

This same anti-reductionism concerning intentionality is found in another of Putnam's internalists books, *Representation and Reality* (1988). There, the reductionist character of functionalism is contrasted with the social character of the externalism adopted since "The Meaning of 'Meaning'", a character which has been present in the doctrines of internal realism as well as natural realism and liberal naturalism:

> Speaking at the level of spontaneous phenomenology, it is undeniable that we perceive one another as "thinking that the weather is muggy," "believing that she will miss her train," and so on. These are phenomenologically real conditions. But as soon as we ask whether a Thai speaker who believes that a "meew" is on a mat is in the same "psychological state" as an English speaker who believes a "cat" is on a mat, we run out of spontaneous phenomenology and begin to babble our favorite "theory." The reason, I think, is that we look in the wrong place. Rather than thinking of the propositional attitudes as having a phenomenological reality which springs from the possibility of asking oneself if one really got the other person or the text right, one looks for a

> reduction of the propositional attitudes to something that counts as more "basic" in one's system of scientific metaphysics. One looks for something definable in nonintentional terms, something isolable by scientific procedures, something one can build a model of, something which will explain intentionality. And this - the "mental process" - is just what does not exist. (Putnam, 1988: 73)

It is noteworthy to notice that in this quote Putnam is not rejecting phenomenology (as the natural realist seems to do). Nevertheless, he is adopting a *version* of a phenomenological approach which is not necessarily at home with the idea that perception is reduced to sense-data, or with the idea that intentionality is reducible to non-intentional terms. A similar point against the desire of formalization of intentionality inherent in functionalism is expressed by the aid of the same formal Godelian argument which was used in "Models and Reality," (cf. chapter 2 above):

> It is part of our notion of justification in general (not just of our notion of mathematical justification) that reason can go beyond whatever reason can formalize. If we look at the arguments deployed against functionalism (and various other "isms") […], we quickly see that they rest (or the "epistemological" arguments rest) on the same fact, though in a less formal way. The connection between the epistemological issues just mentioned and questions of reference and meaning is secured by the truth of meaning holism. […] [R]eference is not just a matter of "causal connections"; it is a matter of interpretation. […] And interpretation is an essentially holistic matter. (Putnam, 1988: 118-19)

As this paragraph makes clear, the issue of perception is not independent of the problem of truth: for the internal realist truth as justification is not reducible to formal equation,

as the different metaphysical doctrines would expect. To understand beliefs expressed in propositions, the internalist insists, one cannot simply think of causal connections of reference and expect to find their formalization –as functionalism expects-. Instead, internal realism places the burden of the argument on *our* conceptions of justification (cf. chapter 3) and on interpretation. Thus, the internalism of *Representation and Reality* insists that a *coherent* picture of the mind and intentionality must account for the phenomena of division of linguistic labor, contribution of the environment, meaning holism, objectivity and conceptual relativity:

> [T]o say that intentional phenomena are "objective" is not to say that they are independent of what human beings know or could find out (it is not to say that they are Objective with a capital "O," so to speak). If we take "truth" as our representative intentional notion, then to say that truth is objective (with a small "O") is just to say that it is a property of truth that whether a sentence is true is logically independent of whether a majority of the members of the culture believe it to be true. And this is not a solution to the grand metaphysical question of Realism or Idealism, but simply a feature of our notion of truth. (Putnam, 1988: 109)

Looking back to *The Many Faces of Realism* (1987), a book in which internal realism is advocated and proposed as an alternative to metaphysical realism, one also finds a defense of a commonsensical approach very close to natural realism. In a strikingly similar fashion to the natural realism of the *Dewey Lectures*, Putnam defends the commonsensical fact that *"[T]here* are *tables and chairs and ice cubes. There are also electrons and space-time regions and prime numbers and people who are a menace to world peace and moments of beauty and transcendence."* (Putnam, 1987: 16) This book serves as a warning against giving up commonsense realism and *"supposing that the*

seventeenth-century talk of 'external world' and 'sense impressions', 'intrinsic properties', 'projections', etc. was in any way a rescuer of our commonsense realism." (Putnam, 1987: 16-17) In this warning one finds a staunch opposition to the metaphysical "interface" approach to perception and the advocacy of a commonsensical approach. As the doctrine is expressed in this internalist writing, commonsense realism doesn't need the empiricist gambit of "sense impressions" to account for perception. Instead, that book defends an approach which takes some features of functionalism (that mental states are compositionally plastic) and some features of commonsense realism (we perceive directly material objects, not their sense impressions.)

To finish, it must be remarked that another striking similarity between internal and natural realism is to be found in the philosophers who are admitted as influencing both doctrines. In *The Many Faces of Realism*, Putnam acknowledges the insights of the philosophers who will later figure in the *Dewey Lectures* as the inspirers of natural realism. Thus, in *The Many Faces of Realism* we find an acknowledgment of the commonsensical realism of James, Husserl, Wittgenstein, and Austin:

> [I]f we allow that William James might have had something 'new' to say – something new to *us*, not just something new to his own time- or, at least, might have had a program for philosophy that is, in part, the right program, even if it has not been properly worked out yet (and may never be completely 'worked out'); if we allow that Husserl and Wittgenstein and Austin may have shared something of the same program, even if they too, in their different ways, failed to state it properly; the there is still something new, something *unfinished and important* to say about reality and truth. (Putnam, 1987: 17)

Internal and natural realism take important insights of this group of philosophers concerning the relationship between mind and world. Even though Putnam is very

reticent to include himself into any doctrine or school of thought, he takes from this group of philosophers a host of insights which have modelled his doctrines of internal and natural realism. As has been already said, these philosophers share with Putnam a certain mistrust towards systematization and reduction in philosophy and a preference for pluralism and commonsense. Both, the mistrust and the preference, as has been shown, find their expression in the doctrine of conceptual relativity, a doctrine shared by internal and natural realism.

5.6. Partial conclusions of this chapter

Both, internal realism and natural realism are alternatives to metaphysical realism and its different brands (particularly, Reductionism and Materialism). As we have seen in this chapter, the relationship between thought and reality is a mutual concern of the aforementioned doctrines. In the case of Materialism, it looked for a reductive explanation of the nature of mind and consciousness. However, this reductionist program seems very utopian, particularly considering that similar programs in physics – such as reducing color or solidity to fundamental physics- have proved impossible. Putnam's functionalism was proposed as an alternative to such Materialism, insisting that thinking beings are "compositionally plastic." Such alternative allows us to *"recognize that all sorts of logically possible 'systems' or beings could be conscious, exhibit mentality and affect, etc., in exactly the same sense without having the same matter."* (Putnam, 1987: 14) Taking into account that *at least* this aspect of functionalism is embraced by internal realism, the criticisms from the *Dewey Lectures* and beyond (particularly Putnam 2012a) don't seem to be taking internal realism at face

value, or at least, they seem to build a straw man argument which depicts internal realism as unquestioningly embracing functionalism and its reductionist consequences.

In this chapter I have tried to point to the similarities between internal realism and natural realism, not with the intention of saying that both doctrines are identical, but just with the goal of showing that Putnam's criticisms from the *Dewey Lectures* and beyond, against his former doctrine of internal realism are, to say the least, ungrounded. As I tried to show, internal realism, just as natural realism, is concerned with *rescuing* commonsense from the stranglehold of metaphysical realism:

> The key to working out the program of preserving commonsense realism while avoiding the absurdities and antinomies of metaphysical realism in all its familiar varieties (Brand X: Materialism; Brand Y: Subjective Idealism; Brand Z: Dualism…) is something I have called internal realism. Internal realism is, at bottom, just the insistence that realism is *not* incompatible with conceptual relativity. (Putnam, 1987: 17)

Internal and natural realism, though two different doctrines, are similar in their mutual acceptance of the doctrine of conceptual relativity. If there is something which Putnam hasn't given up since his internalist period is the idea of the "open texture" of an object, which allowed him to counter the metaphysical claim that the world consists of a closed and well-defined ontology, describable in the language of physics.

However, the problem of perception is not brought to bear directly on the issue of conceptual relativity, and maybe that is for the best. As we have seen in this chapter, Putnam has tried many different alternatives concerning perception. These constant changes of mind on the same issue, though reflecting a very open and honest spirit, also betray a bit of confusion and muddiness in Putnam. After reading this chapter, one cannot escape the thought that Putnam wasn't completely sure where he stood

concerning this difficult issue. For this reason, I propose a "methodological truce" concerning perception: given the muddiness of the issue, and given the fact that arguments from conceptual relativity can be used without having necessarily to rely on sense-data or a specific theory of perception, I propose that Putnam's stand concerning qualia and sameness of quality of sensations[54] be bracketed for the purposes of this chapter. Once we accept this charitable truce, the road seems less muddy for reaching the purposes of finding common ground between internal and natural realism.

A striking similarity between the two doctrines is their common mistrust on a full-blooded acceptance of sense-data (or qualia). Already in *Reason, Truth, and History* Putnam acknowledged that *"qualia are not well defined entities."* (Putnam, 1981: 100) Thus, *"for someone with an 'internalist' perspective on truth, it doesn't follow that there is a fact of the matter in every case as to whether two sensations are qualitatively similar or dissimilar."* (Putnam, 1981: 101) This same disbelief towards qualia and the qualitative similarity of sensations is found in *The Many Faces of Realism*, where Putnam admits that the right picture of the mind accepts the idea of computational plasticity of mental states (again, an element which doesn't figure in the doctrine of functionalism.)

As opposed to sense-data theories, the natural realism advocated by Putnam, and inspired by such figures as James, Wittgenstein, and Austin, insists on the *"needlessness and the unintelligibility of a picture that imposes an interface between ourselves and the world."* (Putnam, 1999: 41) In this chapter, I suggested that Putnam's criticisms against his former internal realism attack a straw man version of this doctrine, since they emphasize a supposed predilection for the "interface" approach; while in fact, if we read carefully Putnam's internalist writings (particularly his 1981, 1987, and

[54] Concerning these two topics, Putnam has shown a rather confusing approach, from ambivalence towards qualia (1981), to its abhorrence (1999), to its embrace (2012b).

1988), one would see that in such writings the approach to sense-data is ambivalent, and, what is more important, they defend a picture based on holism and meaning externalism which is very far from solipsism and reductionism.

Even in *Reason, Truth, and History*, Putnam already had serious doubts about the value of functionalism when it came to account for the qualitative character of sensations. What is striking is that the same doubts are expressed by Putnam in his Liberal Naturalist last period, in which he also doubts whether functionalism can account for the qualitative character of sensations. Therefore, the criticism made by Putnam in the *Dewey Lectures* against his former self concerning the "interface" approach is not fair, since, as was just mentioned, for internal realism, as well as for natural realism (and liberal naturalism), the status of qualia remain a rather diffuse issue. It is worth noticing, though, that in his commonsense realist period, Putnam accepts a version of Aristotelian functionalism according to which *"our psyches can best be viewed not as material or immaterial organs or things, but as capacities and functions and ways we are organized to function."* (Putnam, 2012a: 608) In this late period, it would seem that Putnam comes closer to his former doctrine of internal realism in the sense that such doctrine also emphasized the functional character of psychological states.

Therefore, it seems unfair to accuse internal realism with the charge that it naively embraces functionalism and sense-data, since in fact, just as natural realism, it seeks to preserve commonsense realism. In *The Many Faces of Realism* (an internalist book) one finds a very clear advocacy of the commonsensical approach where the emphasis is put on the *direct* perception of things, as opposed to the "interface" approach. In that book, internal realism is described as the *"key to working out the program of preserving commonsense realism while avoiding the absurdities and antinomies of metaphysical realism."* (Putnam, 1987: 18) Therefore, a commonsensical approach to perception

seems to be the common thread that unites internal and natural realism. The difference would be that internal realism still accepted the functionalist idea of compositional plasticity of mental states (while remaining ambivalent towards sense-data), whereas natural realism insists on the immediacy of perception -without necessarily explaining further how is this possible[55].

In his study of Putnam's philosophy, *Hilary Putnam: realism, reason, and the uses of uncertainty* (2002), Christopher Norris reaches a more or less similar conclusion to the one advocated here, namely that internal and natural realism have some important similarities. However, his argument is a negative one which states that Putnam's natural realism doesn't answer skeptical or realist claims, to the point that,

> [His] new theory is so thickly hedged about with qualifying clauses and disclaimers that [the Putnam of the *Dewey Lectures*] often sounds very much like [his internal realist counterpart], despite his avowed aim of putting a clearly marked distance between them. (Norris, 2002: 25)

According to Norris, the doctrines of internal realism and natural realism concur in their disdain for their metaphysical counterpart. Such shared disdain dictates

> the very terms of his argument by debarring any appeal to the kind of 'metaphysical' realism that would locate the conditions for our truth-apt statements in the way things actually stand with the world, rather than the way they happen to figure according to our current-best evidential warrant. (Norris, 2002: 31)

This shared rejection of metaphysical realism is also expressed in the rejection of a limit concerning the definition of objects and the possibility to know them. This is the mutual

[55] However, it is noteworthy that Putnam insists that his natural realism relies on the Wittgensteinian doctrine of meaning as use, which would suffice to account for the relationship between perception and understanding.

acceptance of conceptual relativity which was mentioned above. The internalist as well as the natural realist agree that *"there is just no way of assigning such limits to the totality of existing objects, properties, structures, etc., nor again (by the same token) to the totality of genuine referring expressions and veridical statements concerning them."* (Norris, 2002: 32) Therefore, both doctrines converge on the importance of conceptual relativity and conceptual pluralism. These approaches allow the internal and natural realist to avoid affirming, as the metaphysical realist does, that *there is* a fact of the matter as to whether sense-data exist or not. For the internal realist, at least, the question of the existence of sense-data is to be decided according to human interests and pragmatic procedures; in other words, such question just makes sense if assertibility of sense-data is warranted.

CONCLUSIONES GENERALES

En esta tesis he tratado de reconocer los méritos del realismo interno de Hilary Putnam, y, de cierta forma, salvar dicha doctrina de las críticas que su propio autor eventualmente le hiciera. Como se ha argumentado, el realismo interno no solo se enfrenta al realismo metafísico y el relativismo, sino que también responde a las críticas del realismo natural, críticas que culpan al realismo interno de ser una doctrina metafísica, materialista y solipsista. Espero haber mostrado por medio de esta tesis que dichas críticas son injustificadas, y que la doctrina del realismo interno es de hecho una alternativa atractiva y eficaz para la filosofía contemporánea.

Como se argumentó en el primer capítulo, las versiones de realismo metafísico allí presentadas tienen pretensiones *ontológicas* más no *epistemológicas*. Por lo tanto, lo que está en juego para tales enfoques es la afirmación de la totalidad de los objetos existentes y la forma en que éstos pueden ser descritos científicamente, y no la forma en que llegamos a conocerlos. De manera que, en el primer capítulo, se mostró que para los realistas el problema de la realidad no está ligado a modos de verificación o a la semántica, algo que Putnam contradice con su realismo interno.

Putnam identificó el realismo metafísico con la tesis que existe una totalidad fija de objetos que puede ser descrita en términos científicos. Su realismo interno es una respuesta efectiva a tal tesis por dos razones principales: en primer lugar, como se mostró en el capítulo 2 de ésta tesis, el argumento de la teoría de modelos presentado en "Models and Reality" (Putnam, 1983) –en el cual se presenta algo así como un *proto*-realismo interno- nos muestra que ni la formalización ni el reduccionismo del realista metafísico logran determinar una única relación de referencia entre las teorías y los objetos. En segundo lugar, la doctrina de la relatividad conceptual, presentada en el

capítulo 4, se opone efectivamente a la noción realista de *objetos fijos*, y en su lugar argumenta que la definición del término "objeto" no se determina a priori, sino por medio de los intereses y las convenciones humanas. Es así que el hecho que el realismo metafísico se encuentre expuesto a varias antinomias, como por ejemplo, el hecho que algunas versiones de dicho realismo defiendan la idea que ni siquiera las mejores teorías puedan acceder al mundo real, y la imposibilidad de establecer una única relación referencial de acuerdo a las exigencias realistas, nos obliga a buscar una mejor alternativa para interpretar la realidad. Para Putnam, el realismo interno fue brevemente tal alternativa.

El realismo interno es una alternativa filosófica que vale la pena considerar, entre otras razones, porque rechaza las dicotomías tradicionales que muchas veces han llevado a la filosofía a un callejón sin salida. Entre estas dicotomías encontramos la división entre mente y mundo, entre los conceptos y las experiencias. En el tercer capítulo vimos la forma en que el realismo interno rechaza las acusaciones que se le hacen en relación al solipsismo y el idealismo por el hecho de aceptar que la noción de la verdad requiere una *cierta coherencia* entre las experiencias y las creencias, y que dichas experiencias se encuentran, de cierta forma, mediadas por los conceptos que usamos. Por lo tanto, si bien la noción de percepción propia del realismo interno es ambivalente con respecto al estatus de los *sense-data*, ésta admite una estrecha interacción entre experiencias y conceptos. Contrario a las críticas hechas por Putnam en las *Conferencias Dewey* (1999), el realismo interno no adopta los enfoques empiristas o racionalistas de la percepción, según los cuales habría una división clara entre la mente y el mundo; en su lugar, el realismo interno insiste que la mente y el mundo son *expresiones* de la realidad y que la una no puede existir sin el otro. Tal como lo expresa Putnam en *Razón, Verdad, e Historia* (1981), *la mente y el mundo producen a la mente y el mundo*.

Espero haber mostrado en esta tesis *coherencia* en el realismo interno de Putnam. Dicha coherencia encuentra su expresión, entre otras características, en el enfoque de Putnam hacia la verdad como justificación, su interés por el externalismo semántico, y la relatividad conceptual: la idea Putnamiana de la verdad como justificación dependiente del lenguaje está ligada a la idea que los hechos son incomprensibles si se expresan en un lenguaje ajeno a su contexto. Por lo tanto, para el realista interno, en oposición al realista metafísico, no habría tales cosas como *hechos independientes del lenguaje*, sino más bien *hechos contextualizados* en lenguajes opcionales, tal como lo mostró el ejemplo de las sumas mereológicas. El hecho que podamos utilizar tales lenguajes opcionales es otra forma de atacar la doctrina metafísica según la cual existe una totalidad fija de objetos que puede ser únicamente descrita en el lenguaje científico. Como lo muestra el externalismo semántico, el significado de las palabras no debe buscarse en los estados mentales (como lo defiende el solipsismo), sino más bien es algo construido colectivamente que se advierte mediante su *uso*.

Por lo tanto, contrario a la idea que Putnam presenta en las *Conferencias Dewey* (y escritos posteriores) según la cual el realismo interno defiende el modelo de la "interface" en la percepción, en esta tesis espero haber mostrado que el realismo interno es un enfoque en el cual las dicotomías tradicionales de la filosofía son superadas en favor de un enfoque más holístico y coherente. Dicho enfoque propone una interacción entre conceptos y experiencias que se aleja por completo del dualismo Cartesiano, y en su lugar defiende la idea de que no tiene sentido, de un lado, hablar de hechos puros, libres de toda conceptualización, y de conceptos desligados de la realidad, del otro lado. Esto se expresó claramente en el tercer capítulo, donde se enfatizó que cuando el realista interno dice que la mente y el mundo son producto de la mente y el mundo, lo

que hace es contrastar la mente con un mundo de *experiencias y creencias*, y no sólo con experiencias sensitivas.

Otro de los objetivos de esta tesis fue el de hacer notar una cierta semejanza entre el realismo interno y el realismo natural. Un punto de encuentro entre ambos enfoques es su mutuo interés por el sentido común, el cual también se expresa en sus respectivas concepciones de la verdad. La concepción de la verdad adoptada por el realismo natural defiende la idea -*propia del sentido común*- según la cual, cuando aprendemos las reglas de un juego de lenguaje también aprendemos que existen ciertas frases que podemos comprender *mas no verificar*, y que este hecho no se explica recurriendo a razones metafísicas y transcendentales, sino que se explica en razón de las reglas mismas del juego de lenguaje. Por su lado, el verificacionismo semántico fue una de las razones que llevó a Putnam a abandonar el realismo interno, pues, a diferencia del realismo natural, el realismo interno sostiene que la verdad se relaciona con la aseverabilidad bajo condiciones epistemológicas "ideales," y, según la crítica de Putnam, dichas condiciones serían expresiones del cartesianismo y el materialismo. En esta tesis traté de argumentar que las nociones que sobre la verdad sostienen el realismo natural y el realismo interno no son incompatibles, pues ambas enfatizan el sentido común y la normatividad social de los juegos de lenguaje. Sin embargo, como se mostró en el último capítulo, el realismo interno no deja de ser ambivalente con respecto a los sense-data, lo cual es un error que da fácilmente lugar a críticas, tal como lo hace Putnam en sus *Conferencias Dewey*. En los últimos capítulos de la tesis se defiende la idea que este error –aunque grave y problemático-, debe hacerse a un lado y minimizar su importancia con respecto a la totalidad de la doctrina del realismo interno para así enfatizar sus aspectos sociales y holísticos. El verificacionismo del realismo interno (una vez desprovisto de los aspectos más problemáticos sobre la percepción) debe

entenderse como un enfoque del sentido común basado en los intereses y las convenciones humanas. Tal como se dijo al final del tercer capítulo, éste verificacionismo va de la mano de los juegos de lenguaje, en el sentido que el criterio para comprender y verificar la verdad de un enunciado no debe buscarse por fuera del juego de lenguaje (desde una *vista privilegiada*), sino que tal criterio hace parte del juego de lenguaje mismo. Por lo tanto, en vez de reconocer el mutuo interés de ambas doctrinas por el sentido común, el Putnam de las *Conferencias Dewey* se acerca al realismo metafísico al exigirle al realismo interno criterios objetivos con respecto a la verificación.

De manera que, al contrario de lo que Putnam sostiene en las *Conferencias Dewey*, lejos de ser una doctrina solipsista, el realismo interno es un enfoque social que, en oposición al funcionalismo, admite el externalismo semántico. Es por esto que Putnam sostiene que

> no es posible individualizar conceptos o creencias sin referencia al ambiente que las rodea; los significados no se encuentran "en la cabeza". El resultado de esta discusión para la filosofía de la mente es que las actitudes proposicionales, como suelen llamarlas los filósofos, es decir, ese tipo de cosas como la creencia que la nieve es blanca y la certeza de que hay un gato sobre el tapiz-, no son "estados" del cerebro humano y su sistema nervioso considerados por fuera del contexto social y no-humano. Por lo tanto, éstos no son "estados funcionales"- es decir, estados que se puedan definir en términos de parámetros que quepan en la descripción del software del organismo. El Funcionalismo, interpretado como la tesis que las actitudes proposicionales simplemente son estados computacionales de la mente no puede ser correcto. (Putnam, 1988: 73)

El rechazo de Putnam a sus propias doctrinas (como en el caso del funcionalismo) ha llevado a muchos a criticar su filosofía y no tomarla en serio. En contra de tales críticas, vale la pena señalar algunos ejemplos, como la relatividad conceptual y el interés por el sentido común, los cuales han estado presentes en los escritos de Putnam desde su período como realista interno hasta sus últimos escritos sobre el naturalismo liberal. El realismo interno se aproxima al realismo natural en cuanto a su rechazo de la tentación metafísica de considerar la existencia fija de los objetos como un hecho objetivo. Ambos enfoques defienden el realismo del sentido común y adoptan la idea que las cuestiones de la existencia dependen también de juicios y convenciones humanas. Por lo tanto, en vez de buscar una razón objetiva que de una vez por todas decida si, por ejemplo, los "qualia" existen o no (o afirmar que éstos pertenecen a un esquema conceptual *secundario*), tanto el realista interno como el natural toman inspiración del pluralismo y afirman que cada sensación tiene un *carácter cualitativo diferente y plural*. El realismo del sentido común, lejos de ser una doctrina basada en conceptos a priori y una ontología fija, se aproxima a la idea internalista según la cual

> el nuestro es un mundo humano, de ahí que las cuestiones sobre lo que es consciente o no, sobre lo que tiene o no sensaciones, y sobre lo que es o no cualitativamente similar, dependan en última instancia de nuestros juicios humanos sobre la similitud y la diferencia. (Putnam, 1981: 102)

El mismo punto se expresa con respecto al problema de la conciencia, pues encontramos grandes semejanzas de ambas doctrinas en lo que se refiere a la crítica de la Teoría de la Identidad (vista en el último capítulo). De hecho, ambas doctrinas afirman que

> no existe un hecho objetivo con respecto a que ciertas entidades sean o no conscientes, ni que las cualidades sean o no objetivamente las mismas o diferentes. Solo existen los obvios hechos empíricos: que las rocas y las

> naciones son bastante diferentes de las personas y los animales; que los robots, en toda su variedad, son objetos intermedios; etc. El hecho que ni las rocas ni las naciones tengan conciencia es un hecho acerca de nuestra noción de la conciencia. (Putnam, 1981: 102)

Tal como lo muestran los anteriores pasajes, las inescapables preguntas que tanto han ocupado a la filosofía, tales como la verdad, la justificación, y la existencia, deben decidirse haciendo referencia a los intereses y las convenciones humanas, y no por referencia a principios transcendentales. Una doctrina relacionada con el realismo interno que expresa muy bien este último punto es el externalismo semántico, doctrina la cual –junto con la relatividad conceptual- ha sobrevivido los constantes cambios en la filosofía de Putnam. El externalismo semántico fue uno de los principales argumentos que convenció a Putnam para abandonar el funcionalismo. La incompatibilidad entre ambas doctrinas llevó a Putnam a buscar un enfoque más social y holístico para su filosofía de la mente; tal enfoque encuentra su expresión en el carácter justificativo de la verdad y en el aspecto social de la referencia defendido por el realismo interno. En esta tesis he defendido la idea que dichos aspectos sociales y holísticos hacen del realismo interno una alternativa válida para la filosofía contemporánea. Es una pena que el mismo Putnam no supiera reconocer este valor del realismo interno, pues en sus últimos escritos se defiende el mismo enfoque:

> Si, tal como lo afirmé en "El Significado de 'Significado'", nuestros estados mentales intencionales no están en nuestras cabezas, sino más bien, deben concebirse como habilidades que implican el mundo, habilidades identificadas con las transacciones que éstas permiten con el ambiente, entonces dichos estados no se identifican simplemente con el "software" de la mente. (Putnam, 2012b: 25)

En estos últimos escritos Putnam parece ignorar el hecho que ellos coinciden con sus escritos internalistas en el rechazo a las doctrinas metafísicas y solipsistas, tales como el funcionalismo. Sin embargo, en dichos escritos posteriores pareciera como si Putnam quisiera reconciliar dos doctrinas incompatibles, pues defiende el realismo del sentido común al mismo tiempo que acepta la existencia de los *qualia* como una hipótesis metodológica (inspirado por el artículo de 2007 de Ned Block.) De igual manera, en uno de sus últimos escritos (en respuesta a la tesis de McDowell que la experiencia es conceptual), Putnam acepta que las cualidades fenomenológicas de las sensaciones pueden ser compartidas por varias personas:

> No veo ninguna razón para dudar que un niño de dos o tres años (o incluso un neo-nato) experimente el calor y el dolor al igual que yo lo hago; o, para ser más precisos, no veo ninguna razón para dudar que la cualidad fenomenológica de dicha experiencia sea la misma que cuando el niño crezca. (Putnam, 2012b: 348)

Esta afirmación contradice lo dicho en las *Conferencias Dewey* en lo concerniente a la inmediatez de la percepción, donde se afirma que percibimos las propiedades de los objetos y no sus cualidades fenoménicas. Esta contradicción, por lo tanto, se suma a la evidencia que se ha tratado de mostrar en esta tesis: existen grandes semejanzas entre el realismo interno y el realismo natural (ambos rechazan la idea que lo que percibimos son *qualia*), y ambas doctrinas rechazan la afirmación funcionalista que los estados mentales no son computacionalmente plásticos. De igual manera, ambas doctrinas rechazan también la idea que dos personas puedan tener el mismo estado físico computacional. Por estas razones, el giro de Putnam hacia el funcionalismo liberal (en sus artículos en 2012a y b) deja sobre la mesa preguntas más difíciles de responder que aquellas planteadas por el realismo interno: ¿es que el hecho de aceptar en sus escritos

del naturalismo liberal la identidad de la cualidad de las experiencias le lleva por ende a aceptar también una tesis similar a la de la "interface" con respecto de la percepción? De igual forma, ¿es posible reconciliar la afirmación naturalista de Putnam que percibimos directamente las propiedades de los objetos con la afirmación de la existencia de los sense-data? Desafortunadamente Putnam no vivió lo suficiente para responder satisfactoriamente a estos interrogantes; sin embargo, la totalidad de sus escritos, *considerados como un intento para comprender la relación entre la mente y la realidad*, son una invitación a la reflexión para las futuras generaciones de filósofos.

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ANEXO

A continuación anexo mi artículo “Is Putnam’s internal realism solipsist?”, publicado en la revista *Universitas Philosophica, 32* (64), Bogotá Jan./June 2015, disponible en línea: http://www.scielo.org.co/scielo.php?script=sci_arttext&pid=S01205323201500010018

La razón por la que este artículo es anexado a la tesis es por que complementa y profundiza lo dicho en el capítulo 3 acerca de la verdad y la trascendencia de la justificación.

IS PUTNAM'S INTERNAL REALISM SOLIPSISTIC?

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ABSTRACT

In this essay I claim that Hilary Putnam's recent rejection of his former doctrine of internal realism as solipsistic is a misfired claim. Putnam's rejection of his early doctrine is illustrated by the criticism of his own verificationist account of truth and justification, which is based on the counterfactual conditional: "S is true if and only if believing S is justified if epistemic conditions are good enough". By accepting that whatever makes it rational to believe that S also makes it rational to believe that S would be justified were conditions good enough, Putnam concludes that the verificationist unavoidably steers between solipsism and metaphysical realism. As opposed to this, I claim that Putnam's later criticism of his own internal realism fails to acknowledge the pragmatic side of this philosophical approach; namely, the idea that, regardless the close relation between truth and justification, not all sentences in a language game are to be understood in a verificationist fashion. Thus, the understanding of the counterfactual "S would be justified if epistemic conditions were good enough" doesn't call for a verificationist reading, which, as Putnam claims, yields solipsism, but rather, for a pragmatic approach which emphasizes on the non-formality of language understanding.

Key words: Putnam; realism; pragmatism; truth; correspondence

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¿ES SOLIPSISTA EL REALISMO INTERNO DE PUTNAM?

JAVIER TORO

RESUMEN

En este ensayo sostengo que el reciente rechazo de Putnam de su primera doctrina del realismo interno como solipsista es un argumento fallido. Este rechazo viene ilustrado por la crítica de su propia explicación verificacionista de la verdad y la justificación, que se basa en el condicional contrafáctico: "S es verdadero si y solo si creer que S se justifica si las condiciones epistémicas son suficientemente buenas". Al aceptar que lo que hace racional creer que S también hace racional creer que S se justifica si las condiciones son suficientemente buenas, Putnam concluye que el verificacionista inevitablemente oscila entre el solipsismo y el realismo metafísico. En oposición a esto, sostengo que la última crítica de Putnam a su propio realismo interno falla en reconocer el lado pragmático de su propuesta filosófica; a saber, la idea de que, sin importar la relación tan estrecha entre verdad y justificación, no todas las oraciones de un juego de lenguaje se deben entender de un modo verificacionista. En consecuencia, la comprensión del contrafáctico "S se justifica si las condiciones epistémicas son suficientemente buenas", no exige una lectura verificacionista, la cual, como Putnam sostiene, conduce al solipsismo sino, más bien, da lugar a un acercamiento pragmático que enfatiza la no formalidad en la comprensión del lenguaje.

Palabras clave: Putnam; realismo; pragmatismo; verdad; correspondencia

IN A RECENTLY PUBLISHED REVIEW OF HILARY PUTNAM'S latest book *Philosophy in an Age of Science*, Jerry Fodor writes: "it would take at least two workaday philosophers to keep up with Hilary Putnam" (Fodor 2013: 30). As extreme as that sounds, Fodor is not exaggerating when he also says that Putnam is one among the few philosophers who can say important things about "the philosophical interpretation of quantum mechanics, the philosophy of mind, the philosophy of language, the philosophy of mathematics, philosophical ethics (analytic and otherwise), and the debate between solipsists, phenomenologists and realists about the epistemological and metaphysical status of 'external' objects" (Fodor 2013: 30). Without necessarily being one of Fodor's "workaday philosophers" trying to keep up with Putnam's work in each and every one of these areas, I will address in this essay one of the topics to which Putnam has shown a good deal of concern in his latest publications, namely, the relation between solipsism and his former doctrine of internal realism.

In his latest book, *Philosophy in an Age of Science* (2012), as well as in recent publications[1], Putnam has repented from his doctrine of internal realism because, as he came to see it, it amounted to a Cartesian epistemological picture that ultimately becomes solipsistic. In fact he admits that:

> On a verificationist account of understanding […] the only substantive notion of correctness available to a thinker is that of being verified. If that is the only notion of correctness that my 'mind/brain' is supposed to be able to use […] then my talk about other people is only intelligible to me as a device for making statements that are or will be verified by my experiences. (Putman 2012: 79)

Since verificationism, as now Putnam sees it, renders internal realism solipsistic, he has come to reject the coherence of this doctrine. Such rejection has led him into the adoption of *natural realism* (inspired by William James), namely, the pragmatist idea which insists that objects are perceived immediately and corrigibly (as opposed to inferentially through sense data)[2].

As opposed to Putnam himself, I will argue that his former doctrine of internal realism is an anti-skeptical doctrine, which is more in accordance to the main tenets of pragmatism than his recent writings are. Thus, under this interpretation, internal realism, by adopting a justificationist approach to beliefs and truth, not only becomes an alternative to the metaphysical realism opposed both by Putnam and the classical pragmatists, but also becomes a relevant account of belief construction.

Of course, one cannot ignore the many criticisms that have fallen upon internal realism (Devitt 1984 Putnam, 1990, 1999, 2012). In this essay I follow Putnam's criticism of his former talk about qualia (Putnam 1999), which was supposed to afford the "ideal epistemic conditions" in internal realism. Though now he accepts the possibility of such talk (Putnam 2012), what he said about this topic in his *Threefold Cord* seems very relevant. Therefore, since the topic of Putnam's drifting attitude towards mental qualia is so vast, in this essay I will simply take for granted that the criticisms of *The Threefold Cord* against the meaningfulness of the internal realist's talk about qualia are much to the point.

Thus, keeping in mind that internal realism is far from being a perfect doctrine –which, by the way, more than a *doctrine*, like pragmatism, would be a *philosophical attitude*–, in this

[1] See especially Putnam 1999, 2007, and the responses in Baghramian 2012.
[2] See "James's Theory of Perception", in Putnam 1990.

essay I will insist that Putnam's rejection of his former doctrine and his charges of solipsism are misfired.

1.

PUTNAM'S "INTERNAL REALISM" DEFENDS THE IDEA THAT "elements of what we call 'language' or 'mind' penetrate so deeply into what we call 'reality' that the very project of representing ourselves as being 'mappers' of something 'language-independent' is fatally compromised from the very start." (Putnam 1990: 28) This philosophical approach, which started with his 1978 article "Realism and Reason", and finished around the publication of his collection of essays in *Realism With a Human Face*, in 1990, was meant to be a reaction against the "strangle hold which a number of dichotomies appear to have on the thinking of both philosophers and laymen. Chief among these is the dichotomy between objective and subjective views of truth and reason." (Putnam 1981: ix). The main *objective view of truth and reason* that Putnam opposed with his internal realism was Metaphysical Realism, the doctrine which holds that "the world consists of some fixed totality of mind-independent objects. There is exactly one true and complete description of 'the way the world is'. Truth involves some sort of correspondence relation between words or thought-signs and external things and sets of things." (Putnam 1981: 49) As opposed to this, internal realism holds that the question "what objects does the world consist of? is a question that it only makes sense to ask within a theory or description." (Ibid.)

However, internal realism, for Putnam, was a short-lived approach to philosophy. Around 1990 (in the "Response to Simon Blackburn", in Putnam 1994), he started to find flaws in this doctrine and began to move towards, what he calls, "natural realism", inspired by William James's radical empiricism. In different places[3], Putnam has described internal realism as a position which commits itself to the metaphysical doctrines which was supposed to combat. For example, the heart of internal realism, as Putnam claims, was verificationist semantics, inspired by Michael Dummett; in Putnam's version of that semantics "truth, was identified with verifiability under epistemically ideal conditions." (Putnam 2012: 25) Thus, according to the Dummettian view of verificationist semantics, which Putnam accepted, "to grasp the meaning of a statement is to know what would justify asserting it or denying it." (Dummett 2004: 114) The core of the problem is related with the referential access to and justification of such *epistemically ideal conditions* for, under the internalist picture, "the world was allowed to determine whether I am in a sufficiently good epistemic situation or only seem to myself to be in one." (Putnam 2012: 25) For Putnam, such situation presupposes the Cartesian dualism – which he has always rejected– between a passive observer and the World. Putnam eventually abandoned this internalist picture because it relied on two epistemic features which he came to reject: the idea of conceptual schemes as being the only reality of which we can speak of, and the acceptance of *sense data* or *qualia* as the main elements of perception:

> On my alternative picture the world was allowed to determine whether I actually am in a sufficiently good epistemic situation or whether I only seem to myself to be in one –thus retaining an important idea from commonsense realism– but the conception of an epistemic situation was, at bottom, just the traditional epistemological one. My picture still retained the basic premise of an interface between the knower and everything 'outside.' (Putnam 1999: 18)

[3] For example, Putnam 1994 "Comments and Replies"; Putnam 1999 "The Threefold Cord"; and Putnam 2012, "From Quantum Mechanics to Ethics and Back Again."

The importance of such mental qualia was that, on the internalist picture, it served as the basis for the conceptualization of reality:

> On the 'internal realist' picture it is not only our experiences (conceived of as 'sense data') that are an interface between us and the world; our 'conceptual schemes' were likewise conceived of as an interface. And the two 'interfaces' were related: our ways of conceptualizing, our language games, were seen by me as controlled by 'operational constraints' which ultimately reduce to our sense data. (Putnam 2012: 26)

Thus, in his 1994 Dewey Lectures, Putnam rejected internal realism because, as he then saw it, it used conceptual schemes and sense data as an interface between the mind and reality. According to him, all we could know under internalist constraints were linguistic constructions based on unverifiable mental qualia. For this reason, Putnam has abandoned the internalist picture and has adopted instead the Jamesian doctrine of natural realism; a doctrine which sees us "as open to the world, as interacting with the world in ways that permit aspects of it to reveal themselves to us." (Putnam 2012: 27)

Nevertheless, Putnam has recently accepted that talk of mental qualia makes good sense, and thus, his rejection of internal realism now centers on charges of solipsism and lack of public intelligibility.

2.

IN A RECENTLY PUBLISHED ARTICLE CALLED "Corresponding with Reality", Putnam claims that his internal realism, due to the solipsism of its "verificationist semantics", "far from being an intelligible alternative to a supposedly unintelligible *metaphysical realism*, can itself possess no public intelligibility." (Putnam 2012: 80) The reason is that, as Putnam now sees the issue, verificationist semantics restricts the range of justification to those sentences which can be verified only by *me*, leaving no room for intersubjectivity. As he admits, though, in *Reason, Truth, and History* he was already aware of such danger, and thus, in that book he defined "an intersubjective notion of truth in terms of verification ("justification") thus: S is true if and only if believing S would be justified if epistemic conditions were good enough." (Putnam 2012: 79) But, as the criticism goes, according to this sort of verificationism, understanding a sentence amounts to understanding a counterfactual that confirms it:

> Let us suppose, as seems reasonable, that whatever makes it rational to believe that S makes it rational to believe that S would be justified were conditions good enough. If my understanding of the counterfactual "S would be justified if conditions were good enough" is exhausted by my capacity to tell to what degree it is justified to assert it, as my "verificationist semantics" claimed, and that is always the same as the degree to which it is justified to assert S itself, then I might as well have simply said that my understanding of S is just my capacity to tell what confirms S. (Putnam 2012: 79)

By equating the understanding of a sentence to the "internal" capacity to decide on its confirmation, verificationst semantics, the core of internal realism, becomes a solipsistic option. Thus, as Putnam came to see it, internal realism is a solipsistic doctrine because it accepts that what makes a statement true is also supposed to be what the statement means, in other words, my *understanding* of S is just my *capacity* to tell what confirms S to what degree. It is in this way that, according to Putnam, internal realism (and verificationism) conflates meaning and justification: if the meaning of a statement is exhausted by my capacity to tell what justifies it, then, by restricting the meaning of sentences to individual means of justification, one falls into solipsism. The problem of solipsism, so present in philosophy since the Cartesian *cogito*, is an

unacceptable position for the pragmatist or the internal realist. It is unacceptable because it implies that the meaning of words is determined by internal and individual criteria, and not by social criteria. Therefore, such arguments like the Cartesian *cogito* and the Brains in a Vat argument[4], do not reflect the importance that intersubjectivity has for internal realism.

In what follows I will argue that such criticism of internal realism is misfired, since Putnam wrongly equates the understanding of a *fact (S)* with the understanding of a *counterfactual (1)* "S would be justified if epistemic conditions were good enough". More than committing a logical blunder –which is almost unthinkable in the case of Putnam–, I will argue that his later rejection of his former doctrine of internal realism overlooks the importance of *pragmatist holism*, namely, the idea that the knowledge of certain specific rules of language games is a necessary condition for the belief of certain facts.

Both, in the above cited article, as well as in his article "Between Scylla and Charybdis: Does Dummett Have a Way Through?" published in the volume *The Philosophy of Michael Dummett*, Putnam conflates the meaning of counterfactual (1) with the meaning of S, which is obviously not the case. To see how he comes to this conclusion, let's inquire what does it mean that the verificationist, according to Putnam, is trapped by solipsism by accepting that his understanding of S is the same as his capacity to tell what confirms S.

For Putnam it is reasonable to suppose "that whatever makes it rational to believe that S makes it rational to believe that S would be justified were conditions good enough." (Putnam 2007: 162) But, he continues, this apparently "reasonable" claim leads the verificationist straight into solipsism:

> If my understanding of the counterfactual "S would be justified if conditions were good enough" is *exhausted* by my capacity to tell to what degree it is justified to assert it, and that is always the same as the degree to which it is justified to assert S itself, why did I bother to mention the counterfactual at all? Why did I not just say that my understanding of S is just my capacity to tell what confirms S to what degree, *full stop*? (Ibid.)

According to this, the counterfactual (1) "S would be justified if conditions were good enough", is equated to S itself, which is a very long stretch. What Putnam fails to see is that (1) is a *condition* for S, not the other way around: let us suppose that S stands for the belief in the existence of saber-toothed tigers 30.000 years ago (an example of Putnam's). Then, according to verificationist semantics, S would be true if it is justified by epistemic conditions such as the acceptance of archeological evidence, the fossil record and all the scientific knowledge which surrounds such evidence. However, at the same time, S is *indirectly* justified by the understanding and acceptance of (1) as an epistemic principle, *not the other way around:* the capacity to tell to which degree it is justified to assert (1) is not the same as the degree to which it is justified to assert S. That (1) is a condition of S, and not the other way around, is clear because one cannot meaningfully say that "The belief in the existence of saber-toothed tigers 30.000 years ago would be justified if epistemic conditions were good enough" is true if and only if *the belief in the existence of saber-toothed tigers 30.000 years ago* is true.

What makes the belief in the existence of saber-toothed tigers 30.000 years ago true –according to the verificationist– is the understanding that such belief would be true if and only if epistemic conditions were good enough.

[4] See Putnam 1981.

Then, as was shown, the capacity to tell to which degree it is justified to assert (1) is not exhausted by the capacity to tell to which degree it is justified to assert S. The verificationist expects that all true beliefs are justified; but what justifies my belief in a *fact* S is not the same as that which justifies my belief in *counterfactual* (1). Ultimately, of course, both are justified linguistically, but that is not what is at stake here. What is at stake is the charge that verificationism is solipsistic because it equates the meaning of sentences with their internal justification, which, as we have seen, amounts to the conflating of the capacity to tell to which degree it is justified to assert S with the capacity to tell to which degree it is justified to assert (1).

Now, however, we must face the question whether verificationist semantics is itself justified according to its own standards[5]. In other words, since what renders true and justifies the belief in every sentence S is the acceptance of the counterfactual (1), which asserts that S is justified if conditions are good enough; then, what justifies the belief in counterfactual (1)? It seems rather strange to justify the statement "a sentence is justified if epistemic conditions are good enough" by saying that what justifies it is that a statement is justified if epistemic conditions are good enough! Thus, trying to justify (1) by appealing to (1) itself leads us to a circular argumentation.

In *Reason, Truth, and History,* Putnam says that "a non-realist or 'internal' realist regards conditional statements as statements which we understand (like all other statements) in large part by grasping their justification conditions." (1981: 122) Therefore, like all other statements which are justified by their epistemic conditions, we accept (1) for its epistemic conditions. The problem is that (1) is itself the very "principle" which says that a statement is justified due to its epistemic conditions. We are facing here something similar to a Convention-T sort of sentence: "S is justified if conditions are good enough" is true if and only if S is justified if conditions are good enough. It is this sort of coherentism –criticized by Putnam long ago in his Model Theoretic Argument (Putnam 1983)– which makes him now believe that his former doctrine of internal realism is solipsistic. Thus, in his latest writings, Putnam has found that for the verificationist there is no way out of this coherentism, and therefore verificationism amounts to solipsism. In what follows, I will argue that statements such as (1) are not to be understood as principles in need of verification, but rather as *pragmatic conditions* for our linguistic practices; then, the only possible option that the verificationist has for her belief in (1) is a *non* verificationist way, a pragmatic way.

3.

AS WE HAVE JUST SEEN, THE CONDITIONAL *"S would be justified if conditions were good enough"* is not to be understood as the meaning of S itself, as the later Putnam pretends, but rather, as a *pragmatic condition* for the meaning of S. Such move, as was explained above, avoids the charges of solipsism which Putnam levels against his former doctrine of internal realism. However, as we just pointed out, such conditional cannot be itself understood in a verificationist way, since it would end up in a circular argumentation. To see a possible (non-solipsist and non-circular) way to understand such conditional I propose to approach it pragmatically.

[5] Putnam has enquired in a similar fashion the question whether the positivist's principle of verification is itself verifiable according to positivist standards. See Putnam 1983 "Philosophers and human understanding"; and Putnam 1992.

Both, in his 2007 and his 2012, Putnam reminds us that by the time he wrote *Reason, Truth, and History,* and defined truth as idealized justification, he wasn't aware of the solipsist "dilemma" of conflating the meaning of a sentence with its assertability conditions. Nevertheless, in that book, not only he mentions that the "'internal' realist regards conditional statements as statements which we understand (like all other statements) in large part by grasping their justification conditions" (Putnam 1981: 122), but also emphasizes that such justification conditions are objective: as opposed to the "methodological solipsist" and relativist, the internalist position

> assumes an objective notion of rational acceptability. The non-realist rejects the notion that truth is correspondence to a 'ready-made world'. That is what makes him a non –(metaphysical)– realist. But rejecting the metaphysical 'correspondence' theory of truth is not at all the same as regarding truth or rational acceptability as subjective … The whole purpose of relativism, its very defining characteristic, is, however, to deny the existence of any intelligible notion of objective 'fit'[6]. Thus the relativist cannot understand talk about truth in terms of objective justification-conditions. (Putnam 1981: 123)

Thus, the internalist understanding of conditionals depends on an objective notion of rational acceptability, which, of course, is different from a correspondence theory of truth. However, we may ask, if the internalist is not assuming a metaphysical correspondence between language and reality, then, what is this notion of "objective fit" which he assumes and the solipsist and relativist deny?

Unfortunately, in *Reason, Truth, and History,* Putnam doesn't give a clear and satisfactory answer to this question. The closest he gets is by emphasizing that truth, rather than correspondence to facts, is idealized assertability. But, since the notion of idealized assertability implies the very notions of verificationist semantics and conditionals which we are trying to understand, it seems that such an answer won't take us very far. However, in his *Pragmatism: An Open Question,* Putnam rehearses an answer which I think is on the right track. In the chapter called "Was Wittgenstein a Pragmatist?", Putnam criticizes philosophers like Richard Rorty, Michael Williams, and Paul Horwich, who, according to him, read Wittgenstein as supporting the idea that language use is based on definite criteria. Thus, "the heart of Rorty's reading of [Wittgensteinian language games] is his comparison of criteria with programs… Rorty sees language games as virtually automatic performances." (Putnam 1995: 33-4) Although not very far from Rorty's approach to language games,

> [o]n Horwich's view, a language game is to be understood as consisting of sentences for which (if we confine attention to assertoric language) there are 'assertability conditions'. These conditions specify that under certain observable conditions a sentence counts as true or at least as 'confirmed'… Note that this account differs from Rorty's only in that the 'criteria' which govern our use of words provide (in some cases) for degrees of assertability less than certainty. Still, speakers who understand their language in the same way and who have the same evidence should all agree on the degree of assertability of their sentences, in this model, just as in Rorty's. (Putnam 1995: 45-6)

This paragraph makes us wonder if, due to the emphasis on the degree of assertability of sentences, such *positivistic* interpretation of Wittgenstein (as Putnam calls it) parallels the internalist account. The main difference between this positivistic reading of Wittgenstein and Putnam's own pragmatist reading (which, as I claim, amounts to his internal realism) is that the first account takes sentences as marks and noises, for which assertability is separated from truth: under certain observable conditions a sentence counts as true. As opposed to this, Putnam's

[6] Here Putnam is making reference to Nelson Goodman's idea of versions fitting with worlds. See: Goodman, 1978.

pragmatist reading of Wittgenstein insists on the idea that "the use of the words in a language game cannot be described without using concepts which are related to the concepts employed *in* the game." (Putnam 1995: 46) This means that language games are not ruled by a definite set of criteria, a set which, if one pays attention enough, one would learn how to use; but rather, that language games are self-contained forms of life:

> Someone who doesn't see the 'point' of the language game, and who cannot imaginatively put himself in the position of an engaged player, cannot judge whether the 'criteria' are applied reasonably or unreasonably… *Understanding a language game is sharing a form of life.* And forms of life cannot be described in a fixed positivistic meta-language… (Putnam 1995: 47-8)

Whereas the positivistic reading of Wittgenstein takes criteria to be exterior to the language game, as some external *aid* we use when it comes to understand language games, Putnam's pragmatist reading of Wittgenstein sees language games as forms of life which cannot be described without using the same concepts which are internal to the game itself. That is why someone who cannot *imaginatively put himself in the position of an engaged player cannot judge whether the 'criteria' are applied* reasonably *or unreasonably.* Under this interpretation, the idea that assertability conditions are external to the truth of statements is ruled out. For Putnam, assertability and truth are *internally related notions*:

> To know under what conditions a statement (not a 'sentence') is assertable is to know under what conditions it is true or liable to be true. The idea that assertability conditions are conditions for making a noise is a total distortion of Wittgenstein's meaning. 'Assertability' and 'truth' are internally related notions: one comes to understand both by standing inside a language game, seeing its 'point', and judging assertability and truth. (Putnam 1995: 48-9)

If the assertability conditions of a statement are not separated from its truth, then, it doesn't make sense trying to apply separate criteria to statements in general, which would be an unnecessary and artificial move. In order to understand the statements of every language game one must stand inside it and know that the truth of one's words are related to their assertability conditions, to the effect that both are to be judged uniformly. Of course, as verificationist semantics shows, every language game has *internal rules* which one must follow, and one such internal rule of our language game is that we pragmatically accept that a statement is justified if conditions are good enough. This rule of our language game, together with all our other cognitive ideals, "only makes sense considered as part of our idea of human flourishing" (Putnam 1995: 43)

4.

NOW WE ARE IN A BETTER POSITION TO UNDERSTAND PUTNAM'S internalist conditional that "S is justified if epistemic conditions are good enough". We said above that such conditional couldn't be understood in a verificationist fashion, since it would imply a circular argumentation. In the same way, the positivistic reading of Wittgenstein which Putnam criticizes doesn't help in understanding sentences like "S is justified if epistemic conditions are good enough" because the meaning of the sentence itself makes reference to a principle of justification conditions for sentences. As was pointed above, establishing assertability conditions or criteria for such a sentence leads us into a circular argumentation; thus the need to understand such sentence *non-criterially*. Putnam's reading of Wittgenstein affords us with the possibility to understand such conditionals in a pragmatist way: one can only understand the conditional that a statement is justified if conditions are good enough if one *shares* a certain language game. Strangely enough, in "Corresponding With Reality" (in his 2012), the very article in which Putnam charges internal realism of being solipsist, he himself, towards the end,

reminds us the importance of Wittgensteinian "imponderable evidence" (as he did in his *Pragmatism: An Open Question*) when it comes to justification. As Putnam sees it, "[not] only what is shaped like a proposition can justify a proposition." (Putnam 2012: 89) Thus, the criteria of verification for the internal realist is not limited only to propositions, but it is open to other means of verification. By asking to criterially justify the convention of our language game, which asserts that a statement is justified if conditions are good enough, Putnam seems to ignore his own pragmatist reading of Wittgenstein. This interpretation seems to be also in line with Putnam's approval[7] of what Stanley Cavell (in a very pragmatist tone, reminiscent of Peirce) has said about skepticism and justification, namely that in order to understand language games and avoid skepticism, one must be *attuned* in them.[8]

This is actually not very far from Michael Dummett's account of justification through language learning: "when we acquire the practice of using language, what we learn is what is taken to justify assertions of different types." (Dummett 2004: 114) Internal realism, far from being the solipsist doctrine which Putnam now claims it to be, gives us a clue to *our* justificatory practices by pointing out to one of *our* more accepted rules of justification, namely, the condition that a statement is justified if the epistemological conditions for stating it are good enough.

The understanding of this conditional is not a metaphysical bedrock, a condition for understanding language in general; but rather, it makes part of what it is to share a form of life. It would indeed be natural for a skeptic who didn't share our language game to doubt this conditional. Such a skeptic would probably not be satisfied until one provides him an argument similar to Descartes's *cogito* argument, an argument where, only apparently, the metaphysical bedrock of certainty was reached. Such a skeptic, naturally, would not be satisfied with the pragmatist argument that I am associating with Putnam (as he himself associated it with Wittgenstein) either; which shows that, after all, Putnam's interpretation of Wittgenstein still seems to the point when he says that "the possibilities of 'external' understanding of a deeply different form of life are extremely limited." (Putnam 1995: 50)

Putnam's latest choice of trying to understand the conditional "S is justified if conditions are good enough" by applying criteria, (as his 2007 and 2012 show), seems to be a retreat to the metaphysical realism which he has so much criticized. The idea that such conditional statement stands for justification as any other statement of our language game does is a retreat to metaphysical realism because it asks us to justify certain cognitive norms of *our form of life* which only a skeptic or an alien to such form of life would bring into question.

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[7] "I follow Stanley Cavell that for most of our beliefs about the quotidian objects and goings-on around us, the question 'Is that justified?' does not arise." (Putnam 2012: 61)

[8] For a fuller development of this idea, see Putnam, 2012 "Philosophy as the Education of Grownups: Cavell and Skepticism".

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