CHAPTER IV

INTERNAL REALISM, ANTI-REALISM AND CULTURAL RELATIVISM

4.0 Introduction

Realism stands for a mind-independent world-view. It is thus ardently opposed to anti-realism and relativism of any kind. However, any discussion of realism cannot avoid a discussion of its contrast with anti-realism as well as relativism. But as has already been mentioned in the previous chapter, this kind of contrast assumes special importance in the context of internal realism. This is largely due to the ‘peculiar’ nature of internal realism as of being ‘the third way’ between traditional realism (conceived in terms of metaphysical realism) and relativism. Internal realism, as we have characterized in our previous chapter, is realism with a qualification, namely, the ‘internalization’ or ‘conceptualization’ of the realist world-view. This ‘peculiar’ nature can be held responsible for the wide misunderstanding of the nature of internal realism. The standard interpretation of internal realism tries to place it under the scope of various
shreds of anti-realism, viz., idealism, extreme nominalism, or conventionalism etc. It also tries to consider internal realism as a special case of relativism. It is against this backdrop that a contrast of internal realism with anti-realism and relativism assumes greater relevance. Firstly, such a contrast offers a reply to the above mentioned interpretation of Putnam by bringing out the points of difference between internal realism on the one hand and anti-realism and relativism on the other. This contrast therefore seeks to identify what is realistic in internal realism. In so doing, it becomes an integral part of the central tenet of this thesis that there exists a continuity throughout the intermittent stages of Putnam's writings. Such contrast helps us in identifying the realism of early Putnam in the scope of later Putnam. Secondly, this contrast serves in grasping the special significance and the various implications of internal realism in their entirety.

This chapter is divided into two sections. The first section deals with the relation of internal realism with anti-realism and the second section presents the contrast between internal realism and cultural relativism. In the conclusion of this chapter an attempt will be made to bring out the common reasons for this standard 'mis'interpretation of Putnam's

Such charges are found in Hacking (1991), Devitt (1984, 277). Devitt writes, "In a vivid and comprehensive way Putnan has captured most of the intuitions that motivate anti-realism." (277).
4.1 Internal Realism and Anti-Realism

It should be conceded at the outset that internal realism enjoys a close relationship with anti-realism. Putnam's conversion to internal realism was in fact initiated by his realization that only a verificationist or anti-realist semantics succeeds in providing an adequate theory of language understanding and that of language acquisition (Putnam, 1978a). As a result of this, Putnam adds the internality aspect to his realism through which he injects the 'human perspective' to his realist hypothesis. An internal realist thus 'constructs' a representation of the world from our point of view -- that is, that of the speakers.

While reflecting on the epistemological implications of his realism of early days, Putnam becomes aware of the problems implicit in the realist conception of truth as Correspondence to the mind-independent reality. This reflection also made explicit to him the inconsistencies of realist semantics, that is, the incoherence of the realist theory of language understanding. The traditional realist maintains that understanding of a language consists in the acquisition of the truth-conditions of the

My discussion here focuses solely on Dummett's kind of anti-realism due to its closeness to Putnan's internal realism.
sentences of that language. Further, as we have already seen, correspondence theory of truth, when coupled with the realist thesis concerning absolute mind-independence of reality, commits itself to a view of truth which takes truth as non-epistemic. Thus the traditional theory of language understanding will consist in the acquisition of the non-epistemic truth-conditions of the sentences of his language. Dummett questions this possibility. Dummett asks, if truth-conditions are totally non-epistemic in the way a metaphysical realist takes them to be, then a knowledge of such conditions becomes totally unintelligible. We cannot think of anything in which our knowledge of such non-epistemic truth-conditions could possibly consist in. Putnam sees the point in Dummett’s criticism and accepts the untenability of the realist semantics. To quote Putnam,

The point is that 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 consist in. We both agree that the theory of understanding has to be done in a verificationist way. (Putnam, 1978b, 129)

The acceptance of a verificationist theory of language understanding and that of language acquisition leads Dummett to embrace an anti-realist world-view. The consequence of Putnam’s acceptance of a verificationist theory of understanding, in a like manner, leaves only this option open for him. That is, Putnam now has to concede the untenability of the entire realist
world-view and thereby he has to convert himself into a thorough anti-realist. This is how Putnam's internal realism is popularly projected in the literature as a version of anti-realism. This, however, does not conform to Putnam's own stand as expressed in his various writings. Putnam does not think that acceptance of a verificationist theory of understanding, that is, accepting the lacuna of metaphysical realism leaves him with only one option, i.e., anti-realism. On the contrary, he throughout asserts his theory to be a realist one. His own theory of internal realism serves the purpose of realism. As he writes, "[S]o metaphysical realism collapses. But internal realism - the empirical theory ... - doesn't collapse (I claim) .... Internal realism is all the realism we want or need" (Putnam, 1978b, 130).

The obvious question that can be raised in this connection is, how internal realism after being reconciled with a verificationist semantics can retain its realist status. This worry is due to the common conviction that verificationism, by its very nature, leads to anti-realism. Putnam's reply to this above mentioned question can be constructed by referring to two points of his internal realism: firstly, the existence of 'human perspective' within the framework of internal realism which is not available to a traditional realist, and secondly, the precise nature of Putnam's verificationist theory of understanding.
Internal realism, as has already been mentioned in the previous chapter, subsumes the realist hypothesis under a conceptual scheme or language. This subsumption makes the realist hypothesis internal to a particular scheme (theory/language). Realist hypothesis, in this framework, is constructed from the point of view of the speakers. Truth is thus defined in this framework as relative to the conceptual scheme and to the human perspective. Truth, is not taken as something non-epistemic in the fashion of the metaphysical realist. Internal realism, therefore, can easily maintain that realist truth can be coupled with the verificationist theory of language understanding, that is, the theory which maintains that we learn the meaning of words, sentences etc., of a language by learning their ‘use’. The question that we raised in the previous paragraph, points to the tenability of such a union of realist truth with a verificationist theory of language understanding. We will postpone our discussion of this point till we discuss the nature of Putnam's concept of truth and also of his verificationist theory of understanding. In this respect, the difference between internal realism and Dummett’s anti-realism is drawn by exhibiting that the realist spirit, which was defined in terms of the availability of coherence of scepticism in our previous chapter, can be identified in the internal realist framework but not in the anti-realist framework of Dummett. This is due to the nature of verificationism that Putnam accepts within the scope of his internal realism.
Truth is defined in relation to a scheme in an internal realist framework. But this does not exhaust completely the force of truth in this framework. Putnam does not accept the metaphysical realist conception of truth as unique correspondence to some 'uninterpreted, thing-in-itself reality' (Anderson, 1992, 77). He, however, as we have already noted, does not "dismiss our pre-philosophical convictions about the meaning of the word 'true'" (Anderson, 1992, 77). This conception, Putnam argues, does not warrant a metaphysical realist notion of absolute correspondence. Our pre-philosophical notion of truth requires truth to be a regulative principle. Putnam retains this pre-philosophical notion, as truth remains a regulative ideal in his internal realist framework. This precisely outlines Putnam's difference from Dummett's anti-realist position. Dummett maintains that as the realist theory of truth along with realist semantics fails to provide an acceptable account of our language understanding, the realist theory should be ruled out completely. This is due to Dummett's conviction that a verificationist semantics can never be fully absorbed in a realist explanatory model. Here Putnam's disagreement with Dummett can be construed under two heads. One refers to their views about verificationist semantics and the other refers to their conception of an explanatory scheme.

Putnam in "Realism and Reason", (1978b, 129) observes
that a theory of understanding in terms of a verificationist concept of 'use' does not exhaust his entire semantic theory (i.e. the theory of meaning). In this regard, he makes his ingenious distinction that the theory of language understanding is different from the theory of language functioning (1978a). Thus, though verificationist theory (in terms of 'use') serves very well as a theory of language understanding, it cannot, by itself, function as a theory of language functioning. For this purpose, in addition to a verificationist theory of language understanding, Putnam's semantic theory has a theory of reference, which is given in terms of the causal theory of reference. This theory of reference refers to a correspondence ('causal chain') relation between our words and the world outside, though not of the absolute nature envisaged in the metaphysical realist framework. The availability of this correspondence imparts the realist force to Putnam's theory as opposed to Dummett's which rules out correspondence of any kind. This correspondence, in turn, plays a crucial role in Putnam's idea of realism as an empirical hypothesis to explain the success of human behaviour, or of human interaction with their environment. It also explains the concept of language functioning in Putnam's semantic framework. The entire idea of explanation will be defeated if some kind of correspondence is not accepted. As Putnam observes, anti-realism due to its lack of any such concept of truth makes the success of science 'a
Internal Realism

miracle' (Putnam, 1978, 18). Putnam's entire framework can be represented as consisting of two tiers, viz, the outer tier of the theory of understanding and the inner tier of the realist theory of explanation. While the outer one makes room for a verificationist theory of understanding as consisting in the concept of use, the inner one retains the mechanism of correspondence (in the form of 'causal theory of reference') which is considered to be one of the basic tenets of the realist hypothesis. In this regard, we may note that Dummett also accepts "two notions of truth in the philosophy of language" (Putnam, 1983b, 83) viz., the internal and the external notions. The internal view is typically exemplified by the metalinguistic sentence, "'P' is true if and only if P", where true-in-L is defined in the corresponding metalanguage ML. However, this does not tell us how to understand 'P' or 'P is true'. For such understanding we need, what Dummett calls, the external notion of truth. This external notion is explained by the notion of justification. "A statement is true if its assertion would be justified" (Putnam, 1983b, 83). If truth has to play any explanatory role in our understanding of language then the external notion of truth should be taken into account. It is

Even Dummett concedes that an anti-realist does not feel comfortable with the question of explanatory scheme (See Dummett's "Comments" on Putnam's article "Reference and understanding" (1979a). This idea, as we have already mentioned, is discussed in detail in "Reference and Understanding" (Putnam, 1978a).
thus not the truth-conditions of a sentence but its justifiability-conditions that constitute our theory of language understanding.

The equivalences stated in the metalanguage provided at the 'internal' level of Dummett thus play no role whatsoever in his explanatory notion of truth. But, for Putnam, 'the external notion of truth', to use Dummett's phrase, does not consist of mere justification; in addition, it includes idealization of justification. "A statement is true, ... if it would be justified under epistemically ideal conditions for many sorts of statements, ...; we cannot really attain epistemically ideal conditions for many sorts of statement, ..." (Putnam, 1983b, 84) 'Epistemically ideal conditions' thus help Putnam's notion of truth to surpass the temporality implied by mere justifiability. If truth is defined in terms of justifiability, in the fashion of Dummett's external notion of truth, then a sentence which is justifiable here and now becomes true forever. There is no possibility for it to turn out to be false at any other time or place. But history of human civilization and that of the development of science is flooded with examples where statements, once taken to be justified (and therefore true) are later rejected as false. The statement, 'The earth is flat' is one

Mere justifiability also makes truth relative to a particular culture, ideology etc. As that forms the principal argument of the next section of this chapter, I am not going into a detailed discussion of this point here.
common example of this feature of our history of the progress of science. So truth loses much of its regulative force, if identified with mere justifiability. Putnam, by asserting that truth can be explained in terms of idealization of justification, retains the pre-philosophical concept of truth as regulative ideal. This pre-philosophical concept also includes the realist intuition about truth. One aspect of this ideal points to the fact that truth does not depend solely on human mind. To use C. Wright's metaphor, this "... spirit requires that there be a mountain that is a genuine obstacle to be overcome..." (Anderson, 1992, 77) and not an imagination of human fancy. This spirit is totally retained in Putnam. This aspect is dealt with by Putnam, as we have already observed before, during his discussion of the objectivity of truth. Objectivity of truth maintains that 'our' knowledge (and truth) depends on external reality also. In so maintaining, Putnam surpasses the arbitrary nature of conventionalism, that is implied by Dummett's anti-realism.

The other aspect of this ideal of objectivity is that as observed by Anderson, it is 'not necessarily achievable' (77). "To say that an epistemically ideal theory could not be false (which

Putnam in his Representation and Reality (1988, 115) clarifies that truth is not reduced to "idealized rational acceptability". It is rather understood in terms of the latter. This, I think, can be taken as a hint of Putnam's desire to retain the pre-philosophical notion of truth and not to reduce it to some epistemic notion.
Putnam does say) is not to say that in every conceivable area of inquiry it is possible for human beings to achieve an ideal theory. Not only is 'truth' not a name for 'the best that a culture can accomplish', it is not even a name for 'the best that human beings can accomplish' (Anderson, 1992, 77).

We accept that mere verifiability cannot entertain a realist spirit of any sort. But, our argument consists of the fact that Putnam's notion of verification differs from that of Dummett's on a very crucial point, that is, it involves the idealization of this concept. It is this notion of idealization that makes room for objectivity and thereby for the realist spirit. It is, therefore, not hard to see how this idealization of justification makes room for the coherence of scepticism. But, before going into a detailed discussion of this point, we need to focus on another important distinction between Putnam and Dummett. This distinction is derivable from their conceptions of meaning and justification.

Putnam's theory of meaning can be successfully expressed with the help of his characteristic slogan 'meanings are just not in the head'. He accepts, through his causal theory of reference, external determinants of reference and meaning. Dummett, on the other hand, in the fashion of Frege, maintains that the meaning of a sentence can be given in terms of a set of necessary and sufficient conditions. Dummett's idea of
justification thus resembles the idea of justification accepted within the scope of the traditional theory of meaning, which borrows its principal argument from Frege's theory. According to Dummett, as Putnam observes, "the justification conditions for sentences are fixed once and for all by a recursive definition" (Putnam, 1983b, 85). This feature, when coupled with 'non-realist' semantics, in the fashion of Dummett, leaves no room for objectivity. The world outside thus is denied any role to play in our theory of meaning and justification. Moreover, such anti-realism has no scope for any sceptic doubt. The world is a creation of human ideas or perceptions (as maintained by idealism) or at best the way in which we see it. It, therefore, does not make any sense in this anti-realist framework to wonder whether a particular sample, which we have taken as of water, is really water. As we are the sole arbiters, any sceptic worry, even in its empirical form, cannot be entertained. Putnam does not accept such a world-view. His realist model accepts the 'contribution of the environment' and its realism is contained in this very fact. As Putnam observes, "[J]ust as the objective nature of the environment contributes to fixing the reference of terms, so it also contributes to fixing the objective truth conditions for sentences, although not in the metaphysical realist way" (Putnam, 1983b, 86).

To deny that meaning does not consist of absolute truth-conditions is not, by any means, to concede that our
sentences have no truth-conditions whatsoever. The sentences of our theory are made true or false by the world in the internal realist framework and therefore the sceptic worry [e.g., 'we (or our present theory) might go wrong'] also assumes meaning here. Putnam's internal realism thus remains a realism in spite of its inclusion of the verificationist theory of understanding. The charge of shifting to anti-realism levelled against the later Putnam is thus a misconceived one.

4.2 Internal Realism and Cultural Relativism: A Source of Controversy

The standard interpretation of internal realism, as has already been mentioned in the introduction of this chapter, takes it as providing a defense for relativism. This interpretation, though widely prevalent, is a misconceived one. Why it is misconceived becomes clear once we contrast Putnam's internal realism with relativism.

Before going into a detailed discussion of this contrast, we should clarify that relativism is considered here as a trend. We thus will not enter into an elaborate study of

By relativism we mainly refer to cultural relativism, a view that maintains that our concepts, knowledge etc., are relative to our given culture or the social context. There is no special reason for choosing cultural relativism but for the fact that Putnam considers its proponents as his main opponent in his discussion of relativism.
relativism which includes different forms of relativism. We accept that it is not fair to club all the different relativists, along with their different views, under one umbrella. But given the nature and scope of our work, it is neither possible nor desirable for us to suggest different classifications of relativism and to discuss them separately here. Our purpose is to identify relativism as a general trend. To do this we propose to identify a few major premises of relativism. These premises have been shared differently by almost all the relativist thinkers.

Relativism in general stands for a view which rejects objectivity (and also absolutism) of any sort. It scorns the idea of objectivity as it maintains, against the realists, that "there is no objective knowledge of realities independent of the knower" (ed. Flew, 1984, 303.). This also expresses the anti-absolutism implied by this theory, as the absence of objective standards points to the absence of absolute standards. Relativists thus accept the conceptual relativity of their world-views. It is this acceptance of the phenomenon of conceptual relativity, that brings internal realism and relativism closer. The standard interpretation of internal

"One can be both a realist and a conceptual relativist" (Putnam, 1987, 17). This relativity which is at the conceptual level should not be identified with cultural relativism. The reason is that for cultural relativism, "there is no truth to be found... 'true' is just a name for what a bunch of people can agree on" (Putnam, 1987, 17-8). This, however, is not the case
realism referred to in our above discussion, can be attributed to this shared acceptance of conceptual relativity. But it is a misconceived interpretation as it suffers from the fallacy of omission. It fails to see that, while internal realism can still offer a notion of objectivity and therefore can talk about the possibility of knowledge (taken in the traditional sense), relativism fails to surpass the limitations of conceptual relativity.

Following Putnam, the reasons for relativism's failure can be construed under two different heads. Firstly, relativism, due to the peculiar nature of its claims, leads to self-refutation. Secondly, cultural relativism, when construed as a theory of scientific rationality, accepts incommensurability of concepts. Radical incommensurability makes our talk, ordinary, scientific or philosophical — 'irrational'. It reduces cultural relativism to an incoherent and inconsistent view and thereby makes it self-refuting.

for internal realism where objectivity is coupled with conceptual relativity.

To say that cultural relativism is incoherent, inconsistent and irrational is not to make three different claims. The fact is that ultimately they all make the same claim, that is, to show the self-refuting nature of relativism. However, this claim is based on three overlapping arguments which may be termed as arguments from incoherence, inconsistency and irrationality. In other words, they may be taken as three routes leading us to the same conclusion.
The first criticism points to the basic premise of any sort of relativism. It says that if everything is relative, the credibility of relativism is also relative. A relativist cannot consistently maintain that relativism is the best theory. But as the claim of relativism is precisely this, since any theory construction depends on the implicit assumption that the concerned theory is the best in the field, relativism results in self-refutation. A version of this argument can be found in Plato's criticism of Protogoras, who maintained that man is the measure of all things. To put it in the jargon of a famous cultural relativist, 'paradigm is the measure of all things'. Plato showed that relativism can be defeated with the help of its own premise. If, as maintained in relativism, everything is relative, relativism itself becomes relative to our choice, and cannot compel us to accept its views. The self-refutation of relativism, at this level, thus consists in its denial of its own force.

Apart from this intuitive argument against relativism in general, the self-refutation of cultural relativism can be derived from its incoherent, inconsistent and irrational nature. The main argument here is directed against the cultural relativist's concept of incommensurability. Incommensurability maintains that the terms of one theory/paradigm/culture do not

In Reason, Truth and History (1981), Putnam attributes this oft quoted criticism of relativism to A. Garfinkel.
have the same reference (and also meaning) in another theory/paradigm/culture. Radical incommensurability says that our terms, when they feature in different theories, involve a 'conversion' or 'gestalt switch'. This is how Kuhn and Feyeraband, two most vigorous proponents of incommensurability thesis, define the concept of incommensurability. The offshoot of incommensurability, then, is that we are all confined to our own world/world-views with our own set of concepts like the monads of Leibnitz. No communication of any kind is possible between these different theories. So every culture or theory has its own paradigms, norms and standards and can never get beyond them.

Putnam argues that incommensurability is "totally incoherent" (1983d, 193; also in 1981, 115). This becomes evident if we draw explicitly the implications of incommensurability. In the first place, it makes translation (of any kind, viz., translating one language to another, translating the 'past stages of one's own language' in case we are using different concepts) and interpretation impossible. This impossibility thus prevents us from regarding people from other culture as 'thinkers' or 'speakers' or even as 'persons'. The whole of scientific discourse thus becomes impossible and meaningless. From this the incoherence of cultural relativism follows. As Putnam writes, "[T]o tell us that Galileo had 'incommensurable' notions and then go on to describe them at
length is totally incoherent" (Putnam, 1983d, 193). Moreover, even for maintaining that theories differ, we should be able to compare them. No such comparison is possible without the possibility of translating one theory into other. Thus Putnam says, "... we could not say that conceptions differ and how they differ if we couldn’t translate" (Putnam, 1981, 117).

This impossibility of translation and the resultant incoherence is due to the fact that the cultural relativists 'confuse or conflate' (Putnam, 1981, 116) concept with conception. Different theories can use the same concept while differing in attaching their own conceptions (the set of beliefs, i.e., their own theory about the functioning and nature of the concept) to them. We can maintain that across different theories a sameness of concepts (though not of conceptions) can be identified.

This criticism of Putnam can be identified even in his first phase, when he was arguing against incommensurability in his article "How not to Talk About Meaning?" (1975d). He distinguishes between customary (linguistic) meaning and the theory attached to a term and maintains that though the attached theory (the conception) may undergo change, the customary (linguistic) meaning remains the same. It is in this continuation of the sameness of concept that we should look for convergence. The only difference between Putnaa's early stage and later stage consists of the fact that he uses 'concept' instead of customary (linguistic) meaning. The reason is, in his later phase, he comes to realize that even the customary (linguistic) meaning has interest-relative and context-dependent features. This realization might have prompted him to talk about more general notion of concept and not of customary (linguistic) meaning.
Thus, if we conflate the notions of concepts and conceptions in the manner of cultural relativists, then it results in this incoherent incommensurability. Its incoherence consists in the fact that it robs us even of our power to say that different theories have different conceptions by making translation impossible. It thus fails to attach meaning to what others speak. This incoherence thus results in self-refutation.

This aspect of relativism, namely, its failure to attach meaning to what others say, is severely criticized by Putnam in his argument from inconsistency against the cultural relativists. This inconsistency is drawn at two levels: one at the level of the cultural relativist’s relation to others and the other at the level of the cultural relativist’s relation to himself. This argument, when drawn at these two levels, shows that a consistent relativist fails to make sense of what he as well as others say.

We begin with a discussion on how cultural relativists render others as mere ‘noise makers’. Cultural relativists ask us to have two stances at the same time. When I say something is true, it is in accordance with the norms of my culture. A consistent cultural relativist goes on to argue, 'when you say

This argument is developed by comparing the fate of a consistent cultural relativist with that of a methodological solipsist in Putnam's "Why Reason can’t be Naturalized?" (1983f)
something is true, you say it in accordance with the norms of your culture. But can he really talk about ‘your culture’? Isn't 'your culture' is equal to 'your culture as seen from my culture' in his framework? If every utterance of mine is tied up with my culture, then my utterances about other cultures are also tied up with the 'norms of my culture'. Thus Putnam concludes, "other cultures become, so to speak, logical constructions out of the procedures and practices" (Putnam, 1983f, 237-8) of one's own culture.

Now a thorough relativism expects the relativist to maintain 'your utterances are true in conformity with the norms of your culture'. But this "transcendental claim of a symmetrical situation cannot be understood if the relativist doctrine is right" (Putnam, 1983f, 238). The reason is, from our

Putnam draws the full implication of this argument with the help of the following reasoning:

To spell this out, suppose R.R., a cultural relativist, says: When Karl says 'schnee ist weiss', what Karl means (whether he knows it or not) is that snow is white as determined by the norms of Karl's culture (Putnam, 1983f, 237).

which is a German culture. But in R.R. statement, the truth gets defined in relation to his own cultural norms, namely, that of American culture. So we get Putnam's restatement of R.R.'s statement:

When Karl says 'Schnee ist weiss', what he means (whether he knows it or not) is that it is true as determined by the norms of American culture that it is true as determined by the norms of German culture that snow is white (Putnam, 1983f, 237).
above mentioned argument it becomes clear that a consistent cultural relativist cannot say, 'the status of a person's (other than himself) statement is relative to that person's culture' because by uttering this what he ultimately means is that any statement uttered by anybody (belonging to any culture) is made true by the norms of his culture. From this inconsistency of cultural relativism we can derive the conclusion of our previous argument from incoherence, that others cease to be 'thinkers' or 'speakers' for a consistent relativist.

We have already seen that for a consistent relativist all other cultures become constructions of his own cultural norms. But can he consistently maintain that he can make sense of what he says? Putnam says, 'No, he can't'. Thus, when a relativist says, 'X is true', what he means is that 'X is true in relation to his culture'. But even to maintain this consistently, a cultural relativist should be able to say that the statement 'X is true for person P' or for himself has a strict, definite and absolute meaning. To utter this a relativist has to accept an absolute notion of truth. A consistent relativist cannot do this.

In the absence of such definite or absolute standard, a relativist's language will fail to sake any sense since such a relativist will be left with no distinction between 'being right' and 'thinking he is right'. This point, which Putnam thinks has
its germ in Plato's criticism of Protagoras, was 'brilliantly extended' by Wittgenstein in his Private Language Argument. This argument maintains that a person who cannot go beyond his own sensations, will not have any standard to differentiate between 'being right' and 'thinking to be right'. To maintain this distinction meaningfully, the relativist should accept an "intelligible notion of objective 'fit'"^{14} (Putnam, 1981, 123) or as Wittgenstein maintains, the concept of 'criteria'. As a relativist cannot have this notion of objective fit, he fails to avail himself of this distinction. A consistent relativist will therefore be left with no distinction between 'asserting' or 'thinking' and 'making noise' (or 'producing mental images') (Putnam, 1981, 122). This reduces a relativist to a mere animal and accepting this reduction is to 'commit mental suicide'.

Thus this charge of inconsistency against cultural relativism when drawn at both these levels, shows its self-refuting nature. At the level of the relativist's relation to others, the inconsistency of relativism consists in the fact that a consistent relativist cannot treat others as speakers or thinkers at all. The inconsistency of relativism at the level of the relativist's relation to himself consists of the fact that a consistent relativist cannot treat himself as a speaker or thinker (Putnam, 1981, 124).

This idea of 'objective fit' is endorsed in Geurts et al (1988, 38).
From this inconsistency of relativism, drawn at the levels of the relativist's relation to others as well as to himself, follows the argument of 'irrational ism' of cultural relativism. This 'irrational ism' of cultural relativists consists of his 'denial' of conceiving others and himself as thinkers. This irrationalism of a cultural relativist denies the possibility of thought. In this way, he reduces himself to a mere animals. This irrationalism argument is explicitly made in Davidson's criticism of relativism also. It is also derivable from the cultural relativist's denial of the possibility of translation or interpretation. The whole rational exercise comes to a halt and thus results in irrationalism.

These incoherence, inconsistency and irrationalism of cultural relativism can be attributed to a deeper cause: viz., the cause which forces a relativist to embrace incommensurability. In his article, "The Craving for Objectivity" (1990b), Putnam tries to identify the possible reasons for the cultural relativist's acceptance of the idea of incommensurability. The first route to cultural relativism is a 'romantic' one where incommensurability is reached through a modified sceptic worry, when applied to interpretation. To speak in general terms, the worry is: while stating a statement we cannot state everything that should be stated. Hence, the argument of relativism goes, every statement of ours is bound to
be false. The same is true of interpretation. We cannot succeed in our act of interpretation, since we are unable to have all the set of conditions fulfilled. This is how incommensurability becomes a reality for the relativists. Apart from this, Putnam argues that there is one more source for the idea of incommensurability.

This source of incommensurability lies in the relativist's craving for objectivity. Putnam explains it as the craving for absoluteness. Both realism and relativism start with the implicit presupposition that a knowledge, to be knowledge proper, should be absolute in nature. In this attempt, both of them try to give a theory from 'nowhere'. In the context of the realist, this attempt to gain absolute knowledge results in his doctrine that our theories should correspond to the mind-independent reality. But the possibility of this correspondence, as we have seen in our previous chapter, depends on the possibility of a determinate reference relation. Similarly, the relativists, start with the absolute criterion of knowledge whose possibility depends on the determinateness of reference. However, they subsequently realize the failure of such a conception of reference because they find that reference is indeterminate, and that we cannot compare our words with the 'unconceptualized reality' outside except by the mediation of our 'discourse'. This leads them to hold a position that there exists no such object called unconceptualized reality. This
Internal Realism becomes the basis for the cultural relativist to deny the possibility of any inter theory interpretation. This is how the cultural relativists embrace incommensurability (Putnam, 1990b, 121-22). Putnam accepts the failure of realism and also accepts the fact that reference is indeterminate. But, according to him, this does not compel one to accept incommensurability which ultimately becomes the basis of relativism. The failure of realism should not lead to relativism. This is where Putnam introduces his own solution through his theory of internal realism.

This conclusion of relativists is due to the misconception that we have only one conception of interpretation and that consists of our ability to relate our words or thought-signs to 'neutral', 'unconceptualized', independent reality. This reflects our craving for objectivity where we look for 'real' standards for translation/interpretation (Putnam, 1983d, 194). Putnam maintains that the unattainability of these 'real' standards of translation, by no means, denies the possibility of translation and interpretation completely. Translation and interpretation are facts of our rational practice. Given our context and our interests, we can successfully translate a foreign language or interpret a different theory. Thus our translation and interpretation are context-relative and also interest-relative. But to say this is not to maintain that 'anything goes*. On the contrary, it is
Austin’s maxim that seems to be more appropriate in this context: "Enough is enough, enough is not everything" (Putnam, 1990b, 122).

In this respect we may observe that human reason is both immanent and transcendent as Putnam observes (1983f, 234-5). Our craving for objectivity makes us lose sight of the immanence of reason, i.e., "of the fact that reason is always relative to context and institution" (234). We thus ask for absolute standards for rationality, truth, etc., which can be given once and for all with the help of an algorithm. Philosophers, for example, cultural relativists, after becoming conscious of the immanence of our reason lose sight of its transcendence. Incommensurability is a sign of the relativist's acceptance of the immanence of our reason. What is needed, as Putnam observes, is a combination of immanence with transcendence, i.e., of contextuality with objectivity. Relativists fail to accept the objectivity of knowledge. This is because objectivity for them is represented only in the form of a view from 'nowhere'. But, as Putnam maintains, there can be objectivity which is coupled with contextuality. Thus concepts like 'reasonableness', and 'relevance' are to be taken care of while defining truth, reference, etc. This, however, is not to eliminate objectivity completely. On the other hand, cultural relativists, (Rorty, for example), in their desperate attempt to define truth, maintain that anything is true if it is accepted by the 'cultural peers'
of the maker of the statement. However, relativist's own practice shows that he is not convinced of his definition of truth. The majority of a relativist's cultural peers do not agree with the relativist. But the relativist carries on with his own relativist ideas by maintaining that, as Putnam observes, "... that is irrelevant to the question of the truth (and to the question of the warrant) of those views" (1988, 110). The relativists reduce truth to warranted assertibility in the fashion of anti-realism and make truth relative to a culture. Truth thus loses much of its regulative force. As Rorty rightly accepts, ideals of truth, justification, etc., thus cease to exist for the relativists. He writes "The word 'Truth', in this context, is just the reification of an approbative and indefinable adjective" (Rorty, 1993, 453). Rorty's main objection against putnam's notion of truth is that his idea of idealized rational justification remains unexplained. This objection can also be found in Geurts and et al (1988). Putnam accepts that this idea of idealization is not a very clear one. But as he maintains, this notion has 'cash value' and thus helps truth to work as a regulative ideal.  

In reducing truth to warranted assertibility, cultural relativists fail to explain certain facts. The incommensurability and the rejection of the ideal of truth

Given the focus of this thesis, we cannot go into the details of the ongoing debate between Rorty and Putnam.
violates the principle of charity (PBD) and denies the convergent nature of *scientific* knowledge. Consequently, it fails to explain growth of scientific knowledge. This rejection also makes all rational exercise impossible by denying a chance to translation and interpretation. The failure of cultural relativism thus consists of its denial of objectivity of all kinds. It thus makes convergence of knowledge, a fact about human knowledge, impossible.

4.3 Conclusion

As a reason for this prevalent *mis’conception regarding the nature of internal realism i.e., that it is a variant of anti-realism or cultural relativism, we can refer to the fallacy of omission. The critics, while taking note of the aspect of conceptual relativity of Putnam's internal realism, lose sight of the objectivity aspect of it. But both are integral parts of internal realism. As C. Gupta (1993) writes, "Putnam accepts conceptual relativity, but would not endorse Kuhn's 'different worlds' thesis, as premised wrongly on conceptual relativity" (Gupta, 1993, 329). For anti-realists (also for cultural relativists), 'different worlds' follow from conceptual relativity as they do not have any other notion in addition to this relativity. They, (Kuhn, for example), make observation purely a subjective phenomenon by maintaining that it is totally "parasitic upon theoretical assumptions", i.e., the
canons of the concerned conceptual scheme. This, as we have already noted, does not explain the success of human interaction with the environment. The failure of relativists or anti-realists lies in this. Putnam, on the other hand, accepts this success as a fact and proposes internal realism as an explanation of this fact.