CONCLUSION: THE REALISM OF INTERNAL REALISM

This thesis tries to establish that there is an interplay between reference and realism in the different phases of Putnam's philosophy the consequence of which is to see the traditional problem of realism from a new perspective. The possibility of this interplay, however, has been seriously questioned by the critics who hold that Putnam has shifted from realism to anti-realism in his philosophical positions. They argue against Putnam on two grounds: firstly that there cannot be any continuity or uniformity in the different phases of Putnam and secondly that no such interplay between reference and realism can be available at the final phase of internal realism. Our reply to these critics also consists of two steps. In the first step, this thesis attempts to establish the unity in the allegedly intermittent stages of Putnam. In the second step, it tries to establish the interplay between reference and realism throughout all the stages in Putnam's philosophy including the final phase of internal realism. This unity, as we have already noted in our previous chapter, is worked out through the concept of centrality of reference, a feature that is shared by all the different phases of Putnam. The centrality of reference is explained here in terms of its invariant nature. By invariance, in short, we mean constancy of reference. This constancy - as we have already observed, plays an important role in making room for the notion of trans-theoretic reference. By the idea of
invariant reference, we also mean that reference is ascribed a pivotal role around which all the other notions, including that of realism, revolve. It has been argued that the three most significant notions of the three phases—viz., the criteria of applicability of a term/name in the first phase, the notion of causal-explanation in the second and the availability of interpretation as rational exercise in the third—have been made intelligible in the light of this invariant reference. This notion of invariant reference, due to its centrality, assumes relevance in the determination of the nature of the associated realism. This notion further shapes the course of the interplay between reference and realism.

In the course of our discussion of the different chapters of this thesis, we have noted that while the semantic invariance of the first phase assumes an absolute nature, the invariances involved in the later phases of Putnaa are non absolute in nature. A critic may argue that this shift from the apparent absolute invariance of the first phase to the non absolute one in the later phases justifies the charge of conversion from realism to anti-realism against Putnam. This charge of the critics when taken in its full force, maintains that the realism of internal realism is only a namesake one, since it does not have any realistic components. This is because the invariance of reference at the phase of internal realism does not have an absolute nature and thereby as the argument goes, it fails to give rise to any realism. A reply to this charge
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consists of explicating the precise nature of Putnam's realism and the nature of its interplay with reference. In the following section an attempt has been made to show how realistic internal realism is.

Some Questions on Realism

An explication of the nature of Putnam's realism consists of comprehending, as has been mentioned already, two of its unique features. The first feature points to the fact that realism has always been conceived here as an empirical hypothesis for providing explanation of some facts. The second feature reiterates the fact that in the frameworks of Putnam the notion of realism is the product of the interplay between reference and realism. His notion of reference therefore shapes the nature of his realism to a great extent.

It is a fact that Putnam has changed his notion of realism while giving up the metaphysical realist picture of his early days. Putnam confesses in his "Realism and Reason* (1978b) that he was 'wedded to' (129) this metaphysical realist picture. In his later phase, he gives up this picture and replaces it with the internal realist or pragmatic realist world-view. But as we have already pointed out, 'changing of mind' should not be understood as a conversion from realism to anti-realism in the case of Putnam. It involves, as Putnam says, 'being torn' between the contrasting views of philosophy itself. In the light
of this discussion we should try to explicate the nature of Putnam's realism. It should be clarified that the attraction of scientific realism for Putnam was not solely for its world-view. This is because realism has never been a purely metaphysical thesis for Putnam. As it has been reiterated a number of times in this thesis, realism has always had an empirical nature here; that is, the nature of a hypothesis in order to explain some phenomena. What Putnam found 'seductive' about metaphysical realism was its "... idea that the way to solve philosophical problems is to construct a better scientific picture of the world" (1988, 108). Metaphysical realism is taken to offer a better scientific theory about the world. Its excellence lies in the fact that this scientific theory could explain 'the phenomena we observe'. In this way, this theory, Putnam contends, is able to solve the philosophical problems. Thus Putnam came to the conclusion that science should be taken 'at the face value', i.e., 'without philosophical reinterpretation' (1978, 37). Science taken at face value implies a strong form of realism. It implies the acceptance of independence, uniqueness, bivalence and correspondence, -- the principles of the metaphysical realist notion of truth, as the regulative principles of science. Together with these, the metaphysical realist ideal that science must achieve the resolution of all philosophical problems is further added. This picture thus assumes an absolute nature, since science, with all its ideals, is expected to achieve the One True theory of the world. This scientific picture as provided by metaphysical realism implies faith in the
extra-theoretic notions of truth and reference. The notion of invariance, that explains the nature of reference at this level, also assumes an absolute nature. In the same manner, the other realist principle, viz., the principle of convergence also becomes unqualified in this phase.

The next phase of Putnam depicts his growing awareness of the problems of this scientific picture provided by metaphysical realism. This utopianism of metaphysical realism, Putnam comes to realize, is not reflected even in the practice of science. Similarly, his reflections on the epistemological bearings of the metaphysical realist premises makes him more and more doubtful about the tenability of metaphysical realisa. In our third chapter we have noted that as a result of this he realizes the inconsistency (in the sense of unintelligibility) of the metaphysical realist ideals as well as of the scientific picture provided by it.

There are a few other philosophers who also do not take science at its face value. They provide reinterpretation of the practice of science. The incommensurability thesis, in this respect, presented by Kuhn and Feyeraband is notable. This thesis maintains that different theories cannot be compared or translated into one another. This reinterpretation of the practice of science in terms of this incommensurability thesis

Putnas comments that his mastery of "a certain amount of mathematics and physics" (1983, 108) made him realize the actual picture of the practice of science.
tries to abandon the idea of convergence in science. Thus it comes in conflict with the practice of science since convergence is a well accepted practice of science.

The notion of invariance of reference and the notion of convergence of the first phase, when accepted 'at the face value' (without philosophical reinterpretation) give rise to the absolute picture which takes the aim of realism as to produce the One True description of the furniture of the world. We have already noted Putnam's growing discomfort with such an absolute world-view. Putnam, however, does not accept the reinterpretation of the practice of science in terms of the incommensurability thesis either. Putnam, in his later phase, provides a middle way. He accepts the need for reinterpretation of the practice of science. He thus gives up the absolute picture of metaphysical realism. This however is not to embrace an all out relativism or even anti-realism. This is due to his acceptance of the realist principle of convergence. This ideal of convergence which maintains that the earlier theories can act as the limiting case for the later theories, is present in all the phases of Putnam. In the second phase, he takes convergence as a realist premise and in the third, he takes it as a fact for realism to explain. So, convergence can be regarded as the realist ideal that is retained in all the phases of Putnam. What Putnam gives up is the absolute picture of metaphysical realism. But as this is not the only realist principle of Putnam, tills rejection should not be taken as a rejection of realism.
As a result of this rejection of metaphysical realism, the nature of convergence also becomes qualified in the later phases of Putnam. In the second and third phases, this principle of convergence is added with normative concepts — viz., with interest-relativity in the second and with conceptual relativity in the third. The critics' objection is precisely to this feature of the later phases of Putnam. They maintain that by shifting from an absolute picture to a non-absolute picture Putnam loses his realism. But Putnam considers convergence as the strongest realist principle. And this convergence is present at all the stages. Moreover, convergence by itself never implies any absolute picture. It only points to an 'interactive' world picture where the world is also allowed to play its contributory role. It does not warrant a belief in mind-independent reality. Furthermore, as Geurts et al (1988) argue, such mind-independent reality amounts to an unintelligible component since it is impossible to conceive of its nature. In the light of this argument Putnam claims that internal realism is more realistic than even metaphysical realism.

This realist principle of convergence ultimately depends on the assignment of the same referents to different theories. It is thus Bade available by the invariance of reference. This also explains how the notion of realism is dependent on the nature of associated reference in the framework
of Putnam. At the first level, this invariance in semantic in nature, at the second it is causal-explanatory and at the final it is empirical in nature. It is the semantic invariance of the first phase that gives rise to the ideal of convergence. So the availability of realism in internal realism would depend largely on the availability of this semantic invariance of reference in the model of internal realism. It should be noted here that semantic invariance of reference by itself does not imply an absolute picture. The semantic invariance of reference maintains that reference supplies the criterion of applicability of a term. A term, for example, 'water' will be applied to a sample when it bears the appropriate sameness relation to the 'local' referents of 'water'. Moreover, our descriptions of these terms are only 'contingently' related to those terms. Given the sameness of referents, different theories (i.e., different descriptions) can be taken to 'talk about the same thing'. Thus what is directly implied by the semantic invariance of reference is the existence of trans-theoretic reference and the associated idea of convergence of scientific knowledge.

In this regard, we can compare the realist model underlying Putnam’s semantic theory of the early days and the model of the internal realisa of his later phase. The main differentiating factor between these two can be called epistemological. The modifications that are made in the strong realisa of Putnam's early days are prompted by his reflections on the epistemological implications of this view, viz., science
taken 'at the face value'. The concept of internality, which reflects the conceptual relativity, is a product of this deliberation. But it remains to be seen how it affects the availability of the semantic invariance of reference of his early days within the scheme of internal realism. In *Representation and Reality* (1988), while criticizing the mentalism of Chomsky and Fodor, Putnam retains his entire semantics of natural kind terms along with the two realistic regulative principles of PBD and PRI. What is exactly given up is the idea of the One True description of the furniture of the world. Consequently, the idea that the essential nature of reference is constituted by a unique correspondence to the world outside is also eliminated. Our question is therefore, how much of the strong realism of early days can be retained in the internal realist scheme. Two aspects of the strong realism, viz., the extra-theoretic notions of truth and reference, as mentioned already, are also rejected as a consequence of the rejection of unique correspondence. The point here is that, this rejection does not amount to the total rejection of realism of the early days. This is due to the explanatory nature of Putnam's realism. This is the reason why PBD and PRI serve as the regulative principles in the realism of his early phase and also of his later phase. But there is nothing in these principles themselves which warrant the presence of an unique correspondence between the words and the world. The idea of unique correspondence and the resultant extra-theoretic notion of reference enter as a presupposition, that is to say, as the essential nature of reference. This idea is an offshoot of
Putnam's attraction for scientific realism. In *internal* realism this presupposition regarding the essential nature of reference has been given up. Internal *realism* makes it clear that talking about reference does not specify what reference is or that it is a determinate (unique) relation. Concepts of reference, meaning, truth, etc., it is argued, have an 'open texture' which may have different uses in different conceptual schemes. But there is no incompatibility between realism and conceptual relativity. The apparent incompatibility arises if we take realism as a metaphysical view. But when construed as an explanatory hypothesis minus the acceptance of one 'Real' world of which we are giving the One True or different descriptions, realism can easily accommodate 'conceptual relativity'.

Regarding the semantics of his early days, we can further note that in internal realism, Putnam retains the 'linguistic division of labor' and 'the contribution of environment'. They contribute to his theory of *meaning* which is regarded as 'interactive' (1988, 18). 'The contribution of the environment' need not depend, contrary to the prevalent idea, on the acceptance of mind-independent entities. It may form the essential part of an 'interactive' *semantic model* which precisely says that meanings are not entirely 'in the head'. In fact, the causal theory of reference is also retained without the presupposition of reference as unique correspondence. This aspect suggests that a speaker's intentions to refer and his relation to his environment ultimately determine the *meaning of a*
term. For the environment to play a contributory role, it is not necessary that such environment should be totally mind-independent. It only points to the fact that mere conventionalism cannot serve the realist purpose fully. To use a terminology that we have used in our third chapter, 'coherence of scepticism' is needed. But this 'coherence of scepticism' does not warrant any absolutism, and as we have seen, can very well be retained in an empirical (fallible) framework. Thus by retaining these two notions of 'linguistic division of labor' and 'the contribution of environment', the 'interactive' theory of meaning of internal realism preserves the regulative principles of PBD and PRI. These two principles make room for trans-theoretic terms and the associated 'convergent' or 'cumulative' nature of scientific knowledge. The empirical invariance thus accommodates the realist ideal of convergence.

The seeming absoluteness of the semantic invariance of reference is therefore not due to the nature of this invariance. It is, on the other hand, a reflection of Putnam's attraction for the scientific theory as provided by the metaphysical realist picture. But in his second phase, Putnam becomes aware of the problems of such scientism (viz., physicalism). Quine's arguments for the indeterminacy of translation and the inscrutability of reference also reiterate this conclusion of Putnam. But Putnam accepts convergence and interpretation as facts and therefore cannot share the despair of Quine. He thus incorporates interest-relativity in the invariance of semantic
reference. This later paves the way for the conceptual relativity of internal realism.

Conceptual relativity, however, does not come in isolation. It is coupled with objectivity. This objectivity is made available by the availability of the semantic invariance of reference in the framework of internal realism. The semantic invariance of the first phase, when placed within a conceptual scheme, gives rise to the possibility of objectivity within the bounds of conceptual relativity. The presence of the semantic invariance of reference, though it assumes an empirical outfit, speaks for the presence of realism in the later phase of Putnam*. So the charge of shifting from realism to anti-realism levelled against later Putnam is a short-sighted argument. Realism and its interdependence on reference can thus be established in all the phases of Putnam.

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