CHAPTER III

REFERENCE AND INTERNAL REALISM: TOWARDS THE UNTENABILITY OF METAPHYSICAL REALISM

3.0 Reference and Internal Realism: Introduction

In the previous chapter realism has been explicated in the form of an empirical hypothesis which was called upon to explain the success of total human behaviour. This empirical realist hypothesis thus assumes the nature of causal-explanation. Causal-explanatory notions of reference and truth lend support to this empirical hypothesis of realism. This makes explicit the intimate relation that exists between reference and realism. Putnam's view about this causal-explanatory notion of reference, however, is markedly different from that of other philosophers. These philosophers, most prominently Devitt, explain causal-explanation in terms of physicalism. In their discussion on reference, they define reference on the basis of physical (‘causal’ to be more precise) relations. Putnam, on the other hand, does not accept physicalism of any form, as explanation for him is in itself an interest-relative concept. Physicalism, which has the inherent ideal of reducing every concept to the physical level, assumes an absolute nature, thereby leaving no scope for interest-relativity.
What constitutes the most striking feature of the second phase of Putnam's writing, as we have already seen, is his dissatisfaction with the physicalistic theory of references and his admission of the inherent interest-relative nature of all explanation. This interest-relativity ultimately paves the way for Putnam’s internal realism, which is developed during the final phase of his philosophical writings. This internal realism subsumes the realist hypothesis under a conceptual scheme. Internal realism expresses in clear terms the most remarkable feature of Putnam's idea of philosophizing, namely, to pursue philosophy from a human point of view. Keeping in tune with this attitude, he outlines the principal maxim of his realist hypothesis. This maxim (Putnam, 1978b, 123) says we (speakers) construct a 'symbolic representation' of our environment. This needs to be differentiated from the traditional realist supposition that our theory, language, etc., 'mirror' the external world. In this process of 'mirroring' the faculty of reason does not have any contributory role to play. Traditional realist, therefore, subscribes to an impersonal world-view. Internal realist, on the contrary, does not 'mirror', but constructs. As Putnam says, "the mind and the world jointly make up the mind and the world" (Putnam, 1981, XI).

Internal realism explains our relation to our environment and the role that language plays in this
relationship. Thus the world-view presented by the internal realist is not an 'alienated', impersonal one; rather it is a human one in which we, the speakers, are at its centre. This project thus is reminiscent of Kant's Copernican revolution, which said reality should conform to man and not the other way. The unique feature of internal realism consists in its concept of subsumption. Internal realism, undoubtedly, is a difficult concept to grasp considering its peculiar position. As Putnam calls it, "a third way ... between classical realism and antirealism" (Putnam, 1988, 107). The best way to explicate this notion is to contrast it with metaphysical realism on the one hand and anti-realism (including cultural relativism) on the other. My task in this chapter is to contrast it with traditional realism or metaphysical realism as Putnam calls it. We will postpone our discussion on internal realism's relation to anti-realism until next chapter.

This chapter consists of three sections. First section elaborates the nature of metaphysical realism by enumerating its major tenets. These tenets demonstrate the impersonal nature of the world-view provided by the traditional realist. I will conclude this section with the observation that a particular referential relation serves as the basis of this whole project of metaphysical realism. The second section provides a critique of metaphysical realism. This critique has two parts. The first part deals with the model-theoretic arguments that Putnam gives
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against the concept of reference implied by metaphysical realism. The model-theoretic argument against reference works as a reductio of the metaphysical realist premises. The second part of the second section presents Putnam's well-known 'Brains in a Vat' argument which serves as a demonstration of the reductio presented by the model-theoretic arguments of Putnam. In the third section internal realism is discussed at length. It involves a discussion of the nature of reference and truth that is acceptable within the scope of internal realism.

3.1 A Brief Outline of Metaphysical Realism

The name metaphysical realism does not stand for the views of any particular philosopher. It rather stands for the general conception of realism as traditionally conceived. Putnam has described metaphysical realism as a bundle of related ideas, among which truth is the most important. Following are the general tenets commonly shared by all traditional realists:

(1) Metaphysical realism starts with the presupposition that there exists a mind-independent reality and our theories are descriptions of this reality. Anderson subsumes this feature under the name 'ontological realism' which maintains that "all (or most) of the objects (middle-sized and theoretical) countenanced by twentieth-century science and common sense exist independently of any mind" (Anderson, 1992, 51).
(2) Metaphysical realism defines truth as the relation of correspondence that holds between our words/thought signs and the external reality. Thus a statement is true if it bears the (unique) correspondence relation to the mind-independent reality.

(3) Related to this metaphysical realist theory of truth as correspondence and dependent on it are the ideas of 'uniqueness', 'independence' and 'bivalence' (Putnam, 1988, 107). But before elaborating on these aspects, we should explicate the nature of truth that these realists accept: it is 'non-epistemic'. As truth consists in the correspondence with external reality, truth becomes radically non-epistemic in this metaphysical realist picture. A metaphysical realist distinguishes between the truth-conditions and the assertability-conditions of a statement. As Putnam writes, metaphysical realists have claimed "that truth outruns even idealized justifiability" (Putnam, 1983b, 85). Anderson subsumes this tenet of metaphysical realism under the name of 'semantic realism' and defines this aspect by maintaining that a "[S]tatement(s) ... will be true or false in virtue of the intrinsic nature of mind-independent reality, and thus in virtue of conditions the obtaining of which may be, in principle, inaccessible to human beings" (Anderson, 1992, 51). A statement in this theory can turn out to be false inspite of being under
‘ideal epistemic conditions’ that is to say, an ideal theory may turn out to be false.

(4) The ‘uniqueness’ and the ‘independence’ aspects together imply that there can be exactly one true and complete description of the external world. This aspect has not been shown to be so important by many commentators (e.g. Anderson) of Putnam. But our textual evidence speaks in favour of taking it as an essential tenet of metaphysical realism. Moreover, the possibility of many descriptions will automatically lead to many correspondences between our descriptions and the world. This has two major implications: firstly, it denies the ‘uniqueness’ aspect of metaphysical realism. Secondly, due to this plurality of descriptions, the intrinsic nature of reality ceases to act as an adjudicator of the truth of our theories as required by the metaphysical realist. If, on the other hand, it is maintained that all descriptions are equivalent (in the manner of the ‘sophisticated realist’), then it will be difficult to say what our theory of the world will be. In this situation all such theories are necessarily relative to this or that description.

Without going into the complex nature of the ideal theory, we will here, following Putnam, define the ideal theory as a theory which fulfils the theoretical and operational constraints.

In his article "Equivalence" (1983a) while explicating the concept of equivalent descriptions, Putnam observes that a metaphysical realist, while accepting the existence of equivalent descriptions, points that all "such theories are ‘One’ at some deeper level ..." (26-7). This is because they are all taken as different descriptions of the same ‘mind-independent reality’.
As a result, we will not be able to know what the world is in itself apart from those various descriptions. To put it in Putnam's phrase, the world, the most important component of the metaphysical realist picture, thus becomes "empty" (1978b, 133).

The most important observation that Putnam makes from all these different tenets of metaphysical realism is that its world picture is dependent on the existence of a unique, determinate reference relation. This point is directly derivable from the non-epistemic nature of realist truth and the ensuing realist assertion that even the ideal theory may turn out to be false. How is it possible? This is possible, a metaphysical realist may say, because the intrinsic nature of the external reality (e.g. the existing objects) is different from the way it is conceived by our ideal theory. That is to say, the world might turn out to consist of different objects than are enumerated in our ideal theory. Thus the world will render our ideal theory false. This is because a determinate unique referential relation is assumed to exist between our terms and the external objects in this metaphysical realist picture. This referential relation will serve as the basis of the correspondence theory of truth and the related notion of uniqueness. As Anderson observes, "Putnam argues that a necessary condition for correspondence truth and the accompanying distinction is the existence of a determinate relation of reference between our words and mind-independent objects"
Putnam, in "Model Theory and the 'Factuality' of Semantics" (1989), maintains that metaphysical realism involves two kinds of 'uniqueness', viz., 'uniqueness of the true theory' and 'uniqueness of reference relation' (Putnam, 1989, 215). The latter uniqueness, in fact, paves the ground for the former. Before moving on to the next section, it may be mentioned here that this aspect of metaphysical realism reiterates the central tenet of this thesis that the theory of reference serves as the basis of any metaphysical position.

Putnam's model-theoretic arguments against reference attacks this above mentioned feature of metaphysical realism, viz., our words possess a determinate unique reference relation to the external world. We will focus on Putnam's critique of metaphysical realism in the next section.

3.2 Critique of Metaphysical Realism

3.2.1 Introduction

As already mentioned in the introduction of this chapter, Putnam's critique of metaphysical realism consists of his model-theoretic arguments against the metaphysical realist notion of reference involving a unique, determinate relation between our words and the objects of the world. Since this referential relation serves as the nerve of metaphysical realism,
Putnam in his critique focuses solely on the possibility of this unique referential relation. Putnam's critique can be discussed in two parts. The first part involves a discussion of the model-theoretic argument whereas the second part involves a demonstration of this argument. The proposed demonstration has been offered in the light of Putnam's 'Brains in a Vat' argument.

3.2.2 Model-Theoretic Arguments Against Reference

Putnam's problem with the idea of a unique determinate reference started with his uneasiness regarding the epistemological implications of the concept of correspondence involved in any realist world picture. This uneasiness, which in Putnam's opinion dates back to the time of Berkeley and Kant, consists of the worries regarding the possibility of a determinate relationship between two factors, viz., our words, sentences etc., on the one hand and the external world on the other, which do not have any feature in common. How can the mind

In this connection we may note at a general level an important observation of Putnam regarding the significance of the epistemological position in philosophy. In the introduction of his Realism and Reason, Putnam wrote, "... one cannot come to grips with the real problems in philosophy without being more sensitive to the epistemological position of the philosopher ..." (Putnam, 1983, vii). This expresses the change in his philosophical outlook as he becomes conscious of the epistemological implications of his metaphysical position.

"As far back as Berkeley and Kant it had been pointed out that the notion of a 'correspondence' is difficult once one becomes even a little bit psychologically sophisticated" (Putnam, 1983, VIII).
compare its ideas (representations) with the objects outside? In the absence of any common property shared by both, there can be nothing in which such correspondence may consist. As Putnam says, "You can't single out a correspondence between two things by just squeezing one of them hard (or doing anything to just one of them); ..." (Putnam, 1981, 73). We have already observed that the metaphysical realist attributes the possibility of this correspondence to there being a unique, determinate referential relation. Putnam with the help of the model-theoretic argument tries to argue that unique reference is not possible, nor is unique correspondence. This, in effect, shows the bankruptcy of the metaphysical realist concepts.

Model-theoretic arguments were the results of Putnam's attempt to extend the implications of Lowenheim-Skolem theorem of mathematics to the field of philosophy of language. Without going into the details of this theorem, we can say that it consists of the resolution of the apparent paradox resulting from Skolem's theory that every consistent non-empty theory has a denumerable (countable) model. On the other hand, Cantor proved that reals are non-denumerable (uncountable). Skolem held that even Cantor's theory, as it is a consistent theory, can be interpreted over a countable model. Thus there results a paradoxical situation as it appears that reals are both countable and uncountable. It is maintained that this "... anxiety expressed in feeling the Lowenheim-Skolem theorem as a paradox
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results in part from the desire to grasp a formal object apart from its setting in a formal system;" (Myhill, 1967, 42). This paradox was resolved by Skolem with the help of the concept of 'referential shift'. This resolution says that a formalized theory can be given different interpretations depending on the referential relation chosen. The terms of a theory will be defined internally for any particular interpretation. Thus the apparent paradox is due to the misconception that terms used in our mathematical theory can be given absolute definition irrespective of any model/interpretation we assume. The implication of this theorem in the field of philosophy of language, as worked out by Putnam (1983c), maintains that problem for metaphysical realist arises from this attempt to define reference in absolute terms. Thereby he tries to take his notions of truth and reference out of their contexts. This attempt underlines the reasons for his failure. This suggestion serves the basis of Putnam's model-theoretic arguments against metaphysical realism.

Putnam maintains that there cannot be any determinate referential relation which is also absolute. This unique referential relation is required, as we have already observed, for the non-epistemic concept of truth which maintains that even an ideal theory may turn out to be false. The concept of an ideal theory needs some clarification. An ideal theory is one which is rationally justified in its ideal limit. This theory is
one that fulfils all the operational and theoretical constraints put by the canons of rationality. The possibility of such an ideal theory's being false is explained by the metaphysical realist by the fact that the reference relation involved in such an ideal theory is not the 'intended' one. Putnam, in his model-theoretic arguments, questions the very existence of such 'intended' relations. Even if such an 'intended' relation exists, the question is, how is it specified? What is the nature of such a relation? The operational and theoretical constraints obviously fail to capture this 'intended' relation. This is because the operational and theoretical constraints specify our ideal theory. If, in addition, they are taken to specify the 'intended' reference relation then the ideal theory will always have the 'intended' relation. So the very possibility of an ideal theory's going wrong, i.e., having unintended reference, forces a realist to accept that there exists some extra feature over and above the operational and theoretical constraints that single out the 'intended' referential relation. Putnam maintains

This idea is developed in detail in "Realism and Reason", one of the early writings of Putnam on the model-theoretic arguments (Putnam, 1978b, 126). A formalistic interpretation of this same criticism of Putnam is presented in Putnam (1981, 33-35). A metaphysical realist argues that the truth of a sentence determines the 'intended' reference relation for the words/terms occurring in that sentence. The operational and theoretical constraints are thus taken to determine the truth or falsity of a statement. Putnam's model-theoretic arguments show that "no view which only fixes the truth-values of whole sentences can fix reference" (Putnam, 1981, 33). Reference thus remains indeterminate.
that this idea of an extra agent as determining the ‘intended’ relation is incoherent (Putnam, 1978b, 124). Later (1989) while elaborating on this idea of incoherence, he distinguishes it from ‘inconsistency’ which is dependent on logical laws. Putnam defines incoherence in terms of ‘unintelligibility’, which, in other words, means being empty. Thus, the interpretation of the term ‘incoherence’ here does not refer to the idea of logical inconsistency. It is here that one needs to see the distinctive feature of Putnam’s argument. Putnam arrives at this interpretation by showing that intelligibility is a product of a philosophical argument and not of pure logic. That is why we find that Putnam’s critique of the realists’ candidates for intended relation does not consist in showing that they involve logical contradiction. Putnam thus argues that they are unintelligible or empty since they fail to provide the intended relation. Before elaborating on this point, let us for a moment consider the possible candidates of the intended reference relation as proposed by metaphysical realists.

There have been several attempts to reply to the model-theoretic arguments of Putnam. Broadly two tendencies in

Putnam’s idea of ‘incoherence’ as defined in terms of ‘unintelligible’ should be understood as ‘unintelligible with reference to us, i.e., speakers’. This can be seen as a reflection of his humanistic, anti-scientistic outlook. The same point holds when he maintains that the ‘Brains in a Vat’ argument is incoherent because of philosophical reasons (unintelligibility or unconceivability). Inspite of being ‘physically’ possible, this argument is taken to be philosophically unintelligible.
those replies can be identified. The first group of reply assigns a ‘magical’ power to the mind which enables the mind to see the intrinsic relation existing between a token of a language and the world outside. This tendency goes back to the time of Aristotle and is echoed in Locke’s ‘Similitude theory of reference’. Our words represent the external objects by sharing the forms (i.e., the intrinsic nature) of that object. The mind while learning the meaning of a word, ‘grasps’ this form encapsulated in the sense of the term. This attitude, as Putnam maintains, due to its mythical appearance does not warrant much of our attention as there will be hardly any philosopher who will be eager to hold such a mythological view. But there is another kind of reply which assigns the referential relation to some relation/property. This reply, as Anderson (1992, 56) maintains, is "... scientifically respectable but incapable of actually fixing reference". This group asserts that there is some physical relation which serves as the fixer of determinate reference in addition to the set of operational and theoretical constraints, and thereby try to combat Putnam's charge of the indeterminate relation of reference. One of the candidates offered as determining a unique referential relation is physical relation/property. A token of a term will refer to any x if x possesses a certain physical property (Putnam, 1989, 216). This proposal, however, does not have much credentials against

This candidate, as we have discussed at length in the previous chapter, offers a physicalistic theory of reference.
model-theoretic arguments as it fails to explain how that particular physical property/relation gets 'singled out'. The offshoot of Putnam's model-theoretic arguments is that there exist other physicalistic relations which may as well serve the physicalists' purpose.

The second candidate is a more plausible one: this also puts forth the physicalistic relation, but in relation to the notion of explanation. A term refers to a particular object, a proponent of this view would argue, because it bears a physical relation with it and this relation in turn "... explains the way we behave with those tokens, our observable actions and their observable results ..." (Putnam, 1989, 216-7). Putnam confesses that he himself thought this to be the way out of the model-theoretic arguments, before 'going public' with his 'internalist' attitude. But as we have seen in our previous chapter, Putnam's concept of explanation has been inherently interest-relative. He thus did not need the reference relation which is "fixed from the point of view of the universe" (Putnam, 1989, 219). On the contrary, when a physicalist philosopher takes a certain physical relation as determining 'the' reference relation by explaining our behaviour, he takes explanation in the absolute sense. But that is a myth; explanation is interest-relative. Moreover, the mechanism of such an explanatory scheme depends on the fact that certain of our sentences come out true. So truth is taken to be determining the
reference relation. But this involves 'flagrant circularity' as reference, needs to be determined first if we are to consider the possibility of our ideal theory turning false (The metaphysical realist premise 3).

There are other problems with this candidate of explanation as determining the referential relation. This concept of explanation of the physicalists depends heavily on the concept of truth. Reference is identified with a particular physical relation which renders most of the concerned sentences true and thereby explains the behaviour as a whole. The purport of model-theoretic arguments, as has already been pointed out, is to show that a theory can be given different interpretations (by assigning different referential relations) all of which preserve the truth-value of the total set of sentences. So any of such reference relations will be able to perform the explanatory role by rendering the entire set true. Thus this feature of explanation fails to single out any particular 'intended' reference relation and thereby fails to be the additional constraint that will serve to pick out the 'intended' referential relation.

The main trouble with metaphysical realists is that they assume that "what is outside of our mind somehow interprets our language for us" (Putnam, 1989, 219). Now the task for them is to single out such an interpretation. The major
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responsibility of model-theoretic arguments, on the other hand, is to show that there can be many such interpretations—Singling out is internal to a model as it is also an interest-relative concept.

A ‘variant’ of this candidate of explanation is ‘causal connection’, an yet another proposal of physicalism. Reference is singled out by causal connection. A token of a term is said to refer (determinately) to an object when it is ‘causally connected' with the latter.

The most common rejoinder to it from Putnam is called the argument of ‘more theory’. The question before us is to determine what identifies the ‘intended' reference relation. If we say that the linguistic symbol ‘causal connection’ does it, then Putnam will ask the question, what is the referent of ‘causal connection' and how is it determined? When the referential relation of the total language is indeterminate, just to offer ‘more language' (‘causal connection') as a candidate is to beg the question.

Another problem is how to differentiate between ‘background condition' and what Putnam (1989) calls the ‘bringer about conditions' of a certain event. Such distinction is thoroughly interest-laden. So the realism that speaks of an impersonal world-view alienates the observer and therefore cannot
refer to our interest (which may be termed as pragmatic constraints) as providing the difference between 'background conditions' and 'bringer about conditions' (Putnam, 1989, 219-20).

The realist might retort by maintaining that this argument of just 'more theory' really does not hold against him as 'causal connections' themselves are taken to fix the intended reference and not the linguistic symbol 'causal connection'. As Van Cleave charges, "... in putting forth the causal theory, ...; one poses an external constraint on reference, a constraint that works from outside the theory rather than within it... . It is not causal language that fixes reference; it is causation itself" (Van Cleave, 1992, 349).

Or as Brueckner, in his well researched paper "Putnam's Model-theoretic Argument Against Metaphysical Realism", maintains:

We maintain that the use of language together with non-linguistic facts about the world (e.g., causal relation between the world and the use of language) do fix the intended interpretation of the language. Unless Putnam can discredit the foregoing claim, he has given us no reason to suppose that every attempt at a linguistic specification of a theory's intended interpretation must fail (Brueckner, 1984, 137).

What the metaphysical realists point out in this manner is that the 'burden of proof lies on Putnam. As they are convinced of
the reasonableness of their claim that there does exist a determinate reference relation, Putnam's argument fails to gain much ground. So Putnam's argument from incoherence fails. But incoherence, as we have noticed, is defined by 'unintelligibility' or as being empty. And we have also seen Putnam's meticulous argument against each candidate of 'intended' relation of reference. Thus against this realist rejoinder of 'burden of proof Putnam will appeal to the concept of 'intelligibility'. Putnam asks, is the mere statement that causal connection or causality fixes the intended reference relation enough for our purpose? Is it not the realists' responsibility to make this precious notion of causal connection or causality precise and intelligible? Putnam, as brilliantly brought out by Anderson (1993), maintains that the realist candidate of causality lacks this intelligibility and thereby becomes incoherent. Following Putnam we can draw a distinction between the way a theory fixes reference for its terms (which obviously is an empirical endeavour) and a theory of reference that deals with the nature and determinateness of the concept of reference, which is an a priori question. Model-theoretic arguments demand an answer for the latter question. As Anderson maintains,

The conditions that Putnam places upon the causal realist, then, are not conditions necessary for a word to refer to an object, but rather are conditions necessary for a theory of reference to be substantive and plausible" (Anderson, 1993, 315).
Putnam's attempt in the course of the model-theoretic arguments is to show that all possible candidates for such a 'substantive and plausible' and therefore intelligible theory of reference will have either of two characteristics and will thereby fail to execute the function of reference fixing. The characteristics are such that, if present, they preclude any candidate from becoming the proper theory of reference required by the realists. These two principles are explicated as follows:

(1) The empirical nature of the candidate. This is the characteristic of the theories of reference that provide empirical determinants of reference. Such theories, for their 'modesty' and empirical nature, fail to meet the high standards of the a priori question. It thus "lacks the resources necessary to 'hook onto' mind-independent reality" (Anderson, 1993, 315). The theories which are considered scientifically respectable fall short of being the 'intended' reference due to their empirical nature.

(2) The second characteristic maintains that any such candidate should not have extravagant ontology which is prima facie implausible. They will thus replace semantic 'indeterminacy' by 'ontological absurdity'.

The concept of modesty is used here in the sense of incapacity. Later, in the discussion of this chapter we will talk about another kind of modesty which is a realist attitude, encapsulated in the acceptance of 'coherence of scepticism'—
Thus a realist should prove that all the candidates for reference fixing and especially causal connection or causality do not possess the above mentioned characteristics. Taking causality as an a priori, already defined property will not be of much help. In this respect, we can take into account the 'causality trilemma' that is implied by Putnam's writings on causality. Anderson, following Putnam, identifies three ways of interpreting the concept of causality. 'The first lemma' of the trilemma is to assume causality as "a mere place holder for something we know not what" (Anderson, 1993, 316). It is obvious that when our search is for a substantive and plausible account of reference, this first candidate of causality will hold little hope.

Second comes the familiar notion of causality, as exemplified in Hume's writings, which is empirical in nature. This empirical nature, as already mentioned, deters it from reaching "beyond the empirical all the way to things in themselves" (Anderson, 1993, 317). Moreover, as Anderson argues, any concept that is empirical in nature, should be captured by means of the operational and theoretical constraints. Since the 'intended' referential relation required by the realists cannot be captured by the operational and theoretical constraints, this empirical version of causality definitely fails to serve the purpose of reference fixing.
Finally comes the ‘third lemma’ of causality that defines causality as ‘a genuinely metaphysical notion’. Brueckner (1984, 138) is ready to define causality in this fashion. He rejects Putnam's criticism of "surd metaphysical truth" (Putnam, 1981, 46) as an unreasonable objection. This proposal, however, does not say much as it is very difficult to make sense of this metaphysical notion of causality. Moreover, even if we accept that existence of such metaphysical facts, it is hard to imagine how a knowledge of such metaphysical facts is possible. This cannot count as a "plausible naturalistic explanation for how reference is fixed" (Anderson, 1993, 317). Thus the mere insistence that ‘causal connections’ or causality by themselves do the reference fixing does not offer much hope.

Thus by maintaining that causal connection or causality themselves fix the reference the realist is not confronting Putnam's real threat. Putnam himself accepts causal theory of reference along with ‘division of linguistic labor as the right semantic theory of reference fixing. What a realist is required to offer is a reply to the a priori question regarding the nature of reference and not the empirical question of determining reference. In fact, Hansen (1987, 88-9) is aware of this distinction and also of the fact that the model-theoretic arguments create problems for the realist as the realist lacks a theory of reference that apriorily explains reference as a
unique, determinate relation. Hansen thinks this is a very unreasonable demand and charges that even anti-realists cannot offer such a theory of reference. But my argument is that the internal nature of an anti-realistic theory/model as opposed to the external one of metaphysical realism (as captured in expressions like 'God's eye view', 'no eye view', 'from the point of view of the universe' etc.) does not need such a referential relation that is being determined externally. The verificationist semantics will do the job of furnishing the background against which the (empirical) causal theory of reference works.

Hansen (1987), in his desperate attempt to reply, falls back on the 'burden of proof gambit and asks "Why does Putnam think that it is incumbent upon realism to prove that our terms have determinate extensions?" (Hansen, 1987, 89). Devitt, in the same spirit, maintains, "Putnam, in effect, accuses the metaphysical realist of begging the question in appealing to a theory to determine reference for a theory. I have accused him of begging the question in claiming that the reference of 'causally related' is not determinate" (Devitt, 1984, 190).

The real force of Putnam's charge of incoherence, at

This term, when accepted by Putnam does not imply all the implications of verificationism. It only implies that the understanding of a sentence consists in our ability to use it (Putnam, 1975a).
the face of all these realist rejoinders, will become explicit if we construe the model-theoretic argument in the form of a *reductio* of realist premises. This *reductio* can be identified at two levels. Firstly, it renders the referential relation presupposed by the metaphysical realist premises *indeterminate*. It thus poses a *reductio*, since the possibility of a 'determinate referential relation' is a prerequisite of the metaphysical realist picture.

The second *reductio* points to the inherent inconsistency of metaphysical realism. It may also be considered as the reply to the realist rebuttal to Putnam's first *reductio* argument which says reference remains indeterminate in a realist picture. The force of Putnam's *reductio*, however, is not exhausted at the first level. The *reductio* cuts the metaphysical realist premises even at a very deeper level. But to appreciate this we should first consider the reply which the metaphysical realists commonly give to the model-theoretic arguments. Here their strategy is to 'shield' the metaphysical realism come what may. They maintain that the metaphysical realism is not defeated even if the model-theoretic arguments are taken to be valid. It

I am indebted to Anderson for this brilliant idea of *reductio*, (1992, 1993).

Reduction of this kind is even accepted by Hansen (1987) and Brueckner (1984). Their attempted reply to it consists of their denial of the conclusion of Putnam's model-theoretic argument that reference is indeterminate.
only proves 'referential plurality' or 'semantic plurality'. And as a result, as Lewis (1984) maintains, "[T]he *metaphysics* of realism survives unscathed. What does suffer, if Putnam has his way, is realist semantics and epistemology" (Lewis, 1984, 232). What model-theoretic arguments have shown is that there can be many interpretations and in like manner, many correspondences. "Truth of a theory on a given interpretation", however, as Lewis argues, "would still make sense, and in a *non-epistemic* way" (Lewis, 1984, 231, emphasis added).

Our question is, can it really remain non-epistemic? My point is that the concessions that Lewis is ready to make at the level of 'realist epistemology and semantics' by way of referential plurality cuts very deep. It robs metaphysical realism of much of its power as this concession forces the realist to give up his premise of non-epistemic nature of truth. This points to the other *reductio* of metaphysical realist premises. The correspondence theory of truth of metaphysical realism is taken to be radically non-epistemic. It is reflected in the fact that even our ideal theory might go wrong. But as we have argued before, this picture is intimately tied with and in fact dependent on the concept of determinate unique reference. If, on the other hand, referential plurality is conceded, in the manner suggested by Lewis, the realists will lose the ground required for maintaining their premise that even our ideal theory might turn out to be false. The concessions made by the realists
thus defeat the major realist premise and thereby renders the
total realist picture 'incoherent'. This point can be made
explicit if we take into account Putnam's 'Brains in a Vat'
argument which, as Anderson (1992) contends, is a demonstration
of the force of the reductio presented by the model-theoretic
arguments. It is more so as Putnam's 'Brains in a Vat' argument
takes the causal theory of reference as one of its premises.
Thus the ensuing reductio, if justified, cuts even the realist
rejoinder of the first reductio that 'causal connection' or
causality determines the unique reference relation. It is to a
detailed discussion of the 'Brains in a Vat' argument that we
turn in the next part of this section.

3.2.3 The 'Brains in a Vat' Argument

The importance of the BIV argument lies in the fact
that it demonstrates the 'unanticipated' and 'unacceptable
consequences' that metaphysical realism will have (in the field
of epistemology and semantics), given the concessions that it
makes at the face of the force of the reductio of the
model-theoretic arguments. Before going into the critical
details of the metaphysical realist position, we start with a
brief outline of this well-known BIV argument of Putnam. Putnam

A terminological clarification: Throughout this thesis 'BIV
argument' refers to Putnam's argument whereas 'BIV' refers to an
inhabitant of the Brains in a Vat world speaking Vat-English.
imagines a world in which the brains of all sentient beings are removed from their heads (not by some evil scientists but that is how that world is!) and put in a vat which is controlled by some highly sophisticated computer. The most interesting point about these BIVs is that they all experience the same mental representations which, we, the non-BIVs experience while interacting with our environment. Putnam attributes this aspect to the impulses from the computer that cause the BIVs to have the illusion that they are having the same experiences as the non-BIVs. Against this background Putnam asks the question, can the words of BIVs (supposing that they also use English which of course is Vat-English) have references in the same way that the words of English (as spoken by non-BIVs) have? That is to say, can their language have the same references as that of the non-BIVs? Putnam's reply to this question is an emphatic 'no'. This is due to his conviction that the 'causal requirement' must be met for successful reference. This is derived from Putnam's early stage of philosophizing where he advanced the new theory of reference with its characteristic slogan that 'meanings just ain't in the head'. To put it in Putnam's words, "one cannot refer to certain kinds of things, e.g. trees, if one has no causal interactions at all with them, or with things in terms of which they can be described" (1981, 16-17). This point assumes

Putnam thus does not accept restrictive causal connection. As he later elaborates in Reason, Truth and History, "[T]he idea that causal connection is necessary is refuted by the fact that 'extraterrestrial' certainly refers to extraterrestrials whether
utmost importance from the point of view of the present thesis. The reason is that it reinforces the central tenet of the thesis that there exists a continuity between the allegedly intermittent stages of Putnam's writings. It shows that Putnam's causal theory of the first phase has been carried over to the final stage of internal realism where it provides the correct theory of reference fixing. But there is another crucial point here. This theory of reference occurs as a premise of an argument, which I will show, ultimately works as a reductio of the metaphysical realist premises. One may, of course, approach this problem of reductio in a different way. A realist like John Heil (1988), for example, argues that this reductio arises due to the inherent inconsistency of the causal theory of reference. In his reply, Putnam rejects this realist argument. He argues that the causal theory works perfectly well when it is assumed within the scheme of internal realism. The apparent inconsistency is due to the realist's attempt to couple the causal theory with metaphysical realism and more importantly to his attempt to present the causal theory in the garb of apriorism. We will elaborate on this point later. Now to get back to the BIV argument:

The point which Putnam wants to make with the help of this argument is that we are not brains in a vat. This is because the very supposition that we are brains in a vat is false we have ever causally interacted with any extraterrestrials or not!" (1981, 52).
and therefore **self-refuting**. Thus the BIV argument can be represented as an anti-sceptical argument similar to that of Descartes' *Cogito* argument. As Tymoczko (1989) comments "... Putnam has extended Descartes' *Cogito* argument in a new and powerful way" (281). It is true that the BIV argument is popularly represented as an anti-sceptical argument. But in the context of this thesis, I have used this argument to represent a *reductio* of metaphysical realist premises. Thus the argument goes as follows: 15

**Premise I**

Metaphysical realism is true and truth is radically non-epistemic; we may all be brains in a vat.

**Premise II**

For the purpose of referring to an object, we need to be causally (directly or indirectly) connected to it. This causal requirement also shows that we cannot be wrong about every thing (i.e., we are not brains in a vat).

Alternatively, this premise in a more familiar form runs as, "If we were brains in a Vat, we could not consider whether we were brains in a vat".

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14 There are a number of articles in literature who take the BIV argument as anti-sceptical and argue that it fails to prove the statement 'I am not a brain in a vat' needed to quieten the sceptic.

15 This form of the argument is suggested in Peter Van Inwagen's "On Always Being Wrong".
Conclusion

So, we are not brains in a vat. These two premises constitute Putnam's reductio, that truth is not radically non-epistemic.

Before going into a detailed discussion of the realist rejoinders to this argument, we should see how this argument works. Given Putnam's causal requirement as expressed in premise II, to refer to trees, brains and vats etc., we need to be causally connected with these things. The BIVs are, on the other hand, ex hypothesi incapable of any such causal connection since their referential functions are necessarily confined to the range of computer impulses. They cannot go beyond those impulses. However, one may still talk about an indirect causal connection between the Vat-English word 'tree' and the tree outside. This claim is made on the ground that there is a connection existing between the designer's (of the computer) word 'tree' and the tree outside. But in reply we will say that this defense will not be of much help since the BIV ex hypothesi do not have any such designer. Thus follows Putnam's conclusion: the BIVs cannot say that they are BIVs in a way in which the non-BIVs can say this (even though they may have similar mental representations). However, there is only one way, as Putnam argues, in which the sentence uttered by a BIV, namely, 'I am a brain in a vat' say have a meaning. In Putnam's explanation the BIV sentence, 'I as a brain in a vat' as uttered by a BIV essentially means 'I as a
brain in a vat in image' or something very similar, but not that 'I am a real (physical) brain in a real (physical) vat'. Thus, this sentence, when uttered by a BIV, results in a false statement. Again, when a non-BIV utters it, it is definitely false as a non-BIV cannot possibly be a brain in a vat. Thus comes Putnam's oft quoted argument,

So, if we are brains in a vat, then the sentence 'We are brains in a vat' says something false (if it says anything). In short, if we are brains in a vat, then 'We are brains in a vat' is false. So it is (necessarily) false (Putnam, 1981, 15).

This BIV argument is one of the most frequently and severely attacked arguments in contemporary analytic philosophy. We can divide the various criticisms against this argument broadly into two categories: the first derives its force from the charge of equivocation and the second from proving the sceptical worry as self-refuting.

The critics who belong to the first group (e.g. McIntyre 1984, Smith 1984, Harrison 1985, Iseminger 1988, etc.) hold that Putnam's argument fails as it involves equivocation, i.e., the premises of Putnam's BIV argument use the sentence 'I am a brain in a vat' in two different senses, viz., one in English and the other in Vat-English. So the conclusion is not valid. Brueckner (1986), on the other hand, accepts the formal validity of this argument. However, he complains that due to its equivocation, or as Brueckner calls it, 'meaning-scepticism', it
fails to prove the conclusion 'I am not a brain in a vat'. He maintains that Putnam's argument has force only at the 'metalinguistic level', where it shows that the sentence 'I am a brain in a vat' is false. But due to Putnam's meaning-scepticism or equivocation, this sentence expresses different statements in different worlds (i.e., at the level of the object language), which are rendered false by different reasons. Putnam's BIV argument does not provide any ground for accepting one statement over the other. Thus, Putnam's argument fails to make any assertion at the object language level. It only proves that if we were BIVs then we could not have asserted that 'we are brains in a vat'. But that, however, does not prove that we are not brains in a vat. Thus the non-epistemic force of the metaphysical realist theory of truth as correspondence is retained. We may still all be BIVs! And the reductio of Putnam is thus defeated.

My argument here will try to show that the reductio is not really defeated. To appreciate the force of this reductio, we should keep in our mind one epistemological attitude which all realists, especially metaphysical realists, share. This is, to use C. Wright's term, an attitude of 'modesty', that is, the acceptance that the mind-independent world makes our beliefs etc., true. Gaining knowledge is a real victory in a real war in

This point is developed in C. Wright's "Realism, Anti realism, Irrealism, Quasi-realism" (25).
this view. What follows from this attitude of 'modesty' is the 'coherence of scepticism'. The sceptic's apprehension that we might all be wrong in formulating our theories about the world, is a meaningful one, given this realist attitude of 'modesty'. Putnam's *reductio* derives its force from the point that metaphysical realism, when supplemented by the causal theory of reference, renders the 'coherence of scepticism' unintelligible within the realist scheme. It thus proves that the proposals and concessions that a realist makes at the face of the model-theoretic arguments of Putnam cuts back into the premises of metaphysical realism. This may be explained in the following way.

Brueckner and Van Inwagen concede that if we were brains in a vat then we could not have asserted that 'we are brains in a vat'. This is because all the BIV assertions are caught in the 'causal wave' which cannot refer to the real brains in real vats. But one of the consequences of this is that it robs the BIV of the power of philosophical *speculation*. To entertain a Cartesian sceptical doubt, the BIV should be able to assert, 'If we are all brains in a vat, then ...' i.e., a conditional whose antecedent should express, as Anderson (1992, 71) observes, a 'non-standard' theory. But as already conceded by Brueckner and others, this non-standard theory is not available to a BIV as 'the cognitive range' of his language is seriously limited due to its limited causal reach. So a BIV is
thus incapable of entertaining a sceptic worry characteristic of the 'modest' attitude of the traditional realist, and thereby fails to be a traditional realist. This conclusion, however, does not worry Brueckner and others as they attribute it to the odd and restrictive set-up of the BIV world. Anderson also assumes that it does not affect us, the non-BIVs, as we "in the actual world bear the proper causal relation to the Kind of the objects that make speculation about the ultimate nature of reality possible" (Anderson, 1992, 73). Our 'vat' refers to a real vat and 'brains' refer to real brains. So we can speculate that we are brains in a vat.

But can we really speculate in the above mentioned manner? We can use the predicament of the BIVs as an eye opener regarding our predicament within the range of causal realism. A sceptic's worry goes as follows:

(A) If we are brains in a vat, then grass is not green.

One way of considering this possibility is to think of a possible world, other than our own, where the conditional holds. But a sceptic wants us to entertain this conditional in our own world. Given this sceptic demand, we are to think that in the actual world we are brains in a vat and our reflection of (A) is a reflection of a BIV. But this is not possible; this requires us to take the conditional firstly as a sentence of BIV and secondly as a supposition that provides the occasion for entertaining the possibility that I am a brain in a vat. But as
Anderson rightly observes, these two cannot be held together. If I consider the first condition, that is, if I take a BIV reflection of (A), then my utterance of (A) will not express the hypothesis that I am a brain in a vat as no BIV can entertain that hypothesis. On the other hand, if we try to entertain the second condition, i.e., the supposition that I am a brain in a vat, then I am already presupposing that I am not a brain in a vat, and thus cannot entertain the first condition. As Anderson maintains,

[T]o entertain the possibility that the actual world is a BIV world I must be able coherently to believe both that some sentence I entertain expresses the claim that I am a BIV and that no sentence I could possibly entertain expresses the claim that I am a BIV (Anderson, 1992, 73-4).

The argument given above shows that a causal realist cannot entertain the sceptic worry that he is a brain in a vat. So scepticism does not remain coherent for him any longer. Apart from this linguistic argument, we can also give a conceptual argument against the intelligibility of the coherence of scepticism within a causal realist framework. This simple but often overlooked argument revolves around the pronouncement of the causal theory of reference that our words have reference (and in turn meanings) by being "causally tied to whichever reality is ultimately causing us to have the experiences that we do, and so

This brilliant argument is suggested in Anderson (1992, 73).
we just will end up holding true beliefs about that reality" (Anderson, 1992, 76). Since causality with its enormous power relates us to the Kantian noumenal world, all our beliefs which are the results of that relation cannot but be true. There is thus no room left for sceptical worry that we might be wrong as we cannot be wrong. The world in itself has reached the courtyard of our theory through the front door of causal connection. So we can no more say 'You never know, we might all be wrong'. Because there is no reality left that can prove us wrong. Our causal connections have captured the reality in its entirety. So there is no room for any apprehension. Anderson writes,

[C]ertainly something of the 'dignity' of the quest for knowledge is lost inasmuch as the wondrous powers of 'causal relations of the appropriate type' will literally carry us up the mountain, regardless of how bad our epistemic situation might be (Anderson, 1992, 76).

This reductio as suggested by the BIV argument thus aims two blows at the metaphysical (causal) realist: it makes 'coherence of scepticism' implausible for him and thereby the non-epistemic view of truth is also rejected. A possible observation in this respect is that, Putnam's internal realism to be realism proper, has to accommodate this realist attitude of 'modesty' as reflected in the 'coherence of scepticism'. Internal realism, as has already been mentioned, accepts the causal theory of reference as the correct theory of semantics. The question thus arises, does not the inclusion of the causal
theory within the scope of internal realism impair the intelligibility of the 'coherence of scepticism' within that framework, as it does for metaphysical realism? This will be dealt with in detail in our next section. Before going into that we will briefly consider the other common criticism of the BIV argument.

The second common criticism starts with the observation that even a BIV can ask the question *am I a brain in a Vat?* and given the formal validity of Putnam's BIV argument, reach the conclusion that *I am not a brain in a vat*. The BIV argument thus, the critic says, turns out to be a paradoxical argument and the sceptic worry to be self-refuting. This seeming paradox disappears when we compare it with Skolem's resolution of the Löwenheim-Skolem paradox. Skolem pointed out that our terms (scientific or otherwise) have meaning internal to a model/interpretation. In like manner, the BIV argument presents a hypothetical situation relative to our language (English) and our theory. Thus the hypothesis is an internal one. So "it makes no sense to wonder whether we really are brains in a vat in some absolute sense, apart from the sense we give these terms in the context of our language and theory" (Tymoczko, 1989, 290). This aspect of the internality of the BIV argument has a significant implication for the entire framework of the later Putnam. In our next section we will notice that this internality makes room for the 'coherence of scepticism' within this
Reference and Internal Realism

framework, which, as we have already observed, is a prerequisite for any realism.

In our next section, an outline of internal realism will be drawn with the focus on its theory of truth and reference.

3.3 Internal Realism: An Outline

Putnam’s internal realism is a shift from his strong realism of his early days which is at times taken as a version of metaphysical realism. However, internal realism is, by no means, a total break from his earlier realism. Realizing the internal incoherence of metaphysical realism, Putnam now adds the aspect of internality to his earlier realism. Now the question is, how is this ‘internality’ incorporated?

Internality points to the fact that our world-views are always conceived in relation to us – speakers. The realist model is always a model from our point of view and not from the point of view of the universe. The given world is our world and the realist model too should be envisaged as an attempt to explain our interaction with this world. Realism, to put it in Putnam’s phrase, thus appears here with ‘a human face’. The impersonal world-view of metaphysical realism makes way for a personal interactive world-views. In Representation and Reality
(1988, 109), Putnam identifies two principal features of internal realism, viz., conceptual relativity and objectivity,

Conceptual relativity is the direct outcome of the incorporation of internality within the realist model. In it, the concept of interest-relativity of the second phase of Putnam reaches its culmination. Conceptual relativity is also an outcome of Putnam's attempt to apply the Löwenheim-Skolem theorem to the field of philosophy of language. It maintains, to put in a nutshell, that only in relation to a model interpretation does our world picture make sense. We can talk about truth or reference of a sentence only within the scope of a system of which it is a part. In traditional philosophy, conceptual relativity is usually coupled with some versions of conventionalism. This might be the reason why the prevalent interpretations of internal realism takes it as a variant of cultural relativism or pragmatism. We will not go into a detailed discussion on this issue since this will be the topic of discussion of our next chapter. But before passing onto the other feature of internal realism, viz., objectivity, we can notice that internal realism does not talk about mere conventionality. Rather, reality is conceived here in terms of a ‘conventional-factual-continuum’.

The notion of objectivity is reflected in internal realism's concepts of truth and reference. One point should be
made clear at the outset while discussing the concept of objectivity of internal realism: that this concept does not refer to the traditional objectivity with capital O. The concepts of truth and reference also, in a like manner, do not refer to Correspondence and the unique, determinate relation between our words and the world outside. This, however, does not mean that internal realism rules out our concepts of truth and reference altogether. Internal realism only subsumes them under the scope of a conceptual scheme. Internal realism, quite contrary to metaphysical realism, does not try to define the concept of reference in terms of an 'essential' unique relation to the objects outside. Such a priori questions (methodological and otherwise) are rejected here as senseless. Concepts of reference, meaning, etc., are taken as primitive (in the sense of being irreducible) concepts with many different uses.\(^\text{18}\) The conceptual relativity of a realist hypothesis consists of the fact that it specifies a particular use for the concepts used in that theory. This empirical realism accepts the causal theory of reference as a theory of reference fixing. It, however, makes it clear that talking about reference does not specify what reference is in the absolute sense, nor does it maintain that reference is a determinate, unique relation. Internal realism, owing to its adherence to conceptual relativity, adds one core normative constraint to its regulative principle of PBD, viz., that the

\(^{18}\) According to Putnam, concepts like meaning, reference and truth etc., have 'open texture' (Putnam, 1988, 120).
comparable theories should treat ('use') the concept of reference in a similar fashion. This aspect is evident in Putnam's comment that "[M]eanings have an identity through time but no essence" (Putnam, 1986, 11). That is to say, they should be identifiable as using the same concept of reference in order to apply the PBD to them.

We now move on to the internal realist's concept of truth. It is usually maintained that truth here consists of coherence and not of correspondence. But I would like to argue that there is room for a kind of correspondence, namely, an internalized correspondence. It will be necessary to accept this because faith in some correspondence is a prerequisite for a realist picture. It is reflected in the attitude of 'modesty'. Following Anderson, we may note that, Putnam "... does not dismiss our pre-philosophical convictions about the meaning of the word 'true' (Anderson, 1992, 77). This pre-philosophical conviction requires that a sentence, say, 'grass is green', is true only if grass is really green. But it does not talk in favour of any unique correspondence, viz*, 'correspondence-with-teeth'. So internalized correspondence which is a 'correspondence-without-teeth' can also explain the pre-philosophic notion of truth. Putnam accepts truth as a regulative ideal. It is reflected in his explication of truth as an 'idealization of justification'. This insertion of idealization has twofold implications: firstly, it distances
internal realism from anti-realism and cultural relativism where truth is explicated purely in terms of justifiability. Secondly, this idealization helps Putnam retain the 'modesty' required of any realism. It helps us to identify the component of correspondence in the framework of internal realism. Both these implications point to the objectivity aspect of Putnam's notion of truth.

Truth as 'idealization of justification' means that truth is independent of any temporal (individual or collective) justification (as opposed to the view of anti-realism). It also implies that truth is independent of the belief of the majority of the members of a culture (as opposed to the view of cultural relativism). Both these features point to the availability of the attitude of 'modesty' in the internal realist framework. In our discussion of the critique of metaphysical realism, we observed that the wedding of metaphysical realism with the causal theory of reference proved to be fatal. That disastrous union robs metaphysical realism of the realist attitude of 'modesty'. In this respect, we had raised the question of how internal realism would avoid the fate of metaphysical realism, once it was united with the causal theory of reference. Internal realism avoids this disastrous outcome due to two reasons; one is its empirical nature and the other is its inclusion of the notion of idealization in its concept of truth. The empirical nature of the internal realist scheme is evident in its aspect of
internality. The sceptic worry, thus, when construed within the scope of internal realism, does not express the absolute worry as to 'how do we know that we are not BIVs?' Even the sceptic worry is formulated as an internal question. The sceptic's worry is made intelligible as an internal question here and then rejected. Internal realism does not accept the Cartesian-style of scepticism which is a reflection of the metaphysical realist's conception of truth as non-epistemic. But the realist attitude of 'modesty' does not warrant a Cartesian-style of scepticism either. 'Modesty' only reflects the fact that our beliefs are not made true solely on the basis of our ideas. This aspect is captured by the internal realist notion of truth as idealized justification. Such idealization keeps the possibility open that even if a sentence is true in the light of our present day scientific findings, future scientific discoveries might prove it to be wrong. That is to say, the sentence might turn out to be wrong in the ideal limit of the concerned scientific knowledge. That is, to put it in C. Wright's words, "... we (also) want it to be a real mountain, not some sort of reification of aspects of ourselves" (Wright, 25). But this does not speak for a Cartesian-style of scepticism. However, the Cartesian-style of scepticism is not the only possible kind of scepticism that we may have. As Anderson says, there can be empirical scepticism as opposed to the "... transcendental [one in a] way presupposed either by Cartesian scepticism or by Putnam's own BIV scenario" (Anderson, 1992, 79).
Thus this feature of idealization points to the objectivity of Putnam's notion of truth. It, therefore, as we have already mentioned, stops the reduction of this view of truth to mere conventionalism. This can be showed with the help of an example. Unless we decide upon how we are going to use concepts like 'object', 'existence' etc., the question 'how many objects exist' does not really make any sense. It thus makes room for conceptual relativity. But once we decide the use of these concepts, the answer to the above mentioned question within that use or 'version', to put it in N. Goodman's phrase, is no more a matter of 'convention' (Putnam, 1988, 110-113). It then becomes a factual question and a reply to it depends on how the facts are and not solely on what we think about them.

The aspect of conceptual relativity suggests the dependence of the internal realist notion of truth on its notion of reference. Truth, though explained in terms of idealized justification, is not reduced to the latter; they are, on the other hand, shown to be 'interdependent' concepts. Putnam goes on to argue that "... truth is not the bottom line, truth itself gets its life from our criteria of rational acceptibility" (Putnam, 1981, 130). These criteria are ultimately tied with the ways in which the words of a language are given referential import. This is what explains the relevance of truth. As Putnam's example shows (Putnam, 1981, 137-8), a person's
description of a room will be acceptable as true only if he uses our ‘concepts’ of tables and chairs. Otherwise, his description will not make any sense to us inspite of being formally true. This notion of ‘making sense’ is made intelligible by the internal realist notion of reference. This speaks for the centrality of reference in this framework which will be dealt with in our fifth chapter. Before that we will consider internal realism's relation to anti-realism and relativism in the next chapter.