Engaging Putnam

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Contents

List of Abbreviations

AA	*Kant's gesammelte Schriften* (Akademieausgabe)
AE	Attitude Externalism
AI	Artificial Intelligence
APA	American Philosophical Association
BIV	Brain in a vat
CA	Capabilities Approach
CLT	Categorical Level-Theory
LT	Level-Theory
LT_{int}	Level-Theory, internalized
MIPOV	Metaphysical Independence of One's Point of View
MIT	Massachusetts Institute of Technology
MP	Methodological Principle
MT	Model Theory
MT_{int}	Model Theory, internalized
OC	Ludwig Wittgenstein, *On Certainty*
PA	Peano Arithmetic
PA_{int}	Peano Arithmetic, internalized
PI	Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*
PS	Proof System
RHF	Hilary Putnam, *Realism with a Human Face*
SA	Spatial Autonomy
TTC	Hilary Putnam, *The Threefold Cord*
UCLA	University of California, Los Angeles
WL	Hilary Putnam, *Words and Life*
ZF	Zermelo-Fraenkel set theory

Sanjit Chakraborty
Introduction to this Volume

Hilary Putnam was one of the truly great philosophers of the twentieth century. In a memorial essay I published elsewhere, I wrote:

> Leading philosophy towards constant dynamic expeditions and holding on to an incredible style of self-critique, Hilary Putnam (1926–2016), over five decades, has been in the process of making laudable contributions in philosophy and philosophy of science by being a beacon to a series of philosophical generations. He was a profound scholar full of wisdom, morality, and love of humanity, in a word a "Philosopher's Philosopher."[1]

Hilary Putnam, whom I called "Gurudev" (mentor), was a *renaissance man of philosophy* for his laudable and novel contribution in the fields of philosophy and philosophy of science. The impetus for bringing out this honorary volume on his fundamental contributions to philosophy and philosophy of science began after his peaceful death on March 13, 2016 in Arlington, Massachusetts. In its aftermath, I, along with my co-editor James Conant, decided to pursue the task of editing a volume dedicated to the memory of our beloved mentor, teacher, and friend Hilary Putnam. By 2019 we had assembled an excellent set of essays for this celebratory volume. Despite the new and often frightening situation worldwide, our contributors swiftly sent us their marvelous essays on time. We profusely apologize to our distinguished authors for the delay on the part of the editors in this atmosphere of mayhem.

   The notices published shortly after Putnam's death, such as Martha Nussbaum's obituary in *Huffington Post* (March 14, 2016),[2] my own reflection on Putnam,[3] David Macarthur's introduction,[4] and Geoffrey Hellman and Roy Cook's preface,[5] all explicitly underlined two extraordinary parts of Putnam's life and work: first, Putnam's profound wisdom and influential contributions in every

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1 Sanjit Chakraborty, "Hilary Putnam: An Era of Philosophy Has Ended," *Philosophia* 45, no. 1 (2017): 1–6.
2 See Martha C. Nussbaum, "Hilary Putnam (1926–2016)," Obituary published in the *Huffington Post*, March 14, 2016, https://www.huffpost.com/entry/hilary-putnam-1926-2016_b_9457774 (last accessed March 13, 2021).
3 Chakraborty, "Hilary Putnam."
4 David Macarthur, "Introduction," in Hilary Putnam and Ruth Anna Putnam, *Pragmatism as a Way of Life: The Lasting Legacy of William James and John Dewey*, 1–9 (Cambridge, MA and London: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2017).
5 In Geoffrey Hellman and Roy T. Cook (eds.), *Hilary Putnam on Logic and Mathematics*, 1–7 (Cham, Switzerland: Springer, 2018).

field of philosophy could only be measured up to Aristotle; second, how, as he persistently changed and re-engaged his philosophical perspectives, deploying his iconic style of self-criticism in order to know the truth behind an argument, Putnam displayed an unwaveringly beautiful mind (*schöne Seele*), a grand combination of intellect and humanity. As Cornel West beautifully says:

> Ironically, in the end, Putnam is most like Socrates – the founding father of Western philosophy and the First Enlightenment. Putnam is *atopos* – no label can subsume him, no "ism" can define him, and no school of thought can contain him. Like a jazzman in the life of the mind, Putnam is forever on the move in search of persuasive pictures of the position of human beings in the world mindful of the wise words of Rabbi Tarphon, "The task is not yours to finish, but neither are you free to desist from it."[6]

It was truly impressive when Maria Baghramian and the University College Dublin celebrated Hilary Putnam's 80th birthday with an exciting and enormous conference, titled "Putnam at 80," where a wide range of renowned philosophers, former students, and friends of Putnam presented their papers on his seminal philosophical contributions. Later, a dozen of the papers presented at that event were collected and published together as a volume titled *Reading Putnam*[7]. Personally, I myself felt it to be an immense honor to organize an international conference on *The Philosophy of Hilary Putnam* at the Indian Institute of Technology, Bombay, in October 2015, where he delivered (on October 3, 2015) his last talk over Skype on "Thought and Language."

Many collections of essays on his works were published during his lifetime. The following half dozen stand out: Christopher Hill's *The Philosophy of Hilary Putnam* (1992), Peter Clark and Bob Hale's *Reading Putnam* (1995), Yemima Ben-Menahem's *Hilary Putnam* (2005), Maximilian de Gaynesford's *Hilary Putnam* (2006), Maria Baghramian's *Reading Putnam* (2012) and Randall Auxier, Douglas Anderson, and Lewis Hahn's *The Philosophy of Hilary Putnam*[8] (2015). These are admirable honorary volumes, all of which appeared during his lifetime and reflect on the many-faced twists and turns in Putnam's philosophical explorations. He

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6 Cornel West, "The Third Enlightenment," in *The Philosophy of Hilary Putnam*, edited by Randall Auxier, Douglas Anderson, and Lewis Hahn, 757–767 (Chicago, IL: Open Court, 2015).

7 Maria Baghramian (ed.), *Reading Putnam* (New York: Routledge, 2012).

8 Christopher. S. Hill (ed.), *The Philosophy of Hilary Putnam* (Fayetteville, AR: The University of Arkansas Press, 1992); Peter Clark and Bob Hale (eds.), *Reading Putnam* (Cambridge and Oxford: Blackwell, 1995); Yemima Ben-Menahem (ed.), *Hilary Putnam. Contemporary Philosophy in Focus* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005); Maximilian de Gaynesford, *Hilary Putnam* (Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press/Acumen, 2006); Baghramian, *Reading Putnam*; Randall E. Auxier, Douglas R. Anderson, and Lewis Edwin Hahn (eds.), *The Philosophy of Hilary Putnam* (Chicago, IL: Open Court, 2015).

deeply cherished interpretative criticism and offered his own trenchant replies to the contributors in most of the aforementioned volumes.

Yet *Engaging Putnam*, our ambitious memorial volume, aims to make a new contribution. It is the first volume to appear after his death that seeks to take stock of his lifetime achievement as a whole. It comprises twelve outstanding essays exploring the innovative contributions of Hilary Putnam in the emerging fields of philosophy and philosophy of science. Putnam's emblematic theories are searchingly explored in these essays, and his older views are shown to lead to cumulative progress. The approach of the volume is distinctive in outlining Putnam's philosophical contributions within a single volume, with an emphasis on avoiding distortion while providing critical analysis that will prove helpful for readers. A summary suffices: all the essays collected here are self-explanatory and fine-grained in their Putnam-inspired thoughts.

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Turning to Putnam's philosophical contributions, an immensely complicated topic involving vast areas, Joshua Thorpe and Crispin Wright, in their magnificent paper "Putnam's Proof Revisited," look again at Putnam's *Brain in a Vat* thought experiment. The argument challenges the familiar idea of an embodied mind that interacts causally with the external world, imagining a Brain in a vat [henceforth BIV] not causally hooked up to a real world and stimulated by engineered electro-chemical signals. Looking back at Putnam's thought experiment, Thorpe and Wright debunk the VAT scenario that purports to expose "the skeptical conclusion that you lack the vastly greater part of the empirical knowledge you ordinarily take yourself to have." More specifically, they think that Putnam rules out the VAT scenario by defending semantic externalism, a view evolved from the interconnected and equally celebrated Twin Earth case.[9] This opening essay also shows us how the VAT argument expresses Putnam's thinking not only about reference but also about concepts. Significantly, the authors reject any epistemic distinction between the reasoning of Putnam's BIV argument and that of the McKinsey paradox (1991), and make a foray into Putnam's account of warrant transmission as a question-begging proof! Using Putnam's interpretation to harness the possibility of metaphysical realism and the VAT argument, Thorpe and Wright highlight two vital elements – *Mind-Independence* and *Robust Correspondence* respectively – to check whether Putnam's VAT scenario could serve as a parable for an Ideal Error situation or not.

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9 Hilary Putnam, "The Meaning of 'Meaning'," in *Language, Mind, and Reality: Philosophical Papers,* Vol. 2, 215–271 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975).

In his essay, "Language, Meaning, and Context Sensitivity: Confronting a 'Moving-Target,'" Sanjit Chakraborty picks up three major interrelated aspects of Putnam's philosophy of language and epistemology: language, meaning, and the context-sensitivity of "truth-evaluable content." In the first part of the essay, he briefly describes how Putnam's semantic externalism challenges both internalist theories based on the idea of a "language of thought" (often called "mentalese") and theories that prelude meanings as abstract entities. Putnam construes meanings, or more accurately, ascriptions of meaning, as descriptions of the world involving competencies that speakers possess. For instance, as an externalist, Putnam argues against the natural language proposed by Chomsky and especially the early Fodor, who postulate an innate language realized by computer programs in the brain. Chakraborty explores the relationship between Putnam's hypothesis that "language precedes thought" and theses of his such as that "language is a social art" or that linguistic acquisition is an ability that presupposes human intelligence operating in a physical and cultural environment, or to use Putnam's words, involves the acquisition of a "socio-linguistic hypothesis."[10] The second section of his essay focuses on Putnam's celebrated causal theory of reference that refutes the view that the semantic features of a term are determined by its epistemic descriptive features (e.g., Russellian "descriptions") by considering how meaning can be determined by referential functions that are publicly sharable (i.e., be subject to a constraint of publicity). Putnam's "normal forms" is a regimentation of a way talking about the meanings of words not indeterminate in a Quinean sense, and which supports a claim of the non-ambiguity of "the meaning" of words in a linguistic sense, namely what is represented in dictionaries and by linguists. Interestingly, for Putnam, the reference of terms is also context-sensitive. In fact, this is the main reason why the truth-conditions of sentences are themselves context-sensitive. Chakraborty later examines the trajectory of a "moving-target" philosopher like Putnam, especially showing a magnificent expedition from the meaning and language towards "truth-evaluable content," paving the way to "context sensitivity."

Sanford C. Goldberg's brilliant paper "Externalism and the First-Person Perspective" consists of two parallel inquiries: first, an epistemic investigation into externalism's compatibility with first-person perspective, and second, some metaphysical qualms about mind and brain, language and thought, and especially meaning and mental content. The linked series of logical argumentation throughout the essay produces a collection of these implications and they are then brought together in a single package. The implications Goldberg presents

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10 Putnam, "The Meaning of 'Meaning'," 227.

should by now be familiar; the outcome of packaging them together Goldberg anticipates may not initially seem feasible. To make explicit how the arguments work: he shows externalism to require a revision of the standard account of the *first-person perspective*. And if externalism is true, we will need to reconsider clear-cut conventional views about what it is to occupy an epistemic standpoint on the world. Goldberg puts his interesting conclusion as follows: "The result would be a view on which one's point of view yields one's epistemic perspective on the world – all of which is *causally* dependent on, but *metaphysically* independent of the world itself."

Garry Ebbs, in his stimulating essay entitled "Putnam on Trans-Theoretical Terms and Contextual Apriority," vindicates the nuances of the philosophical approach he finds in Putnam's paradigm-changing explanations of the methods of scientific inquiry concerning the world. The key problem of the paper is the dilemma of how to reconcile the methodological role of statements accessible in synchronic, practical ways with Putnam's view of diachronic, theoretical reasoning, whose contours conceive whole new theoretical structures. Ebbs brings out Putnam's point here by considering a range of examples. For example, if one holds with Putnam that if the only way a statement can be overthrown is by a new theory, then it should count as contextually a priori, one thereby commits oneself to a very different conception than Quine's for what counts as a theory-laden observation. Looking back on a scientist in the eighteenth century, Putnam holds that it would not have been epistemically reasonable for an agent to accept that physical space is Euclidean. Hence the statement was not contextually a priori for them, even if a century later it will come into focus for us as one that is contextually a priori. An important *methodological* principle that Putnam derived from this consideration is, in Ebbs's words, that, if a person cannot specify any way in which a statement S may be false, it is reasonable for her to accept S and hold it immune from disconfirmation. As we know, in defense of the analytic-synthetic distinction, Putnam notably introduced the idea of a "law-cluster" concept that requires multifaceted criteria such as laws and specifiable predictions. Whereas Quine denied any rules that create a sharp line between evidence and theory, for Putnam the notion of being immune to revision for an analytic sentence rests on an epistemic basis. This permits Putnam to use *trans-theoretical* terms to refer (for example, to kinetic energy) across either side of an episode of radical change in our theory of kinetic energy. In the concluding part of the paper, Ebbs criticizes Putnam's proposed elucidation of what counts as contextually a priori in terms of conceptual schemes. Ebbs concedes that Putnam's deployment of the latter notion is helpful in showing how there are important methodological differences in the character of, for example, Einstein's discovery that the geometry of physical space is non-Euclidean and Russell's discovery that Frege's Basic Law V

is inconsistent. Ebbs concludes, however, that Putnam's conceptual schemes explanation of the contextual a priori does not deliver what it promises. For the methodological differences upon which Putnam focuses in elucidating the differences between such cases fails to explain the difference between having and not having a contextually a priori entitlement to accept a statement.

Keeping in mind Ebbs legitimate points, let us now turn to Quine who challenges Carnap and his followers who maintained the logical positivist commitment to the analytic-synthetic distinction. Quine's naturalistic perspective frames observational sentences in terms of holophrastic ones in which the notion of conjunction is delimited. Quine says that, "The observation sentence is the means of verbalizing the prediction that checks a theory. The requirement that it commands a verdict outright is what makes it a final checkpoint. The requirement of inter-subjectivity is what makes science objective."[11] Putnam objects that for Quine, there is no fact of the matter as to whether an observation sentence is "theory laden" or "not theory laden," because there is no fact of the matter as to what it means. Of course, once we accept a translation manual, we may say that a word is a "theoretical term" and that an observation sentence "contains theoretical terms." Even if consider any translation manual that fails to preserve the stimulus meaning of observation sentences unacceptable, there still remains no fact of the matter as to whether a translation manual is right.

In his insightful essay "Mathematical Internal Realism," Tim Button carefully assesses Putnam's internal realism in terms of his philosophy of mathematics. Button investigates internalism about arithmetic, set theory, and model theory separately, revisiting Putnam's mathematical internal realism by means of a speculative connection between the Skolem-Gödel Antinomy and conceptual relativism. For Putnam, an ontological assumption seems internal to a conceptual scheme, and he later rebuffs any scheme-independent facts underneath the panorama of internal realism. The sophisticated turn that Button sketches on internal categoricity results in mathematical internal realism. He thinks that these results speak in favor of a non-metaphysical view that lends support to Putnam's dictum that models "have names from birth." This analysis forms one horn of Putnam's impasse since internal categoricity conflicts with Putnam's internal realism, which disdains the claims of mathematical objectivity as hinging on mathematical objects by promoting a formal link between quantification "over mathematical entities" and quantification over natural kind terms.

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11 W.V.O. Quine, *Pursuits of Truth* (Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press, 1992), 4–5.

In investigating the topic of mathematical entities that might be taken up as true on some crucial realist interpretation, one should consider the sphere of quantum mechanics. Putnam's notable writings in this area, bearing titles such as "The Logic of Quantum Mechanics" (1979)[12]. "Quantum Mechanics and the Observer" (1981),[13] "A Philosopher Looks at Quantum Mechanics (Again)" (2005),[14] and "The Curious Story of Quantum Logic" (2011),[15] reveal his strong disagreement with prevalent interpretations of quantum mechanics. In the first of these, his paper "A Philosopher Looks at Quantum Mechanics" (1965)[16], Putnam talks about "quantum potential," i.e., some unknown force for which there is scant evidence, but could encompass the disturbance by the measurement. Putnam infers that, "'measurement' can never be an undefined term in a satisfactory physical theory . . ."[17] But David Bohm, who postulated an electron (quantum particle) along with a hidden "guiding wave" that controls its motion, subsequently nourished the idea that the *Principle of Non-Disturbance* is a valid means to measure the position of the electron. Originally Putnam considered this as a failed interpretation of quantum mechanics and resisted the validity of the *Principle of Non-Disturbance* for any quantum measurement. Later (in "A Philosopher Looks at Quantum Mechanics (Again)") he changed his mind, admitting that his early argument doesn't ultimately succeed, since the notion of live functioning does not require a rigid interpretation. Such interpretations of quantum mechanics, in my own view, supplement empirically testable predictions about the probabilities of experimental results with forms of description of quantum phenomena that exaggerate the reality of hidden variables.

Tim Maudlin, in his seminal paper, entitled "The Labyrinth of Quantum Logic" argues that the two-slit interference of electrons embedded in quantum mechanics predicts many surprising phenomena. Maudlin lucidly explains the span of quantum mechanics and its central conceptual difficulty, known as the

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12 Hilary Putnam "The Logic of Quantum Mechanics," in *Mathematics, Matter and Method: Philosophical Papers*, Vol. 1. 174–198 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979).

13 Hilary Putnam, "Quantum Mechanics and the Observer," *Erkenntnis* 16, no. 2 (1981): 193–219.

14 Hilary Putnam, "A Philosopher Looks at Quantum Mechanics (Again)," *British Journal for the Philosophy of Science* 56 (2005): 615–634.

15 Hilary Putnam, "The Curious Story of Quantum Logic," in *Philosophy in an Age of Science: Physics, Mathematics and Skepticism*, edited by Mario De Caro and David Macarthur, 162–177 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012).

16 Hilary Putnam, "A Philosopher Looks at Quantum Mechanics." in *Beyond the Edge of Certainty: Essays in Contemporary Science and Philosophy*, edited by. Robert G. Colodny, 75–101 (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1965).

17 Putnam, "A Philosopher Looks at Quantum Mechanics," 132.

measurement problem in physics. Maudlin observes a development in Putnam's response to the problem. In his early career, Putnam stressed modifications to classical logic that could resolve the measurement problem and account for the two-slit phenomena. Maudlin shows how this foray of Putnam's into his own version of quantum logic ended in self-contradiction and failure, but also how he himself came to recognize this. Culminating in his final contributions to the topic, forty years later, in which Putnam became a trenchant critic of the entire approach to quantum mechanics that he himself had pioneered. He came to appreciate that one can't just stipulate how so-called "measurement interactions" work and then trim logic to fit. That is, he came to appreciate that the form of the difficulty that quantum theory here faces – in seeking to bring "measurement interactions" and "measurements" under the same physical laws and principles of physical analysis – is one that plagues natural scientific inquiry elsewhere as well. Maudlin concludes his piece as follows: "Putnam wandered for three decades in the labyrinth of quantum logic, but he finally found his way out again." The essay's detailed account of how he did so not only interestingly delineates the trajectory from Putnam's earlier views to his later views but also thereby illustrates the intricacies involved in any attempt to unravel physical problems through modifications of mathematics and logic.

Roy Cook's fantastic paper, "Fulfillability, Instability, and Incompleteness," carries out the deductive account of Gödel's first incompleteness theorem pertaining to the sentence G constructed via diagonalizing on the negation of the provability predicate. In addition, Cook does not introduce meta-level deductivism, according to which sentence G nor the negation of G could be proven from modulo familiar assumptions or axioms of arithmetic. Putnam recapitulates the whole debate by bringing in the concept of "semantic," which seems to enter in the course of the object-language level as it entails a predicate that blends a minimal "correctness" criterion for sentences of arithmetic, as well as semantic at the meta-level to get the truth-value of a sentence in a model-centric theorem. Cook raises a question: Can we mix-and-match these methods to obtain proofs of the incompleteness theorem that are deductive at one level and semantic at the other? A moderate stance comes from Cook's thought that it looks inevitable to diagonalize on the negation of the semantic "correctness" predicate in order to obtain a sentence that is neither provable nor refutable in arithmetic. Putnam and Kripke's model-theoretic argument holds that the most intelligible way to prove the incompleteness theorem in accord to a sentence expressing a syntactic/deductive claim. The theory is not beyond doubt. Cook's alternative argument is motivated by the reasons he lays out for the collapse of Putnam-Kripke's model-theoretic argument. Subsequently, it opens up a scope for the non-standard model of arithmetic.

Martha C. Nussbaum's outstanding essay "Putnam's Aristotle" addresses Putnam's special affinity for Aristotelian philosophy. His reverence for Aristotle is embodied in his remark: "As I get smarter, Aristotle gets smarter." She explores Putnam's receptive stance toward Aristotle, as expressed in his co-authored paper "Changing Aristotle's Mind" with Nussbaum[18] and a solo-authored paper "Aristotle after Wittgenstein."[19] Nussbaum argues that this reverence is not anchored in mere argumentation, but in a more general affinity of philosophical methods and thoughts, such as his adoption of Aristotle-inspired ideas (the *Capabilities Approach*, *Hylomorphism*, *Functionalism*, *Realism*), his procedure of organizing a metaphysical inquiry into natural kind terms and properties and, especially his refusal to split animal minds from bodies. Cornel West appreciates that "Putnam and Nussbaum are claiming that Aristotelian realism undermines Platonic distinctions between deep reality and surface appearances, and modern dichotomies between mind and body."[20] In the final section of her essay, Nussbaum discusses tragic conflicts in ethics and literature, taking issue with Putnam in arguing that a deeper appreciation of such conflicts is an integral part of an Aristotelian approach to human flourishing.

In his critical essay, "Davidson and Putnam on the Antinomy of Free Will," Mario De Caro takes up Putnam and Davidson's respective accounts of free will and seeks to explore how and why those views are governed by the twofold motive of finding a way to conjoin adequate accounts of mind-body relation and causal reference with our ordinary and scientific explanatory practices. Both their accounts represent a quest for liberal forms of naturalism, in which normative notions are pertinent to scientifically explicable phenomena without being reducible to them. By thus employing Davidson as a foil, De Caro is able to bring out what is distinctive in Putnam's own variety of such a liberalized from of naturalism. This enables De Caro to illuminate both the strengths and weaknesses of Putnam's own accounts of determinism and free will. He argues that Putnam's attempt to strengthen a libertarian account of free will through an appeal to consideration drawn from the indeterminism of quantum mechanics fails. But he also shows that Putnam, by the end of his life, came to realize this and therefore accepted compatibilism as the correct account of free will. Putnam thus came to agree with Davidson that an action is free as long as it is

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18 Martha C. Nussbaum and Hilary Putnam, "Changing Aristotle's Mind," in *Essays on Aristotle's De Anima*, edited by Martha C. Nussbaum and Amelie Rorty, 27–56 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992).

19 Hilary Putnam, "Aristotle after Wittgenstein," in *Modern Thinkers and Ancient Thinkers*, edited by Robert W. Sharples, 117–137 (London: UCL Press, 1993).

20 West, "The Third Enlightenment," 761.

adequately caused by some relevant intentional state. However, he never wavered in his disagreement with Davidson on one crucial point: his rejection of Davidsonian *monism*. Putnam denied that all causal relations instantiate a universal (physical) law. De Caro details Putnam's reasons for thinking it is not the case that causal powers must only belong to physical events. It is this consideration that renders the mental epiphenomenal in Davidson's framework and in no way epiphenomenal in Putnam's thought. It is this dimension of Putnam's thought – his resolute *pluralism* in ontology and in epistemology – that De Caro singles out as his lasting contribution to this area of philosophy. De Caro's concerns find an important resonance in Putnam's thought of patronage libertarianism with the indeterminism of quantum mechanics that goes wrong, and due to this failure in the last part of his life, Putnam admits compatibilism as an acceptable explanation of free will.

Wittgenstein, in conversation with G.E. Moore, argues against the notion of contents, calling them "shadows." The problem is that on this conception, "contents" are themselves unambiguous, and to disambiguate a sentence is to say which of a number of contents it has. Still, those contents themselves are not held to have different interpretations. Putnam taught me to take this problem seriously and said, "Philosophers before Quine spoke of sentences as 'expressing propositions'; those propositions were like the shadows that Wittgenstein attacked. Quine made 'proposition' talk unfashionable, but now it seems to have crept in under the new terminology of 'contents.'" Following Travis in his *Unshadowed Thought*[21] and elsewhere, I think that "meanings," as in the things dictionaries and grammars seek to describe, do not determine what Travis calls "truth-evaluable content." The latter depends on the meaning plus the context of use. But now you will ask, "how can you yourself use the word 'content,' if you object to the notion?" The answer is that the notion of content I object to is one on which (i) contents are supposed to be the meanings of sentences and (ii) they determine the truth-conditions of sentences in all possible worlds. My "truth-evaluable contents" are not the meanings of sentences, and they only serve to disambiguate sentences to the extent that is appropriate to employ them on a particular occasion of use. If I can decide whether a sentence is true, false, or not clearly either on a particular occasion given enough relevant information, then I know its truth-evaluable content on that occasion. What its truth-evaluable content would be if some other logically possible world were actual, I may not be able to determine in my present situation – nor do I need to be able to do so.

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21 Charles Travis, *Unshadowed Thought: Representation in Thought and Language* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000).

Thus knowing the truth-evaluable content is a species of knowing how, not knowing that. (I critically discuss this in my essay "Language, Meaning, and Context Sensitivity: Confronting a 'Moving-Target'" – earlier presented at the *International Conference on The Philosophy of Hilary Putnam* that took place at the Indian Institute of Technology Bombay in 2015.)[22]

With regard to the notion of unformalizability, Putnam refused to endorse any account of the ability of a hearer to understand the truth-evaluable content of an utterance on a particular occasion of use that rested upon an axiomatic algorithmic analysis of that ability. Fodor's compositionality account vindicates at most the claim that that some words, particularly logical words, contain formal properties, but it hardly suffices to show that nouns such as *gold*, or *diamond*, or *tree* have context-insensitive meanings, or that there is such a thing as *the property of being gold*, to which an agent is causally connected such that the extension of "gold" in (almost) every sentence containing that words may be analyzed in terms of "the" collection of things having that purportedly unique property.

It is against the background of Putnam's rejection of such mainstream analyses of the meanings of natural kind terms and his own later endorsement of occasion-sensitive semantics that Duncan Pritchard explores the implications of this dimension of Putnam's philosophy for central debates in contemporary epistemology. In his startling contribution to this volume, titled "Putnam on Radical Scepticism: Wittgenstein, Cavell, and Occasion-Sensitive Semantics," Pritchard considers how Putnam's ingenious style of reasoning enables him to bring the panorama of considerations he originally adduced in his writings on content externalism to bear on the epistemological dilemma posed by radical skepticism. This paper reconstructs the arc of Putnam's journey towards such an anti-skeptical line in epistemology – one that draws its inspiration from Putnam's own distinctive and penetrating understanding of the lessons to be learned from Wittgenstein, Cavell, and, most recently, Travis's respective ways of articulating the insights underlying *occasion-sensitive semantics*.

Pritchard's essay helps to bring out crucial aspects of Putnam's conception of language. For Putnam, a language is like an art form that each user modifies and adds to. There is a constant interaction between the subjective and the intersubjective. Thinking of utterances as vehicles for "propositions" obscures this, since "propositions" are not supposed to be human creations. The mental event that is someone's thought on a particular occasion is part of the mental life of a subject, and admittedly is subjective in that sense but this does not

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22 See in detail, https://www.hss.iitb.ac.in/en/international-conference-philosophy-hilary-putnam (last accessed March 13, 2021).

preclude its content (unless it contains the indexical "I") from being shareable. The question of whether anyone else can think exactly what I think when I think "my name is Sanjit Chakraborty," or "I have an antique pen in my hand" is an intricate one, which Putnam leaves to philosophers like David Kaplan. One should resist sweeping generalizations here. Putnam's outlook is perhaps closer to Kant's than to that of the post-Kantian idealists, but none of them thought about the phenomenon of context sensitivity nor arrived at Wittgenstein's insight that we land ourselves in paradox if we hold both that all understanding of signs requires interpretation and that every interpretation of a sign can itself be further interpreted. In Putnam, we encounter the unique case of a philosopher who combines the internal diversity of a systematic approach to philosophy of the sort we find in Kant, with one who is exquisitely attuned to the sorts of considerations that Wittgenstein brought to light – ones that make it so difficult to achieve the forms of systematic insight to which philosophy aspires.

In her interesting essay "Natural Laws and Human Language," Yemima Ben-Menahem, decisively examines the issue in Putnam's philosophy regarding realism, understood as an objective understanding of natural laws, and how it might appear to conflict with the vista of human language in which sensitivity to context and what is ineluctably personal in experience may play a role in shaping the contours of our beliefs and methods of justification. Ben-Menahem puts forth an alternative conception of realism, one that commits her neither to the naïve view (a meticulous description of the world that is simply correct) nor to the view that all correct descriptions are requisite parts of the language of fundamental physics. In addition, the authenticity and efficacy of a range of descriptions do not fully look up physical concepts and physical categories that fend off reductionism. Ben-Menahem's account draws on Putnam's nuanced discussion in his later writings of what is required of an adequate philosophy of objectivity and language – one which faces up to the depth of the entanglement of these issues in questions about the limits of reductionism. She follows Putnam in trying to offer an account that does equal justice to scientific knowledge and to the irreducible character of our various forms of non-scientific knowledge.

This raises the question of what the place of conceptual necessity is in the alternative conception of realism that Ben-Menachem sets forth and attributes to Putnam. The supervenience principles advocated by contemporary naturalists are certainly not conceptual truths; for Putnam they are substantive metaphysical assumptions in their own right. For instance, contemporary naturalists hold that all the properties of material objects (except for *existing in this particular universe* – if that counts as a property at all) are supervenient on the total *physical* states of the world; but no naturalist ever claims that this is a *conceptual* truth any more than they would claim that "All brown things are colored" is true in

virtue of the truth of some supervenience principle. Putnam himself came to reject any form of naturalism that conceives of what happens "in the mind" as happening in an isolable region of physical reality. Such a conception, he concludes, rests on a solipsistic conception of what a mind is that is not simply false, but incoherent. As Putnam later puts it:

> To have concepts it is necessary to have appropriate causal connection with an environment. Semantic externalism implies externalism about the mind; if to have a mind is to have thoughts, then to have a mind it isn't sufficient to have the right goings-on in the brain and the rest of the body; to have a mind you have to be hooked up to an environment in the proper way, or at least to have a mind that can think about an external world, you have to have causal interactions that extend into the environment. One might call this an anti-solipsist conclusion: If externalism is right, pace Descartes, an isolated disembodied mind would have no thoughts about the world at all, not even false thoughts. In Kantian language, the pseudo-thoughts of Descartes' isolated mind are an empty play of representations and not thoughts at all.[23]

The question, however, is how exactly this conception of "appropriate causal connection with an environment" is to be spelled out. Putnam's answer to this question undergoes considerable fluctuation over the course of his philosophical development, reflecting tensions in his thought on this matter. In my own effort to get clearer about what he himself was committed to here, I once addressed the following question to him:

> Even you regarded truth as a non-relative property. You also claimed that the truth of a belief must be 'warranted assertible.' Here do you think that, in the linguistic representation of our belief, norms are assertible with the concept of causal constraint in our external world?

Putnam responded as follows:

> I claimed (and now think that was a *mistake*) that to be true a belief must be warrantedly assertible (or in other words confirmed by the evidence), not necessarily at the present time, but in the future, *provided the epistemic situation is good enough.* [This is the point at which I helped myself to a notion that the internal realist is not really entitled to.] As to the second part of your question, concerning causal constraints: I accepted the idea that we must have causal connection of the right sort to things in our environment BEFORE, DURING, AND AFTER my "internal relativist" period (1976–1990). BUT – and this is a big "BUT" – during my internal realist period whether we have such causal connection was just a part of our "theory," and thus also mind-dependent, whereas now, as a realistically minded naturalist, I say that whether we have such causal connection or not isn't a matter of whether our beliefs are or could be confirmed.

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23 Hilary Putnam, "Sixty-Five Years of Philosophy," in *Naturalism, Realism, and Normativity*, edited by Mario De Caro (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2016), 223.

For the internal realist, the so-called external world – the world outside the brain and body – is itself *mind-dependent*; for a real realist of the sort Putnam later became when he abandoned this feature of his earlier internal realism, it isn't. Qua internal realist, Putnam held that truth has everything to do with assertibility; qua the real realist he became, he holds that truth and assertibility are logically independent. From his later vantage, therefore, his own earlier internal realism was insufficiently realist. In finding his way back to this fully realistic view, Putnam reported to me that he had been inspired by ideas that he found in the Indian realistic school of thought of Nyāya and Vaiśeṣika.[24]

Maximilian de Gaynesford's "Balance in *The Golden Bowl:* Attuning Philosophy and Literary Criticism," is a worthy attempt to further explore Putnam's favorite novel. One aim of his contribution is to highlight a dimension of Putnam's thought that he feels has gone underappreciated, namely his view that philosophy and thoughtful appreciation of literature have much to contribute to each other. The essay seeks to bring out why this ought not to be regarded as a topic peripheral to Putnam's central concerns in philosophy, noting ways in which the influence of figures such as Stanley Cavell, John McDowell, and Iris Murdoch helped Putnam to arrive at an unusually capacious conception of rationality – and especially of moral reasoning. At the outset of the essay, de Gaynesford quotes Putnam's remark that moral thinking requires "reasoning in the full sense of the word," something that "involves not just the logical faculties, in the narrow sense, but our full capacity to imagine and feel, in short, our full sensibility." The aim of the essay is, on the hand, to explore Putnam's own reasons for thinking such reasoning "in the full sense of the word" requires that we cultivate a capacity to describe the sorts of situations that call for nuanced ethical evaluation in the language of a sensitive novelist; while, on the other hand, it does so by supplementing and challenging certain details of Putnam's own conception of what this involves. It prosecutes this dual aim by developing an alternative reading of *The Golden Bowl* – one that offers a different account of wherein the philosophical significance of the novel lies, when approached anew with Putnam's interest in seeing what philosophy might be able to learn by attending to the perspective on human life and action that such a novel affords.

This strikes me as a fitting note on which to conclude this volume, underscoring how literature can serve as a guide for living ethically through a gradual expansion of self-realization toward a universal realization of humanity

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24 In a personal communication, Putnam wrote to me: "I did have a course in Indian philosophy in graduate school, and I remember being impressed with Nyāya and Vaiśeṣika."

and its values. In the context of what it means to do analytic philosophy, Putnam once wrote to me:

> As I mentioned in a recent message, your gurudev is an analytic philosopher, though not a scientistic one, and the first principle of analytical philosophy is to be sure that questions have a clear sense before you try to answer them. If they don't, you don't always need to dismiss them, but you had better find at least one way to make them clear. Another principle is that questions (especially philosophical questions), have presuppositions that need to be subjected to critical examination.

An extended introduction is often freighted by its context, and this possibility grows when someone writes about the person whom he admires most and loves very much. So I feel I should not extend it more. My sincere thanks go to my co-editor, James Conant for his conceptual inputs and his team Garrett Allen, Ryan Simonelli, Elena Comay del Junco for her careful editing. Besides, I would like to thank Cornelia Meinig and Sreetama Misra for keeping everything updated and their commitments to get the volume published in a timely fashion. We are grateful further to our publisher De Gruyter and Christoph Schirmer for his appreciation and various editorial help. We pay our heartfelt homage and gratitude to Noam Chomsky, Martha Nussbaum, and John Perry, all of whom read the volume in manuscript form and shared their precious endorsements in a timely fashion. Without the encouragement and incessant moral support of Martha Nussbaum, Maximilian de Gaynesford, Mario De Caro, Duncan Pritchard, and Sanford Goldberg, I personally could not prevail over the difficult hurdles faced during the completion of such daunting editorial tasks.

This honorary volume is dedicated to all Hilary Putnam's students and followers!