

What is «true» in internal realism?¹

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Abstract

This paper is a critical examination of Putnam's theory of truth as it evolves from metaphysical to internal realism. First, I analyze the model-theoretic argument that led Putnam to abandon the metaphysical concept of truth as correspondence and to adopt an epistemic view of truth. Though a powerful critique of the metaphysical realist conception of truth, this argument does not establish conclusively that the concept of truth has any *epistemic* content. Secondly, I discuss Putnam's idealization theory of truth, arguing that the identification of truth with «acceptability under ideal conditions» is at odds with the claim that truth is context-transcendent, since the notion of justification is intrinsically context-dependent and no amount of idealization can redeem its contextual character. Finally, I suggest that the realist intuitions that Putnam's internal realism tries to capture call for no more than a deflationary view of truth. Acceptance of this view requires abandoning not only the idea that truth is an epistemic property, but also the idea that truth is a *substantive property* that all true statements share and, therefore, a proper object of philosophical theorizing.

Key words: truth, Putnam, internal realism, acceptability, metaphysical realism, justification, idealization.

Resum. Què és «veritat» en el realisme intern?

Aquest article és un examen crític de la teoria de la veritat de Putnam en la seva evolució des d'un realisme metafísic a un realisme intern. En primer lloc, presento una anàlisi de l'argument de la teoria de models que va dur a Putnam a abandonar el concepte metafísic de veritat com a correspondència i a adoptar un concepte epistèmic de veritat. Aquest argument, encara que constitueix una potent crítica de la concepció de la veritat del realisme metafísic, no estableix conclusivament que la veritat tingui algun contingut *epistèmic*. En segon lloc, discuteixo la teoria idealitzada de la veritat de Putnam, tot argumentant que la

1. This paper is the product of many thought-provoking discussions with Professor Meredith Williams in the winter of 1994. If there is any original idea in this paper, it is probably hers. I am also grateful for having had the opportunity to work with Arthur Fine and Michael Williams, which enabled me to read Putnam in a new light. The argument of this paper relies heavily on their philosophical work. I also want to thank professor Cristina Lafont for insightful discussions on Putnam and theories of truth, and David Bullwinkle for helpful comments on earlier versions of this paper.

identificació de la veritat amb «acceptabilitat en condicions ideals» no s'adiu amb la tesi que la veritat no és contextual sinó transcendent, per tal com la noció de justificació és intrínsecament contextual i no hi ha idealització que la pugui redimir d'aquest caràcter. Finalment, suggereixo que les intuïcions realistes que el realisme intern de Putnam intenta captar no requereixen més que una perspectiva deflacionista sobre la veritat. Adoptar aquesta perspectiva implica abandonar no sols la idea que la veritat és una propietat epistèmica, sinó també la idea que la veritat és una propietat substantiva que totes les afirmacions vertaderes comparteixen i que, per tant, és objecte d'una teoria filosòfica.

Paraules clau: veritat, Putnam, realisme intern, acceptabilitat, realisme metafísic, justificació, idealització.

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I. Introduction

What is realist about «internal realism»? As Michael Devitt has pointed out², it is difficult to understand the nature of Putnam's intellectual change, and to see anything realist about his new view. An important aspect of that change concerns Putnam's conception of truth. Putnam's view has shifted from an extra-theoretic and metaphysical notion of truth (i.e. truth as correspondence with the mind-independent world) to an intra-theoretic and epistemic notion of truth (i.e. truth as idealized justification)³. However, Putnam insists, truth, the internal realist truth, though intra-theoretic, is not simply conventional and context-dependent. Unlike radical relativism, internal realism contains a substantial notion of correctness; and, unlike metaphysical realism, it links truth to justification. Putnam seeks a theory of truth that grounds realist intuitions without making truth epistemically inaccessible. Truth now becomes for

2. M. Devitt, «Realism and the Renegade Putnam», *Nous* 17 (1983), p. 291-301. See p. 295.
3. This shift takes place in *Reason, Truth and History* (Cambridge University Press: 1981) and *Realism and Reason. Philosophical Papers. Volume 3* (Cambridge University Press: 1983), where Putnam departs from the metaphysical realism of his early writings (collected in the first two volumes of his *Philosophical Papers*, Cambridge University Press: 1975). There is a further and more recent shift in Putnam's thought whose direction is still unclear. In *Words and Life* (Harvard University Press: 1994), he no longer holds the conception of truth as «rational acceptability under ideal conditions» that he put forward in *Reason, Truth and History* (see p. v for a short statement of his new position), but he still maintains that there is more to truth than a disquotational account can offer, that truth is «a substantive property» (p. 326), and that there is a conceptual connection between truth and justification (see «Does the Disquotational Theory Solve All Philosophical Problems?», p. 264-78; and «On Truth», p. 315-29).

him «idealized rational acceptability». This idealization theory of truth is what supports the *minimal* realism that Putnam advocates.

One virtue of internal realism that Putnam emphasizes is that it can explain the convergence of scientific knowledge (which is for him a crucial feature of mature science) without bringing in any metaphysical baggage. Putnam thinks that he can hold on to realism as an explanatory stance in philosophy of science without having recourse to inflationary metaphysics. But, as Arthur Fine and Michael Williams point out⁴, inflationism as such is not overcome in internal realism, for Putnam simply resorts to an inflationism of a different kind. In Fine's terms, Putnam becomes a «semantic inflater or truthmonger». He inflates the notion of truth, not with metaphysical content, but with epistemic content, by exchanging truth for ideal rational acceptability. The problem is that that semantic inflationism will not give Putnam what he wants, or so I will argue. In the end Putnam will not get a substantial notion of correctness out of the identification of truth with justification.

The trouble is that there is *prima facie* a strong asymmetry between truth and justification. As Putnam recognizes, justification is a contextual notion while truth is not. But Putnam thinks that he can bridge the gap between truth and justification by idealizing the latter, and so he concludes that truth should be treated simply «as an *idealization* of justification»⁵. I will argue that once you tie truth to justification, no amount of idealization will make truth context-transcendent, for any idealization will have to be anchored to a specific epistemic context. We have no clue about what ideal justification can consist in independently of particular justification contexts. And when we actually determine the ideal justification conditions for a particular claim, such conditions are dependent on current justification standards in such a way that, though ideal, they remain contextual, that is, parasitic on that epistemic context. After all, the idealization theory of truth fails to preserve the realist intuition that Putnam is so eager to nurse (i.e. that truth is stable or convergent). I will conclude, therefore, that there is nothing specifically realist about Putnam's idealized notion of truth. In fact, I will contend, the clarification of its epistemic content, despite its idealization, makes internal realism indistinguishable from a pragmatism à la Rorty (from whom Putnam is at pains to distance himself).

Finally, I will suggest that a merely disquotational elucidation of truth may be more congenial than the idealization theory to the minimal realism that Putnam wants to retain. Internal realism might be better off with a deflationary view of truth, which is to say that no theory of truth is needed. The strategy «let's idealize in order to remain realists» does not seem to work. So maybe we should just leave truth alone if a realism without inflation is what we want.

4. A. Fine, «Truthmongering: Less is True», *Canadian Journal of Philosophy* 19 (1989), p. 611-16, esp. p. 611; and M. Williams, «Do We (Epistemologists) Need a Theory of Truth?», *Philosophical Topics* 14 (1986), p. 223-42, esp. p. 237.
5. «Reference and Truth», in *Realism and Reason*, *ibid.*, p. 84.

In my analysis of Putnam's view of truth I will be concerned with two questions: first, whether the idealization theory makes the contexttranscendence of truth intelligible; and, second, whether a theory of truth is needed at all in order to preserve the realist intuition that truth is contexttranscendent. I will argue that both questions deserve a negative answer. In order to analyze and evaluate Putnam's developing conception of truth a close examination of his central arguments is required. The argument that led Putnam to abandon the metaphysical notion of truth as correspondence and to refashion the concept of truth in epistemic terms in *Reason, Truth and History* (hereafter RTH) is to be found in «Models and Reality»⁶. In the next section I will examine Putnam's move away from metaphysical realism via the model-theoretic argument of that paper. Section III will focus on the epistemic content and the idealizations that Putnam builds into the notion of truth. And the final section will discuss whether the concept of truth can be taken as an object of philosophical theorizing, that is, whether we need a philosophical theory of truth that goes beyond the mere logical analysis and pragmatic elucidation of the predicate «true».

II. From metaphysical realism to internal realism: the model-theoretic argument

In «The Meaning of "Meaning"» Putnam argues that since we use the notions of truth and extension in an extra-theoretic way, we have to accept the realist perspective to which these extra-theoretic notions belong⁷. In that paper Putnam's view was that it is the world itself that decides what belongs and what does not belong to the extension of our terms: e.g., it is the microstructure of the stuff «out there» that we call water that determines membership in the extension of the term «water». This realist notion of reference is tied to a correspondence theory of truth⁸. A statement is true just when, and because, there is a state of affairs corresponding to it, that is, when the appropriate referential relations between its component parts and reality obtain. These substantial concepts of truth and reference are said to play a crucial explanatory role in *scientific realism*, which, following Richard Boyd⁹, Putnam defines as an interpretative hypothesis that includes two central theses, namely:

1. Terms in mature science typically refer.
2. The laws of a theory belonging to a mature science are typically approximately true¹⁰.

6. *In Realism and Reason*, *ibid.*, p. 1-25. Notice that «Models and Reality (1977) was written before RTH (1981), although it was not published until 1983 in Volume 3 of Putnam's *Philosophical Papers*.

7. «The Meaning of "Meaning"», in *Mind, Language, and Reality. Philosophical Papers*, Volume I, Cambridge University Press: 1975, p. 236.

8. See *Meaning and the Moral Sciences*, Routledge & Kegan Paul: 1978, Lecture II, p. 18-33.

9. *Realism and Scientific Epistemology*, Cambridge University Press: 1978.

10. *Ibid.*, p. 20.

These two principles taken together are supposed to account for the behavior of scientists and the success of science, notably the *convergence* of theories in mature science. The reference of scientific terms and the truth of scientific laws were understood by Boyd and Putnam in metaphysical realist terms, that is, in terms of correspondence between scientific language and the mind-independent world. However, Devitt notices that 1 and 2 are compatible with any view of truth and reference, and that they do not, by themselves, entail metaphysical realism¹¹. The possibility of subtracting metaphysical realism from the interpretative hypothesis expressed in 1 and 2 that Devitt points out seems to have been precisely Putnam's thought. Realism as an explanation of scientific practice acquires a renewed interest for Putnam when he realizes that it can in fact be detached from any metaphysical thesis¹². 1 and 2 constitute the realist skeleton that remains after Putnam's transition from metaphysical to internal realism. The notions of truth and reference used in those principles are simply reinterpreted or, if you like, internalized¹³.

The thought that moves Putnam to «internalize» his earlier view is that we can be realists without having to resort to metaphysically-inflated semantic notions. The guiding intuition of internal realism seems to be the realization that we do not need extra-theoretic notions of truth and reference to explain the convergence of scientific theories. Devitt writes:

Let T' be the successor of T in any mature science. Then convergence holds if and only if *from the perspective of T'*, the terms of T typically refer and the laws of T are typically approximately true¹⁴.

Convergence requires only truth and reference relative to a theory, not unique correspondence with a mind-independent world. Realism needs nothing more than intra-theoretic semantic notions.

Moreover, Putnam now argues, the correspondence theory of truth ultimately fails to make sense of the convergence of scientific knowledge, for in explaining truth in purely nonepistemic terms, it makes truth inaccessible.

11. For Devitt this means that there is nothing specifically realist about the interpretative hypothesis that Boyd and Putnam put forth, and that we should look for realism elsewhere. Devitt argues that realism is simply the thesis that there exists a mind-independent world. He emphasizes that such thesis is devoid of semantic content. In particular, he insists that no doctrine of truth is constitutive of realism as he understands it («Realism and the Renegade Putnam», *ibid.*, p. 293).
12. See «Realism and Reason», in *Meaning and the Moral Sciences*, *ibid.*, p. 123-138.
13. Notice that acceptance of realism as an explanation of scientific practice by the literal truth of scientific theories does not automatically commit one to any theory of truth. In fact, as Williams has argued, realism as an interpretation of science does not seem to require a substantial notion of truth at all: «even if we agreed that the success of our theories is explained by their truth, we shall have no reason for adopting a richer-than-disquotational conception of truth itself» («DO We (Epistemologists) Need a Theory of Truth?», *ibid.*, p. 228).
14. M. Devitt, «Realism and the Renegade Putnam», *ibid.*, p. 294.

The idea of an abstract isomorphism between language and reality, an abstract mapping of concepts onto things in the world, is not in the end very helpful. The problem is that «too many correspondences exist» (RTH, p. 73) and to single out the right correspondence between words and things, the ultimate adequate reference relations, would require an epistemic access to mind-independent objects that we lack. But if all correspondences are equally good, if any model can make a theory true, then no real convergence will obtain. As Putnam puts it, «[i]f all it takes to make a theory true is abstract correspondence (never mind which), then incompatible theories can be true» (RTH, p. 73). But the metaphysical realist holds that truth is unique correspondence, that there is One True Theory on which all scientific knowledge will ultimately converge. This view, Putnam argues, is ultimately unintelligible. He thinks that its unintelligibility can be shown in purely logical terms. This is what Putnam attempts to do in «Models and Reality», which contains the most complete formulation of Putnam's logical argument. This argument is the cornerstone of Putnam's transition from metaphysical to internal realism¹⁵.

In «Models and Reality» Putnam offers an argument based on set theory which is intended to uncover the logical incoherence of the correspondence theory of truth. The argument has two different, though interrelated, parts. In the first part Putnam argues that the notion of correspondence between words and discourse-independent objects is highly problematic and the view of truth as unique correspondence a non-starter. The second part of the argument is intended to show that a radically non-epistemic notion of truth is unintelligible.

In the first part of his model-theoretic argument Putnam claims that set theory teaches us that «the total use of the language (operational plus theoretical constraints) does not «fix a unique «intended interpretation»¹⁶. Oversimplifying Putnam's argument and disregarding the technical niceties of set theory, the central idea seems to be that for any model M of a theory, we can always construct a model M' which satisfies equally well all the theoretical and operational constraints of that theory, by simply establishing a one-to-one correspondence between the elements of the universe of M (say 1, 2, 3, ...) and the elements of the universe of M' (say 1', 2', 3', ...). No matter what operational and theoretical constraints you place on a theory, you can always find more than one model that makes the theory true. The upshot of the argument is that there are always infinitely many different reference relations which satisfy all of the constraints that our practice may impose on our use of a language. Putnam concludes, therefore, that no sense can be made of the metaphysical realist claim that there is a unique language-world correspondence¹⁷.

A causal theory of reference to which realists like Boyd or Putnam's former self typically resort cannot solve the «too-many-correspondences» pro-

15. See footnote 6.

16. «Models and Reality», *ibid.*, p. 4, emphasis dropped.

17. *Ibid.*, p. 16.

blem. A causal theory (or for that matter any theory of reference) cannot single out one unique correspondence because it simply adds more theoretical constraints to the semantic interpretation of the language, and again these constraints can be satisfied by more than one model. As Putnam puts it, unless the word «causes» «is already glued to one definite relation with metaphysical glue, this does not fix a determinate extension for “refers” at all»¹⁸.

What Putnam wants to conclude from this argument is that truth and reference are intra-theoretic notions. Putnam takes the argument to show that the semantic interpretation of a theory is crucially dependent on the «conventions» that we adopt¹⁹ hence the «theory-dependence of meaning and truth»²⁰. The problem of indeterminacy arises only when we attempt to pin down the semantic interpretation of a theory from an external standpoint. From the perspective of its user the theory comes with an intended interpretation. It is only when we attempt to assign to it a semantic interpretation from a detached perspective (from a standpoint external to the theory) that we are confronted with an infinity of models. And then no amount of constraints of whatever kind will single out one model. If you separate language and reality there is no way you can put them back together again. So the trick is not to introduce a gap between language and the world in the first place. Reference and truth have to be internalized²¹, i.e. relativized to a theory, point of view, or «conceptual scheme». The result of this internalization is that the idea of a single true picture of the world, the God's Eye View of metaphysical realism, is abandoned. Internal realism urges us to give up the old ideal of the One True Theory. As Putnam puts it in RTH, «why should there not sometimes be equally coherent but incompatible conceptual schemes which fit our experiential beliefs equally well? If truth is not (unique) correspondence then the possibility of a certain *pluralism* is opened up» (p. 73, emphasis added).

If one side of the model-theoretic argument shows that truth is intra-theoretic, the other side is intended to prove that truth is an epistemic notion. The claim of this part of the argument is that the metaphysical realist view that truth outruns even idealized justifiability is incoherent. The intuition of the metaphysical realist is that truth depends exclusively on the way the world is, and the world might be very different from the best knowledge of it that we can possibly have. Correspondence with the world is not assured even for the best imaginable theory if truth depends only on the way the world is independently of us. But Putnam's claim is that we do not even understand a radi-

18. *Ibid.*, p. 18. Devitt argues against Putnam that in a causal theory the predicate causally related is «glued to one definite relation» by causal relations, not with «metaphysical glue» («Realism and the Renegade Putnam», *ibid.*, p. 298). Devitt contends that a semantic theory applies to all theories, including itself, and that such self-reference need not be problematic.

19. «Models and Reality», *ibid.*, p. 10.

20. *Ibid.*, p. 11.

21. «Models are not lost noumenal waifs looking for someone to name them; they are constructions within our theory itself, and they have names from birth» (*ibid.*, p. 25).

cally non-epistemic concept of truth. The argument goes as follows²². Imagine a possible formalization T_1 of ideal scientific theory, that is, the best theory of the world possible for us humans, a theory at the limit of scientific investigation which fits all possible observational evidence and satisfies all possible theoretical constraints. Putnam's contention is that no sense can be made of the claim that such an ideal theory might be false, for, by definition, that theory will come out true in all possible models. The metaphysical conception of truth as correspondence with the language and mind-independent world makes truth inaccessible for us, and is ultimately unintelligible²³. Putnam concludes that we need a new analysis of the concept of truth in epistemic terms. He reads his model-theoretic argument as a vindication of the connection between truth and our epistemic access to the world: how we represent the world becomes determinant for truth, which is refashioned in terms of coherence relations between representations (see RTH, p. 49-50). But what is realist about this conception of truth?

Note that the intuition that what is most justifiable to believe may nonetheless be false is not really the exclusive property of *metaphysical* realism. It is rather the core intuition of *fallibilism*, which is an essential component of any realism properly so called²⁴. That intuition is independent of what we consider the «nature» of truth to be (whether a correspondence relation or something else); in fact it is independent of whether or not we think truth has a «nature» in the first place. What the intuition expresses is simply that our knowledge of the world (whether actual or ideal) cannot determine what is true, that is, that the concept of truth is nonepistemic. Metaphysical realism is not the only view that gives content to the fallibilist intuition. A purely disquotational account of the predicate «true» also captures that intuition. In fact, unlike a correspondence theory, a disquotational account gives a precise formulation to the fallibilist intuition by showing that the truth of p neither entails, nor is entailed by, our knowing that p under ideal conditions, that the predicate «true» is not equivalent to «knowable at the end of inquiry». According to disquotationalism, what is involved in a sentence's being true is fully captured by the sentence itself hence the disquotational scheme « p » true if and only if p . To say that a statement is true is not to say that what it expresses counts as knowledge for us, or that it would under ideal epistemic conditions; it is just to make the statement over again (hence the redundancy property of «true»): « p » is true iff p , not «iff p is knowable at the end of inquiry or under ideal epistemic conditions». So, as Williams puts it²⁵,

22. Models and Reality, *ibid.*, p. 11-13.

23. «The metaphysical realist's claim that even the ideal theory T_1 might be false "in reality" seems to collapse into unintelligibility» (*ibid.*, p. 13).

24. For a lucid examination of the complex conceptual connections between fallibilism, truth and realism, see C. Lafont, «Truth, Knowledge and Reality», *Graduate Faculty Philosophy Journal* 18/2 (1995), p. 109-126.

25. «Do We (Epistemologists) Need a Theory of Truth?», *ibid.*, p. 224.

Thin as it is, even disquotational truth is «realistic», to the extent that, on a disquotational view, indeed deflationary views generally, truth is no more an epistemic property than it is on a full-blooded correspondence theory.

It is difficult to see how one can be a realist without being a fallibilist, that is, without keeping the concepts of truth and justification separate. A radical antifallibilism which identifies truth with knowledge is just pure idealism. Is there any room left for fallibilism in Putnam's view? Putnam's argument curtails significantly the force of fallibilism. In his view there is room only for a *weak* fallibilism: our knowledge is de facto fallible, but its fallibility lies in the contingent conditions of our epistemic position; could we adopt an ideal epistemic position, truth would coincide with knowledge, which is to say that our knowledge would be infallible. On this view, the defeasibility of knowledge stems from the *contingent* gap between what is true and what we find acceptable given our epistemic situation. The ongoing revision of our knowledge reflects our constant effort to fill in that gap. But the gap is supposed to close under ideal conditions, and therefore as we approximate those conditions, there should be an increasing convergence between truth and knowledge. For Putnam, it is a mistake to suppose, as a *strong* fallibilism does, that there is an in principle unbridgable gap between truth and knowledge. He argues that the strong fallibilist conception of truth and objectivity as knowledge-transcendent is unwarranted and ultimately unintelligible when it comes to an ideal theory. For, since an ideal theory of the world is a theory whose formalization comes out true in all possible models (i.e. in all possible semantic interpretations), it is senseless to think that it might turn out to be false. For Putnam, this is supposed to express a conceptual truth about «ideal theories». This is just what an ideal theory is: a theory that cannot be false. Is this a definite refutation of strong fallibilism? In what follows I will argue that a strong fallibilist need not be bothered by Putnam's argument, for in her view there is no room for such thing as an «ideal theory of the world».

What is unintelligible about the supposition that an ideal theory might be false? Is it the very idea that no piece of human knowledge is infallible that is unintelligible? How is it that this idea is not only intelligible but quite intuitive with respect to actual theories and beliefs, and yet highly problematic with respect to ideal theories? What is so special about an ideal theory? Why is it impossible to think that the world might be different from the way an ideal theory would describe it? Indeed if we build into the very notion of «epistemically ideal theory» the impossibility of error, then we cannot make sense of the possibility of that theory being wrong. But it is not clear that we understand what an epistemically ideal theory is in the first place. That an ideal theory is true can be said to be analytic, true by stipulation. But do we really understand that stipulation? Devitt points out that it is not clear at all what a theory that satisfied all theoretical and operational constraints would consist in²⁶.

26. «Realism and the Renegade Putnam», *ibid.*, p. 297.

We are told that T_1 fits all possible observational evidence, but in what sense of «possible»? Is the possible evidence, Devitt asks, what humans would have gathered if they were at every point of actual space-time? Or what they would have gathered if they had performed all possible experiments? Or both? And what sense can we make of the idea of «possible experiments»?... The list of questions can be extended indefinitely. So maybe the supposition that an ideal theory might be false is unintelligible just because the notion of an ideal theory itself is unintelligible. We cannot make sense of the infallibility of an ideal theory any more than we can make sense of our being omniscient. If it is a conceptual truth that an ideal theory cannot be false, so much the worse for ideal theories. This alleged «conceptual truth» does not force us to give up our fallibilist intuitions. The strong fallibilist may simply drop the notion of «ideal theory» as an untenable philosophical construct. This construct conjures up what, from the perspective of strong fallibilism, is an unsound philosophical picture: the picture of us at our *absolute* best. From the standpoint of a thorough fallibilism, we can always do better or worse within any given epistemic practice, but there is no «absolute best» for *all* epistemic practices that we can picture as an ideal. So postulating an «ideal theory» as the absolute best we can do, as the ideal terminus of human knowledge, is begging the question against the fallibilist. The contention of strong fallibilism is that human knowledge is always fallible, always subject to revision, and therefore that there is no such thing as an «ideal theory», and this means, not just that such a theory is impossible for us to attain (which is agreed by all parts), but rather, that we can make no sense of the idea of «an ideal theory of the world» which determines what is true in our actual epistemic practices, at least no more sense than we can make of a God's Eye View of reality²⁷.

So the defender of fallibilism may reject Putnam's argument by denying its premise. Indeed in a truly corrigibilist outlook the idea of a final theory, a theory which is exempt from error, simply does not make sense. The defender of corrigibilism can take Putnam's argument to show, not that there is a limit up to which fallibilist intuitions make sense, but simply that there is a limit up to which idealizations make sense. But it is not only the explicit idealizations in Putnam's argument that are problematic, but also a hidden idealization that is liable to pass unnoticed: the idealization implicit in the idea of «total science», the idea of science as a unified «theory of the world». So let me backtrack a bit and examine what is factored into the premise of Putnam's argument. He writes:

27. Note that the notion of an «ideal theory of the world» is the direct heir of the God's Eye View of Reality of metaphysical realism: it is just the Absolute View *internalized*, turned into a *regulative ideal*, made accessible to us through the idealization of our epistemic point of view. For a thorough fallibilist, this idea is not an operative regulative ideal, that is, an ideal that we actually use for making sense of our epistemic practices. Why should we think of scientific practices as contributing to a theory of the world that satisfies all observational and theoretical constraints?

Let us assume that there exists a possible formalization of present-day total science, call it 'T', and also that there exists a possible formalization of *ideal* scientific theory, call it 'T_i'. T_i is to be «ideal» in the sense of being *epistemically ideal for humans*. Ideality, in this sense, is a rather vague notion²⁸.

Putnam acknowledges that it is difficult to determine what counts as «epistemically ideal for us». He seems to be sensitive to the problems involved in idealizing our present epistemic position and the scientific view of the world that we have arrived at, but he seems to accept uncritically that we have a n «epistemic position», that there is such thing as our «present-day total science». What renders problematic the notion of an «ideal theory» is not just the idealizations that we make of our current scientific «theory of the world», but the very supposition that we have such a «theory», that our scientific practices add up to a unified theoretical picture. The problem with the idea of an «ideal epistemic position» is not simply that it is difficult to establish the correct idealizations of our actual epistemic position; the real problem starts with the prior assumption that there is something called «our epistemic position», «our view of the world». This is what Williams calls «epistemological realism»²⁹. «Epistemological realism», as Williams describes it, «is not realism as a position within epistemology—the thesis that we have knowledge of an objective, mind-independent reality—but something quite different: *realism about the objects of epistemological inquiry*»³⁰. The seemingly unproblematic assumption of the unity of science hides in fact an epistemological realism with respect to scientific knowledge: the view that all scientific beliefs hang together in an interesting way, that they all share some kind of «heoretical integrity» that makes them the proper object of philosophical theory, that scientific knowledge constitutes a «surveyable whole», a «natural kind». But there is no secure basis that guarantees that a wholesale assessment of scientific knowledge is possible. As Williams puts it, talking about «knowledge» in general,

All we know for sure is that we have various practices of assessment, perhaps sharing certain formal features. It does not follow from this that the various items given a positive rating add up to anything like a natural kind. So it does not follow that they add up to a surveyable whole, to a genuine totality rather than a more or less loose aggregate³¹.

It goes without saying that Putnam's argument does have force against the correspondence theory of truth that explains science in terms of convergence to a single description of the world, the One True Theory. But it is important to notice that the argument undermines the realist intuition that truth is independent of justification only when that intuition is combined with *epis-*

28. «Models and Reality», *ibid.*, p. 12.

29. See *Unnatural Doubts* (Blackwell:1991), p. 101-111.

30. *Ibid.*, p. 108, emphasis added.

31. *Ibid.*, p. 109.

temological realism. The argument presupposes that all scientific beliefs hang together in a big picture which ultimately will be an ideally complete view of the world, and that a global assessment of total science is possible, that is, that the evaluation of all scientific beliefs, all at once, is viable. Williams remarks that it is this view in conjunction with a nonepistemic theory of truth that makes truth utterly inaccessible and leads to radical scepticism³². As he puts it, it is only «questions about the justifiability of everything» that makes us «feel under pressure to establish any general relation between justification and truth»³³. On a nonfoundationalist (i.e., contextualist) view of knowledge, there is no room for such questions, so the inference from fallibilism to radical scepticism is blocked and the pressure to find an internal relation between justification and truth disappears.

It is important to notice that Putnam's model-theoretic argument would be an argument for the internal connection between justification and truth *only* if the correspondence theory were the only non-epistemic notion of truth available and belief in the independence of truth from acceptability automatically committed one to metaphysical realism. But Putnam is not justified in concluding from his argument against the metaphysical realist view of truth as correspondence that truth has to be thought in epistemic terms. The argument does not by itself succeed in establishing the connection between truth and justification because an important alternative is overlooked, namely, the merely disquotational account of truth. That deflationary view of truth is also non-epistemic and, as Williams points out, it can be viewed as «a kind of minimal realism»³⁴, for it accommodates perfectly well the realist intuition that even our most justified beliefs might turn out to be false. The fallibilism that the deflationary attitude towards truth brings with it avoids the problems of metaphysical realism and is untouched by Putnam's argument. However, for reasons that we will see in the last section, Putnam does not take the deflationary view of truth as a serious alternative. So from the collapse of the correspondence theory of truth he simply concludes that truth is an epistemic notion to be elucidated in terms of justifiability.

Before turning to my analysis of the epistemic content that Putnam builds into the notion of truth, I just want to emphasize the crucial role that Putnam's model-theoretic argument has in his intellectual development, for it marks the transition from an extra-theoretic and non-epistemic to an internalist notion of truth. It is interesting to note that in that argument Putnam makes a significant use of Peirce's view of truth in order to show that truth does not outrun justification (i.e. an epistemically ideal theory cannot be false). Now, though Putnam does not want to make truth dependent on «the ideal end of inquiry» or «an ideal community of inquirers», his account of truth contains problems similar to the ones the Peircean view has, for it retains the highly problema-

32. See his «Coherence, Justification and Truth», *Review of Metaphysics* 34 (1980), p. 243-272.

33. *Ibid.*, p. 272.

34. «Do We (Epistemologists) Need a Theory of Truth?», *ibid.*, p. 224.

tic notion of what is «epistemically ideal». It is not clear how such a problematic notion can explicate the much simpler notion of truth. More importantly, it is not clear how an idealization theory can make the context-transcendence of truth intelligible. To this issue I now turn.

III. Truth, justification and idealization

In «Reference and Truth» Putnam argues that though Michael Dummett's identification of truth with justification points in the right direction, it is not sufficient to explicate the notion of truth. We have to manipulate the notion of justification in such a way that it can account for certain aspects that we regard as constitutive of the notion of truth. In the first place, while truth is «a property of a statement that cannot be lost»³⁵, justification is both tensed (for a time and place) and relative to a person. In the second place, justification admits degrees whereas truth does not. So the question is how a contextual and gradient notion such as justification can explain a context-transcendent and absolute notion such as truth. Through idealization, Putnam answers. Truth is just an idealization of justification. A statement is true if it would be justified «under epistemically ideal conditions». Putnam explains the role of «epistemically ideal conditions» in his view of truth by analogy with «frictionless planes»³⁶. We cannot really attain epistemically ideal conditions, but, Putnam argues, they are a usefull idealization that helps us clarify what we mean by «true». He writes:

Frictionless planes cannot really be attained either, and yet talk of frictionless planes has «cash value» because we can approximate them to a very high degree of accuracy³⁷.

However, there is a strong *disanalogy* between epistemically ideal conditions and frictionless planes that threatens the claim that talk of the former has «cash value». The idealization of frictionless planes is parasitic on a well-defined notion of friction that we can quantify and assign value 0 even though we know that no physical context actually yields such value. But there is no parallel in Putnam's idealization of justification because we lack a clearcut concept of what «epistemic conditions» *in general* are. So the problem with epistemically ideal conditions is not that they are not attainable, but that we do not know what they are because we do not really understand what that idealization means. As Putnam himself points out in RTH (p. 55), we can never be completely certain that we actually approximate those conditions, while we have a very precise notion of what it means for a body to approximate frictionless motion. Let me explore the disanalogy further to see its implications.

35. «Reference and Truth», in *Realism and Reason*, *ibid.*, p. 84.

36. *Ibid.*, p. 55.

37. *Ibid.*, p. 84.

The notion of friction does not change in meaning from context to context. «Friction» means surface resistance to motion whatever the bodies involved in the motion happen to be. And since the meaning of friction is fixed for all contexts, it is unproblematic to apply the idealization of frictionless planes to any case of motion. However, though Putnam's idealization of justification is supposed to apply to any statement, it cannot have the same meaning for all statements, for there is no single set of epistemic conditions of justification for every statement. The «epistemic conditions» under which «p» is justified are not independent of the content of «p». What counts as justification conditions in any given situation is crucially dependent on what those conditions are conditions of. But if justification conditions are content-specific, so are *ideal* justification conditions. There is no reason to believe that idealization will make the notion of justification lose its contentspecificity. So the assumption that there is a unique and consistent set of ideal justification conditions for our «knowledge of the world» is unwarranted. For all we know, the ideal justification conditions of different statements may not cohere in any interesting way. Even if we could specify the ideal justification conditions for each and every statement about the world, nothing (other than «epistemological realism»³⁸) guarantees that we could add them all up to obtain the ideal conditions for the justification of our «knowledge of the world». Until it is shown that there are underlying commonalities in the justification conditions of every statement about the world, until it is shown that what we call «knowledge of the world» is a «surveyable whole» rather than a «loose aggregate», there is no reason to believe that the ideal justification conditions of all statements about the world have some cohesive core (i.e. a set of common features).

Furthermore, what counts as epistemically ideal conditions is not only statementspecific but also radically context-dependent. Propositions do not bring with them their own justification conditions. Only an *epistemological realist* (a realist about the objects of epistemological inquiry³⁹) can maintain that a proposition has in itself epistemic properties that we can survey. For Putnam, however, the justification conditions of any given statement cannot be examined independently of the context the statement figures in. So what counts as epistemically ideal conditions for the justification of a proposition is crucially dependent on the actual context of justification in which the proposition appears. But it is only in conjunction with an epistemological realism that Putnam rejects that the view of truth as idealized justification can make truth context-transcendent. Only if the concept of justification, like the concept of friction, remains fixed across contexts can the idealization of justification, like the idealization of frictionless planes, have «cash value». But Putnam holds that there is «no single general rule or universal method for knowing what conditions are better or worse for justifying an arbitrary empirical judgment»⁴⁰.

38. See p. 15 above.

39. See p. 66 above. See also M. Williams, *Unnatural Doubts*, *ibid.*, p. 108.

40. *Realism and Reason*, *ibid.*, p. XVII.

What we consider to be the ideal justification of a statement will vary from context to context. Truth, however, is for Putnam a permanent «property» of the statement. The gap between truth and justification is not successfully bridged by idealization when epistemological realism is given up. If what counts as epistemically ideal conditions of justification is not determined by the statement itself, but rather by us in particular justification contexts and according to specific standards, then what counts as ideal today (or in this context of justification) may not count as ideal tomorrow (or in some other context of justification). As Putnam puts it, «the justification conditions for sentences change as our total body of knowledge changes, and cannot be taken as fixed once and for all»⁴¹. No amount of idealization will repair this lack of fixity, and therefore the identification of truth with justification (whether actual or ideal) cannot make truth a permanent «property» of statements. What procedures we regard as justificatory depends on our criteria of acceptability, and if truth is idealized justification, truth itself becomes relative to those criteria. As our acceptability criteria change our epistemic idealizations change with them.

The idealization of our current context of justification may succeed in making the truth of a statement independent of the evidence presently available in that context, since the idealization forces us to think of a situation in which all the possible evidence (whatever that means) is available. But that idealization does not succeed in making the truth of the statement independent of the justification context in which (and the defeasible standards according to which) the ideal justification conditions are envisioned. No matter how much idealization we introduce, the identification of truth with justification forces us to view truth as a contextual notion. In fact, this is what Putnam seems to conclude in his most internalist and least realist moments: «truth» (idealized justification) is as vague, interest relative, and context sensitive as we are. The «truth conditions» for an arbitrary sentence are not *surveyable* in Dummett's sense⁴².

In Putnam's idealization theory the holistic aspects of justification are transferred to truth, which is now explained in terms of coherence. Putnam's view thus comes close to a coherence theory, as his internalist definition of truth in RTH makes clear. Truth is, he writes,

Some sort of (idealized) rational acceptability some sort of ideal coherence of our beliefs with each other and with our experiences as those experiences are represented in our belief system. RTH, p. 49-50, emphasis dropped.

Putnam remarks that our conceptions of coherence and acceptability are deeply interwoven with our biology, our culture, and our values. «They define», Putnam says, «a kind of objectivity, *objectivity for us*»⁴³. It is not *prima*

41. «Reference and Truth», *ibid.*, p. 85.

42. *Realism and Reason*, *ibid.*, p. XVII.

43. «Reference and Truth», *ibid.*, p. 55.

facie clear how this view is different from relativism. There is indeed a strong antirealist tendency in the notion of truth as coherence. Putnam's epistemic idealizations are supposed to counterbalance that tendency. Again it is idealization, Putnam thinks, that does the work to keep us realists. However, it is not at all clear that a realist notion of truth, an objective and context transcendent notion of correctness, can be derived from Putnam's epistemic idealizations, for, as we have seen, they are ineluctably parasitic on particular acceptability criteria.

Richard Rorty argues that in the end «idealized» adds nothing to «rational acceptability», for Putnam does not show how we can understand «idealized rational acceptability» otherwise than as acceptability to an ideal community⁴⁴. And if Putnam does not want to appeal to Peirce's notion of a community of inquirers at the ideal limit of inquiry, such an ideal community cannot be but «us at our best». «Identifying “idealized rational acceptability” with “acceptability to us at our best”», Rorty contends, «is just what I had in mind when I said that pragmatists should be ethnocentrists rather than relativists»⁴⁵. However, Putnam has repeatedly expressed his discomfort with such a radical pragmatism.

In *Realism with a Human Face* Putnam formulates five different principles of warranted assertability in order to distance himself from Rorty⁴⁶. The main point of disagreement between them is that while for Rorty all normativity is contextual (i.e. warranted assertability is always for a time and place), Putnam wants to preserve the idea of «some kind of correctness which is substantial». Rorty's reservations concern Putnam's first two principles of warranted assertability:

1. In ordinary circumstances, there is usually a fact of the matter as to whether the statements people make are warranted or not.
2. Whether a statement is warranted or not is independent of whether the majority of one's cultural peers would say it is warranted or unwarranted⁴⁷.

For Rorty the only fact of the matter as to whether or not S is warranted in asserting p is a sociological one and has to be ascertained «by observing the reception of S's statement by her peers»⁴⁸. Putnam, however, seems to allude in 1 to something more than merely a matter of sociological fact. In fact 1 suggests that epistemic warrants are utterly independent of sociological considerations. But then, Rorty argues, Putnam talks as if warrant could be viewed «sub specie aeternitatis», as if there were some natural order of reasons that determines whether S is warranted in asserting p.

44. R. Rorty, «Putnam and the Relativist Menace», *Journal of Philosophy* Vol. XC, N. 9 (1993), p. 443-61, esp. p. 451.

45. *Ibid.*, p. 452.

46. See «Realism with a Human Face», in *Realism with a Human Face* (Harvard University Press: 1990), p. 21-6.

47. *Ibid.*, p. 21.

48. «Putnam and the Relativist Menace», *ibid.*, p. 449.

With respect to (2) Rorty says that the majority can indeed be wrong⁴⁹: *p* might be true even if the majority of *S*'s cultural peers does not consider her to be justified in holding *p*. But how can *p* be in that case warranted?

Justifiability or warranted assertability is a matter of «solidarity» with an epistemic community. If we take the relevant epistemic community to be *S*'s culture, then her claim is not warranted. But the relevant epistemic community does not always have to be the actual community *S* happens to be in. However, warranted assertability is not independent of some community or other. And, again, appeal to an «ideal» community would not make normativity less contextual, for even then correctness is anchored to an epistemic context, namely, the one provided by the «ideal» community as we conceive it.

Putnam's idealization theory of truth and warranted assertability does not succeed in establishing a more substantial notion of correctness than the contextual normativity of a pragmatism à la Rorty. The idealization strategy does not seem to work unless backed with an epistemological realism that Putnam clearly would not accept. Putnam's claim that there is a fact of the matter about justifiability which is independent of community standards seems to have two different readings. On the one hand, Putnam can be read as claiming simply that assertability is not confined to institutionalized norms, that the acceptability of one's assertions should not be restricted to the norms of one's culture. But this claim does not really entail a context-transcendent notion of objective rightness, but only the idea that institutionalized normative contexts are not exclusive or privileged (and, as I just suggested, this seems to be congenial with Rorty's view). On a stronger reading, Putnam can be taken to be saying that there is an objective notion of justifiability completely independent of the epistemic standards of any community whatsoever, an objective order of reasons to which our ideas of ideal justification and ideal acceptability refer. The weak reading does not seem to take Putnam where he wants to go, but the strong reading takes him much further than he seems willing to travel.

Putnam's idealization theory of truth contains two key claims that are at odds with each other, namely:

- I. that truth is independent of justification here and now, but not independent of all justification;
- II. that truth is expected to be stable or «convergent»⁵⁰.

If the truth of a statement is supposed to be dependent on its justification, on its acceptability by certain standards, truth cannot be expected to be stable or convergent across relevantly different epistemic contexts (no matter how

49. «*S* may be the unhonored prophet of some social movement or intellectual revolution whose time has not yet come», *ibid.*, p. 450.

50. «Reference and Truth», *ibid.*, p. 85; and RTH, *ibid.*, p. 56.

much we idealize the notions of justification and acceptability). No strong convergence can obtain once we tie truth to justification.

The problem comes from running «warranted» together with «true». It is the identification of truth with ideal rational acceptability which is itself problematic. It is not clear how Putnam can combine a non-foundational and strongly contextualist view of justification with a realist concept of truth unless he keeps them separate. But to keep truth and justification separate is to deny that the concept of truth is epistemic. This is what a deflationary view of truth enables one to do. Why doesn't Putnam take the deflationary route? Why doesn't he limit his minimal realism to a disquotational account of truth?

IV. Does internal realism need a theory of truth?

Putnam thinks that there is something more to truth than what is captured by the disquotational schema «p' is true if and only if p». In a merely disquotational view such as Quine's, to say that p is true is simply to assent to p. But to reduce truth to assent is to abandon the idea that truth is a substantial notion, and for Putnam «this is to give up what is right in realism»⁵¹. «That truth is a property», Putnam says, «is the one insight of "realism" that we should not jettison»⁵². Recently Putnam has become dissatisfied with his idealization theory of truth and he no longer identifies truth with ideal acceptability⁵³, but he still maintains that truth is «a substantive property»⁵⁴ that has an epistemic dimension, and that there is more to truth than a disquotational account can provide.

For Putnam truth is a substantive property that statements have, a property whose nature neither the disquotational schema nor remarks on the use of the predicate «true» can capture. He thinks that the disquotationalist claim that the truth of a sentence is fully expressed by the very assertion of the sentence amounts to an identification of truth conditions with assertibility conditions⁵⁵. So he contends that according to disquotationalism «the only substantive kind of rightness our statements (...) possess is warranted assertibility»⁵⁶. The problem is that «nobody has ever given a theory of what «assertibility conditions» are»⁵⁷, and the only candidates available in the literature for an account of assertibility conditions commit us, according to Putnam, to behaviorism, cultural relativism, or methodological solipsism: what makes my

51. See «The Causal Structure of the Physical», in *Realism with a Human Face*, *ibid.*, p. 93.

52. «A Defense of Internal Realism», in *Realism with a Human Face*, *ibid.*, p. 32.

53. See *Words and Life*, *ibid.*, esp. Preface, «Does the Disquotational Theory Solve All Philosophical Problems?», and «On Truth». See footnote 3.

54. «On Truth», *ibid.*, p. 326

55. He interprets the disquotational approach to truth as the claim that «the description of the assertibility conditions (in the sense of confirmation conditions) for sentences containing the word true tells us all there is to know about truth» («On Truth», *ibid.*, p. 326).

56. «Does the Disquotational Theory of Truth Solve All Philosophical Problems», *ibid.*, p. 264.

57. «On Truth», *ibid.*, p. 327.

statement assertible is either my behavioral dispositions, or the norms of my linguistic community, or my own sense data. But Putnam misrepresents disquotationalism by characterizing it as just another *theory* of truth.

As Williams remarks, «[t]o approach truth in a deflationary spirit is emphatically not to think of 'true' as denoting a theoretically significant property, explicating which will illuminate what is involved in any sentence's being true»⁵⁸. As I emphasized above (see p. 11), what the Tarskian biconditionals show is that all that is involved in a sentence's being true is captured by the sentence itself. As Quine puts it, «one who puzzles over the adjective 'true' should puzzle rather over the sentences to which he ascribes it. 'True' is transparent»⁵⁹. According to traditional theories of truth, however, «truth» denotes a property shared by all true sentences, a property which is the rightful object of philosophical theory. A deflationary account of truth is not a theory of truth in this sense, but rather an analysis of the truth-predicate. A deflationary approach to truth seeks no more than a description of the logical behavior of «true» and a pragmatic account of its utility. This is precisely what a disquotational account of truth offers. On this view the necessary and sufficient conditions for a sentence's being true are expressed by the sentence itself («p' is true iff p»). So what is accomplished by appending the truth-predicate to a sentence? According to Quine: «To ascribe truth to the sentence [«Snow is white»] is to ascribe whiteness to snow... Ascription of truth just cancels the quotation marks. Truth is disquotation»⁶⁰.

A deflationist can be content with a disquotational analysis of the truth-predicate and a pragmatic elucidation of the contexts of use of that predicate⁶¹. But for someone who still strives for a theory of truth, for someone who thinks that the property that «truth» denotes needs theoretical clarification, the disquotational-cum-pragmatic analysis of «true» is bound to be deeply dissatisfying, for it says nothing about what makes all true sentences true. The contention of deflationism is precisely that there is nothing to say⁶², that there is no single thing that all true statements share, that truth does not have an essence and true statements do not constitute a «natural kind» or a theoretically interesting category. As Williams puts it: «On a deflationary view, then, true sentences constitute a merely nominal kind. We could even say that, for a deflationist, though there are endlessly many truths, there is no such thing as *truth*»⁶³.

58. *Unnatural Doubts*, *ibid.*, p. 111.

59. W. V. Quine, *Pursuit of Truth* (Harvard University Press: 1990), p. 82.

60. *Ibid.*, p. 80.

61. As Williams puts it, for a deflationist «remarks on the behaviour and utility of the truth-predicate say just about everything there is to say about truth» (*Unnatural Doubts*, *ibid.*, p. 111).

62. The argument goes as follows: «the more a purely disquotational account of "true" can be shown to capture whatever we want out of the truth-predicate, the less reason there is for thinking that there must be some "truth-making" property that all true sentences share: the invitation to apply Occam's Razor ought to be irresistible» (M. Williams, *Unnatural Doubts*, *ibid.*, p. 369 n31). It is mainly its parsimony that makes disquotationalism so attractive.

63. *Ibid.*, p. 112.

Putnam fails to take seriously the main insight of disquotationalism, namely, the deflationist claim that truth is not a property at all (neither warranted assertibility nor ideal justification nor anything else). On a disquotational view, to say that a sentence is true is not to ascribe a property to the sentence but just to reaffirm the sentence⁶⁴. So «p is true» is expected to be assertible whenever «p» is. However, this does not mean that «p is true» says that «p is assertible», any more than «p» itself does⁶⁵. And, a fortiori, it does not mean that «p is true» is equivalent to «p is assertible by the norms of my linguistic community». Because on a deflationary view there is only «immanent truth», Putnam thinks that a disquotational account of truth identifies the meaning of «true» with «assertible according to the norms of a particular community», and he concludes that a deflationary attitude towards truth commits one to cultural relativism⁶⁶. But, as Williams has argued, adopting a deflationary view of truth is not itself sufficient to make one a relativist: «to say that community practice is the basis for assessments of rightness is not to say that the standards embodied in such practice constitute a linguistic straight-jacket»⁶⁷. Deflationism is perfectly compatible with a minimal realism that makes truth context-transcendent. Since a deflationist does not analyze truth in epistemic terms, he does not identify truth with the contextual notion of justifiability or assertibility. And precisely because on a deflationary view truth is not an epistemic property, a deflationist has no difficulty expressing a corrigibilist outlook.

As Williams remarks, it is the threat of relativism that seems to prevent Putnam from taking seriously «the deflationist's claim that there is no reason to suppose that truth has a nature»⁶⁸. But that threat disappears when we realize that on a deflationary view truth has no epistemic content whatsoever. Being non-epistemic without being metaphysical, a deflationary notion of truth can accommodate perfectly well the realist intuitions that Putnam wants to preserve. In fact internal realism would be better off with a deflationary attitude towards truth, for, as we have seen, the identification of truth with

64. Any difference between «p is true» and «p» must have a pragmatic character: it must be due to the performative force of «true». However, it is an open question what «pragmatic» value the truth predicate has. Presumably different approaches to pragmatics would propose different accounts; and it could even be argued that the pragmatics of the truth-predicate can support more than a merely deflationary account of truth. For an argument to this effect from the perspective of Habermas pragmatics, see C. Lafont (1995), «Truth, Knowledge and Reality», *ibid.*

65. As Williams puts it, «p is true» says whatever p says and so would say p is assertible only if p itself did. But to say that p is meaningful because asserting p is a move in a rule-governed practice is surely not to say that p is therefore a comment on the practice that sanctions it» («Do We (Epistemologists) Need a Theory of Truth?», *ibid.*, p. 240).

66. As Williams points out, Putnam usually presents the deflationist as «offering a naive epistemic account of truth, which then provides the perfect foil for Putnam's sophisticated epistemic account» («Do We (Epistemologists) Need a Theory of Truth?», *ibid.*, p. 240-1).

67. *Ibid.*, p. 239.

68. *Ibid.*, p. 240.

justification in Putnam's idealization theory does not succeed in making truth context-transcendent. But Putnam stresses that «as thinkers we are committed to there being some kind of truth, some kind of correctness which is substantial and not merely "disquotational"»⁶⁹. However, saying that truth is disquotational prevents philosophical inflation but it does not weaken our ordinary notion of truth. We are indeed «committed to there being some kind of truth». But there is nothing that commits us to think of true statements as a natural kind and to think of truth as having an essence, as something for which philosophical theories are appropriate⁷⁰.

Putnam is right in protesting that a disquotational theory does not «solve all philosophical problems» concerning the notion of truth⁷¹. But the point is that disquotationalism does not even address those problems (other than indirectly, by showing that there is nothing wrong with our ordinary notion of truth, that the ordinary uses of «true» are in fact transparent). So to depict deflationary accounts as weak attempts to solve philosophical problems about truth is an important misrepresentation, for these are not genuine problems for the deflationist and if he addresses them at all it is to dissolve them rather than to solve them. Putnam's complaint that deflationism «contains no answer to the question What is the nature of the property *truth*?»⁷² shows that he is still under the sway of problems inherited from traditional theories of truth. If we think of truth as a property then it becomes a question what kind of property it is, whether absolute or relative, whether metaphysical or epistemic, whether indefinable or reducible to something else, etc. Both the correspondence theory of truth of realism and the acceptance theory of truth of anti-realism are answers to these questions; they both try to give a theoretical elucidation of the concept of truth by offering a certain picture of what truth consists in. But, as we have seen, both the metaphysical and the epistemic picture of truth have their own special difficulties; they both render truth problematic. As Fine points out, «the way out [of these problems] is not to "construe" *truth* at all», to adopt «a no-theory attitude toward the concept of truth»⁷³. This deflationary attitude that Fine recommends comes from the recognition that «truth» is «a concept already in use» and that we should respect its customary «grammar»⁷⁴. If the concept of truth is a «fundamental semantical concept» (or family of concepts), we should not expect it to be amenable to explication and we should be «inclined to reject a *II* interpretations, theories, construals, pictures, etc., of

69. «Why Reason Can't Be Naturalized» (in *Realism and Reason*, *ibid.*, p. 229-47), p. 246, emphasis dropped.

70. See A. Fine, *The Shaky Game. Einstein, Realism and the Quantum Theory* (The University of Chicago Press: 1986), for a detailed argument as to why the philosophical «truth-monstering» should be stopped (see especially p. 137-42).

71. See «Does the Disquotational Theory Solve All Philosophical Problems?», in *Words and Life*, *ibid.*, p. 264-78.

72. «On Truth», *ibid.*, p. 326.

73. *The Shaky Game*, *ibid.*, p. 9.

74. *Ibid.*, p. 133.

truth» as reductive or circular⁷⁵. So, far from being an alternative *theory* of *truth*, a deflationist view of truth should be taken to be, as Fine puts it, the expression of a «no-theory attitude toward truth».

If internal realism is not just a conciliatory solution, a middle way between metaphysical realism and relativism, but something more radical, i.e. a way of scaping from the dilemma or a way of dissolving the dilemma, it must reject the premise that makes the dilemma possible: that is, the assumption that truth is a property in need of clarification. As long as the internal realist keeps this premise and continues to strive for a theory of truth, he cannot stop the oscillation between realist and anti-realist pictures of truth; the only success he can obtain on this turf is to reduce the oscillation to a minimum, to achieve some stability in the center; but the tension will still remain.

75. *Ibid.*, p. 149.