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Some Remarks on the Relations of Semantic Externalism and Conceptual Pluralism

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RESUMEN

Este artículo defiende la tesis de que la teoría de Putnam sobre el uso de conceptos empíricos constituye de principio a fin la columna vertebral de su filosofía. Por tanto, la teoría de Putnam sobre los conceptos empíricos debería ser al menos compatible con los aspectos más distintivos tanto de su realismo (esto es: externalismo semántico) como de su pragmatismo (esto es: pluralismo conceptual). El artículo sugiere incluso la tesis más fuerte de que la teoría de los conceptos de Putnam es esencial para los propósitos explicativos de ambos. Al hacer esto, propone que la teoría de Putnam se lea más bien como la exhibición de los aspectos contextuales del uso del lenguaje que como una descripción de sus fundamentos metafísicos, epistémicos o cognitivos. Se considera que la continuidad de la teoría muestra así que el realismo y pragmatismo de Putnam son y siempre han sido inseparables.

ABSTRACT

This article defends the thesis that Putnam's theory of the use of empirical concepts constitutes a continuous backbone of his philosophy early and late. Thus, Putnam's theory of empirical concepts should be at least compatible with the most distinctive features of both, his realism (viz., semantic externalism) and his pragmatism (viz., conceptual pluralism). The article suggests the even stronger thesis that Putnam's theory of concepts is essential for the explanatory purposes of both. In doing so, the article proposes reading Putnam's theory as a theory displaying contextual features of language use rather than as one describing metaphysical, epistemic, or cognitional 'underpinnings'. The theory's continuity is thus taken to show that Putnam's realism and pragmatism are and always have been inseparable.

Putnam's philosophy is normally divided in two hardly compatible parts: his (early) realism and his (recent) pragmatism. One of the pillars of his early realism, it is agreed, was semantic externalism, whereas one of the pillars of his pragmatism is pluralism in general, and conceptual pluralism in particular. One of the most interesting discussions that has been triggered by Putnam's change of perspective is if, and to what extent semantic externalism (as a minimal form of realism) and pluralism are compatible. In some of his more recent writings, Putnam stresses that semantic externalism is something he still defends.[1] However, Putnam doesn't make very clear what function this defence has in his larger, pragmatist perspective that includes conceptual pluralism as well. In order to address this question, I first want to summarise

Putnam's pragmatist commitments. The role of externalism will be the theme of the rest of the paper.

I. PUTNAM'S PRAGMATIST COMMITMENTS

1.*Participants' perspective*: As regards his methodological stance, Putnam sees one of the lessons in pragmatism in the rejection of the spectator's or "God's eye point of view" for philosophical reconstruction and the priority of the participants' perspective.[2]

2. *Fallibilism, anti-scepticism, and Cognitivism*: The three epistemological positions that Putnam sees combined in pragmatism are: *fallibilism, anti-scepticism, and cognitivism.*[3] The agents Putnam has in view are convinced that there are no metaphysical guarantees that exclude that any of their beliefs might turn out to be false under adequate conditions, but on the other hand their normative attitudes towards the beliefs they have been able to defend is that they constitute knowledge if anything does. Agents with this normative mindset are capable of seeing themselves as stating facts and describing a world. That this world is not dependent on their beliefs is noted by the fact that even their best-entrenched beliefs can turn out to be *factually* incorrect under adequate circumstances.

3. *Post-Kantianism*: At the same time, pragmatism is a decidedly post-Kantian movement. This means that in order to be able to form beliefs about objects, we have to presuppose some conceptual organisation to be in place that presents the environment as coming in certain pieces.[4] From the fact that the interpretation of our empirical beliefs has to consist in an assignation of objects to the signs our beliefs are formulated in, it is obvious that the systems of beliefs articulating the conceptual organisation have an interpretatively special function in our system of beliefs.

4. *Contextualism with respect to the a priori*: However, having this function only gives them a different *contextual status*, without exempting them from fallibilism. On the contrary, if the function of such belief-sets is to structure the realm of experience into objects, properties and relations, then these beliefs have to constitute themselves *factual truths.*[5] At least they have to be considered as such by agents that *use them* to describe a realm of interpretation. Since their function is to *structure* the *objects* of our experience, at least they cannot be *factually empty* or inconsequential. This fundamental insight results in the possibility that the same statement may play, in one context, the role of a truth that is taken for granted, but since its *factuality doesn't change with its status*, in a different context become *testable*.[6] Al-

though such beliefs may have a status of *actual non-revisedness* in the absence of *functional equivalents*, this status is itself *conditional on the absence of alternatives*.[7] Alternatives being present, the factuality of those beliefs allows for their revision in case reasons to do so arise. In combining fallibilism and post-Kantianism, pragmatists have always been strictly *anti-absolutist* or *anti-aprioristic*, thereby developing certain contextualism with respect to the a priori.

5. *Pragmatic pluralism*: However, the fallibilism in pragmatism that leads to the revisability of the contextual a priori also opens the way to an appreciation of another anti-absolutist doctrine, *pluralism*. The core idea of pluralism is to admit alternative descriptions of the same facts.[8] It emerges as soon as we realise that, just as there may be alternatives that provide reasons to revise some of our beliefs, there may be alternatives that reflect different interests, but the adoption of which does not directly force us to give up any belief in the other alternatives. In this sense, pluralism is a consequence of the conviction that there are no descriptions that do not reflect particular interests [cf. Putnam (1999), p. 5]. It is this *pluralistic Kantianism* that Putnam seems to admire in the pragmatists. Now, as long as each of the alternatives is tied to a specific epistemic or practical interest, so that on suitable relativisation to interests, no conflicts remain, this seems a rather uncontroversial insight. But Putnam has a much more thoroughgoing commitment to pluralism.

6. *Conceptual pluralism*: Putnam claims that *even in practices where the interests and relevancies are fixed*, there may be, according to the agents themselves, *more than one way* to represent the same situations *without any one version standing out as the best*, and some of these ways may *conflict*. Putnam calls this the "phenomenon of conceptual relativity".[9]

Many of those who otherwise share Putnam's pragmatist commitments feel forced to reject the last, conceptual pluralism. The reason for discomfort is that the admission of the phenomenon of conceptual relativity seems to present us with two puzzles in view of post-Kantianism, cognitivism and fallibilism:

(1) if there is no access to facts but through our ways of describing them and they must not be factually inconsequential, and there are two *conflicting* ways of saying what the facts are, how do participants come to the idea that they are making claims about *the same facts* in practices where both versions are available (as opposed to making claims about different sets of facts)?

(2) If both ways of describing the facts are seen by the agents as ways of accessing *and stating facts*, but they conflict, how can *fallibilist* agents escape *having to choose only one of them*?

There have been basically two reactions to these worries from post-Kantian philosophers who want to keep all or a substantial part of the aforementioned assumptions.[10] The first group (in different ways, Putnam thinks of Quine, Davidson, Devitt) wants to save factuality and the idea of one objective world and sacrifices the pluralism. The second group (Putnam here seems to have in mind Goodman and Kuhn) wants to save pluralism and factuality and sacrifices the unity of the objective world.

The first group suggests that the puzzling situation will be remedied by future unified accounts of reality. "Science" will be unified and thereby alternatives eliminated, and the final account will show what we have to take reality to be like. Meanwhile, the situation is managed by administratively adopting one system and, following post Kantianism, taking it as the (provisional) definition of what the facts are. On the basis of this, eventually eliminating the other is mandatory on pain of contradiction. Since there are by definition (and other reasons like underdetermination) no sufficient empirical reasons to back up this decision, it is *arbitrary* which way we go. But whatever way we go, we have to opt for *elimination* unless we want to sacrifice our claims to objective knowledge. The inference is: Fallibilism, cognitivism and conceptual relativity are incompatible and therefore conceptual relativity has to go. The result is a hybrid of absolutism through elimination and conventionalism with regard to the reasons to eliminate.

The second group suggests that we should see our conceptual activity as creating and multiplying equally correct ways of making and changing worlds instead of regarding our descriptive practices as stating definite facts about one objective world. As a consequence, the idea that one system *revises the other* in the sense of *enabling us to claim facts from one system that contradict or agree with views from the other system* becomes a view just as dubious as the idea of independent confirmation of factual claims. Rather, deeming a belief we held true as false is the consequence of adopting a new way of description. Fallibilism, cognitivism and conceptual relativity are incompatible and therefore cognitivism has to go. The result is a hybrid of pluralism regarding worlds through proliferation of reference-constituting systems, and non-cognitivism for *any* way of talking. Since neither post-Kantianism nor the principle of non-contradiction stands in question for any of these approaches, these two reactions seem to exhaust the possibilities regarding the puzzles allegedly introduced by the admission of conceptual relativity.

Putnam opposes both reactions for an important *normative* reason. Both of these dissolutions imply in one way or another that we would have to interpret the users of other conceptual systems in such a situation as *necessarily*

failing to make factual claims. Either we have to see them as adopting different facts by adopting different ways of describing them, or we have to see them as incapable of making claims that are either true OR false, because their claims concerning the circumstances alternatively described are systematically false if we take our description as basic. Since this is an unacceptable consequence from the perspective of participants in practices of making and exchanging factual claims, the alternative — either no objective world or no pluralism — cannot be forced by the commitments of these practices.

In the following I want to argue:

(1) that adding Putnam's externalism relieves us from having to choose between fallibilism, cognitivism and conceptual relativity and leaves all pragmatist commitments intact.

(2) Under an externalist view of interpretation, the recognition of conceptual relativity appears as a *weaker assumption* already contained in the interpretative abilities required from fallibilist agents prepared to revise also contextual a priori-assumptions in view of alternatives. Conceptual Relativity can then be seen as a possible consequence of rather than an obstacle to learning processes.

For the purpose of developing this idea, I want to read Putnam's view of the reference of general empirical terms as a presupposition-analysis of the interpretative practices performed by agents in fallibilist practices of empirical belief-fixation, and then to apply the results to an example of conceptual relativity that Putnam gives.

II. PUTNAM'S NORMATIVE PERSPECTIVE

To get started, let me mention two thought-experiments that Putnam uses to illustrate each idea, conceptual relativity and semantic externalism. Putnam's view of reference is best accessed in terms of his famous Twin Earth (TE) example. In this thought experiment, Putnam asks us to consider two empirical environments that coincide in all details apart from the fact that on TE, what "water" refers to is XYZ. Other than that, XYZ is superficially indistinguishable from H_2O (i.e. naturally occurring as liquid, the stuff that pours down when it rains, can be mistaken for gin, etc.). He further asks us to imagine the situation of two speakers in 1750. Like the environments, these speakers are also almost indistinguishable. Both speakers are speakers of English and share almost the same physiological and perceptual makeup. In particular, they share the same observational vocabulary with the same interpretation. Since both speakers share their language and their physiological

and perceptual make-up, and use the same observational criteria to apply "water" to liquids, both would say without thinking "this is water" if they are given a glass of liquid that satisfies these criteria. Putnam asks the impossible question: is this the same belief or not? Do both agree?

Before answering this question, let me introduce a parallel example to illustrate Putnam's idea of conceptual relativity. Putnam asks us to consider a table with three things on it. Putting the example in a thought experiment, we could imagine that two persons have been instructed to count what is on some contextually definite table in a room. They counted from 1 to 100 to prove that they are competent counters (e.g. both agree that 3 unequal 7, etc.), and then enter the room. Unbeknownst to the observer, one uses our system of grouping, and one uses a system that counts as objects what we count as individuals, but also all their non-repetitive combinations. Putnam calls the first a Carnapian and the second a Polish logician. For the sake of perspicuity, the Carnapian is female, the Polish Logician male. After having had a sufficiently good and intensive look at the table (i.e. in 'ideal epistemic conditions'), the Carnapian says, "3", and the Polish Logician says "7". Putnam asks the impossible question: Is there a contradiction? Do both disagree?

Putnam's answer in both examples is in the negative. As to the second, the Carnapian and the Polish Logician don't really disagree but have, as it were, a latent agreement. As to the first, the Earthian and her Twin actually have two different thoughts, as it were, a latent disagreement. Putnam goes even farther, telling us that we normally *should* interpret the two pairs of speakers in this way.

One obvious reason for this recommendation is that the results the agents apparently can't come to produce — namely that thoughts about H_2O and thoughts about XYZ are not the same thought and the results of two ways of counting may differ while being each objectively correct countings of the same things in a given context — are actually *the results we all know*. Therefore it *cannot be impossible* for the agents to come to these results (if the actual implies the possible). In other words: it is a *fact that we learn this kind of thing*. If something is puzzling it is not that the participants in the practices reach the results they do, but rather that we *don't understand how it is possible* when we use certain entrenched views about the relation between concept-words and their meaning and reference.

I will suggest that Putnam's answers are based on two fundamental methodological decisions that set his theory of meaning and reference as much apart from classical empiricist accounts as from other, similar criticisms of 'traditional' theories that are based on certain metaphysical views. The first is the idea that we should follow the practice of speakers to treat *all* of these claims primarily as moves in practices of making *empirical claims*. The second idea is to put interpretative (referential) decisions under the influence of empirical knowledge and contextual conditions. As I will argue, this

means that Putnam's view of empirical concept-words entails that the application of a concept is guided by judgments of the correctness of application that crucially rely on informal aspects of concept-use like the evaluation of the context at hand in view of prior uses of a term.

With this in mind, I will suggest that the speakers in *both cases* assume that (a) several methods to perform the same epistemic job (can be and) are applied to *the same range of* (contextually available) *phenomena*, and (b) all these methods issue *mutually relevant factual statements* as results in the contexts at hand. With these assumptions, Earthians and Twin Earthians, as well as Polish Logicians and Carnapians can come in a position to *acquire* or *develop* the interpretative skills needed for solving the cases in the way that is familiar to us. However, within Putnam's work, we get the assumptions required for the acquisition of these interpretative abilities *only* from his semantic externalism. I would therefore like to expand a little on this theme before coming back to the discussion of conceptual relativity.

III. SEMANTIC EXTERNALISM

In fact-stating practices the results of applying a term, say "water" (i.e. tokenings of the sort "this is water") are *empirical statements*. Putnam's theory of reference for general empirical terms consequently explains the structure of our use of empirical concepts as an *inductive (at least non-demonstrative) structure.* We start from a set of empirically obtained samples ascribed to "water" and then develop the set of things falling under the concept by identifying objects with the samples we already have, according to features we regard as relevant for the identity of, e.g. substances. According to Putnam's reconstruction, the use of empirical concepts follows the form that "*x* is water iff *x* is similar in relevant respects to our samples".[11]

The use of empirical terms is thus *doubly contextualised* in Putnam's theory: it is *epistemically* contextualised by making referential decisions dependent on relevant criteria (where these criteria can change historically) and it is *environmentally* contextualised by making the particular procedures to reach referential decisions dependent on the samples that a linguistic community has available. A further important claim is that empirical concepts are pragmatically determinate *only insofar as their use is doubly contextualised in this way*.

Let me first summarise how the environmental contextualisation is pragmatically realised in what Putnam calls the "hidden indexicality" of empirical concepts.[12]

The idea can be best seen when we consider two different concepts of which we know that they are differently intended, but where we can't tell the difference from looking at the formal features of the systems of beliefs (un-

derstood as *extension-independent* mental contents and their inferential relations)[13] governing the use of the concepts. This is exactly the case of the two speakers on Earth and Twin Earth: they share all dispositions regarding the use of "water", but neither of them (nor we) would say that they are referring to the same chemical compound if presented with the mere possibility that what is called "water" on the other planet doesn't have the same chemical composition and hence behave the same way as everything else they call water under the same circumstances. Both speakers would expect in virtue of their using "water" in a fact-stating practice that "this is water" is false if applied to something that is significantly different from the rest of stuff they call by the same expression under this understanding. Each of them thus intends to state different facts when he or she uses the term "water" by applying the same criteria. The question is how to account for this difference, or, with respect to the term's reference, how to disambiguate the two uses. Given only the system of (*extension-independently* characterised)[14] dispositions concerning water that are associated by both speakers and their communities with the use of "water", we couldn't find any difference. Hence, on this basis alone it is indeterminate whether we refer to H_2O or to XYZ when employing the term according to the rules implied in the belief-systems structuring these dispositions. Therefore the difference in their concepts cannot be a function of the dispositions concerning water (which both share). By the same token, the identity of a concept cannot be determined by identifying the system of belief associated with its use (and thus the actual content formed *by employing the concept-expression in a sentence* is not adequately individuated either by regarding only the mental items associated with the term *irrespective of* any extension-related characteristics).

This is where Putnam's concept-structure becomes important. We can account for the differences in the results of applying the same structure (i.e. the truth values of "this is water" for each speaker's use of the expression "water") if we see them as *inductive concepts in Putnam's sense,* i.e. when we take them to be structured by the general rule "*x* is water iff *x* is similar in relevant respects to *y*", where "*y*" has to be given as a standard. The standard used in the above account is "everything we usually call 'water'". Since it is trivially true of all members of the class of things we call "water" that if "this is water" with reference to them yields a true statement, then the object referred to in the context by "this" is part of the extension of "water", the set of things that count as water on the strength of the practice of using the term (the 'pre-theoretic extension' of "water", so to speak)[15] can be given by those instances of the utterance "this is water" that have been publicly accepted as correct in the context where they're uttered. This reference to past results of use transforms the concept structure into a rule of applying "water" by substituting the demonstrative in each such utterance for the indexical denoting the term's instances, viz. "our samples". Under the given assumptions,

and presupposing their contextual access to the samples indicated in utterances of that kind, in such a practice speakers follow the rule "*x* is water iff *x* is similar in relevant respects to our samples".[16]

Now there is an obvious way to point out a difference between the Twin Earthian's and the Earthian's concept. Even though *both* water-concepts would have the structure "*x* is water iff x is relevantly similar to our samples, i.e. this and this….", when applied in each of the circumstances of use of the term, the resulting references of "our samples" for Twin Earthians, collected by contextually true tokenings of "this is water", yield bits of XYZ, whereas for Earthians the samples collected in the same way are H_2O. Therefore, for any arbitrary object, whether or not it is to count as water (i.e. "this is water" is true of it) depends on its being chemically similar to XYZ samples or H_2O samples, respectively. In this way, we have disambiguated the use of "water" of both communities in spite of the sameness in dispositions governing their use of the term. However, without assuming contextually successful demonstrative exemplifications of what we take to be the things our term is to refer to, this would have been impossible. We have what Reichenbach called a "real element" [cf. Reichenbach (1928), pp. 25-6, p. 32] in our definition of water, namely the samples that we contextually indicate, which count as the standard of what it is that future candidates have to be similar to in relevant respects. Since the standards are different according to what the context was where we indicated them, the concepts are different if we take the corresponding context as normal. This first element of indexicality could be called the *disambiguation-relevance of demonstrative reference.*

However, this aspect of indexicality still leaves the Twin Earth case partly undecided. What we know now is that if Earth and Twin Earth are different in this way, then there are two different concepts of water. But we don't know which of the two we should count as ours. However, given a set of relevant respects, the decision as to which of the two concepts we count as ours is decisive for our considering, e.g. "XYZ is water" as true or false, hence for the facts about water that we assume.

It is only by adding a second element of indexicality that we reach the identification of our concept. This second element follows from the success-conditions of indicating, exemplifying or demonstratively referring. The basic idea here is that indexical expressions only have determinate *utterance*-extensions, not *type*-extensions. Thus, an indexical expression indicates an object successfully only in a certain public context to a certain audience. Whenever someone uses a description or an indicator-word in order to indicate an environmental feature, the success-conditions of this act include that speaker and hearer *be in the same situation*. Indexical expressions can only successfully indicate an object in a context where speaker and hearer are in adequate positions to access the same object as the intended object of reference. By implication, the identity of an expression which makes essential use

of some such expression, say "*x* is water iff it is similar in relevant respects as this", is only determined if "this" is construed as "'this' as used under such-and-such-circumstances". Once we take this line, it is clear why our term "water" should be taken to refer to H_2O: this is, as a matter of fact and the environmental conditions of our use of demonstratives, the chemical structure of what we are exposed to in our use of the term when specifying samples. Our taking this context as normal, in turn, stems from the fact that we have neither had occasion nor reason to try to specify our term elsewhere.[17]

The first general lesson from this seems to be that *before* and *independent of* the public practice of *applying the concept structure to objects in a publicly accessible environment*, our concepts remain not only metaphysically indeterminate, but even pragmatically indeterminable, even if we are given a set of relevant similarities. Now, if the use of the term "water" could not be disambiguated without successful demonstrative references, and if successful demonstrative references entail the presupposition that we, as hearers, and other speakers successfully *communicate within the same environment about things in it,* then making determinate factual claims with the use of descriptive general terms rests on the *presupposition of a world of publicly demonstrable objects* as the source of *standard-contexts* (the 'actual' world).

The second lesson seems to be that *descriptions* that are used in interpretatively relevant contexts *may be used or understood as an indication of samples* under the success-conditions of demonstrative references (like the description "the liquid that is transparent, potable, etc.", which indicates different samples on Earth and Twin Earth), and in a different context *as a means of specifying the relevant respects in which objects have to be similar to samples given in indications* (when we say that the relevant features of our samples are liquid, potable, etc.). As concept users, we can take a description utterance, according to our interpretative interests, either as performing the function of giving us samples as standards or as giving us a rule as to how to determine future objects as similar to samples we already have. How we take a description in a given context, as *demonstratively* used or as *criterially* used, can thus not be told *by looking at the description*, but only by *understanding its interpretative role* in the context of a practice of using a term to make determinate claims.[18]

Let me connect this to the second, epistemic, contextualisation of our concepts, the one regarding the criteria for the development of the extension. It follows from contextualism with respect to the a priori and Putnam's account of concept structure that even when a description was used criterially in a context (i.e. as prescribing what it is to be water), it can be *interpreted by us as demonstratively used to give samples* (i.e. describing some of the referents empirically) while we use a different description *criterially* to determine the extension from these samples. Even if our changing the status of her description and substituting ours in its place means that some of the things a person

would have determined as being legitimately called "water" actually don't end up in the extension we determine, these differences need not be counted as a failure of making factual claims about the same things, since we grant her having been successful in delivering samples. *Using* the presupposition of a common environment by *understanding her description as an indication*, we come into a position of *revising her extension* because we have the procedure of converting criterially used descriptions into empirical ones that indicate samples for us. We can *continue her practice of referring to several things as similar* on the basis of her samples' being items in the same environment while using a different description to identify items as water. Post-Kantianism or the idea that we do the dividing is therefore not violated. It's just that various dividing practices can be continuous in spite of differences in belief.

An important consequence of this is that *the extension of a person's or a group's use of a given term within a practice* does not depend on her having certain beliefs or samples satisfying these alone. By the lights of the very participants in practices of making empirical claims, the use of a sign and the results of this use, the extensions, are *independent*. This independence makes our particular ways of determining referential decisions revisable. At the same time, it is the *overriding norm to make the person intelligible as making empirical claims* that motivates the decision to change the *interpretative status of the beliefs the person associates with her use of the term*. The alternative is to *deny her the status of being able to make empirical claims* because she determines a different extension, hence "talks about something different". If she *is* claiming the status of making empirical claims about water, then she will accept the extensions we build from hers, taken as samples. Thus *accepting extensions that have been determined independently of her beliefs* is at the same time constitutive for and resulting from her being and remaining a participant in practices of exchanging empirical claims.

Putnam's answer to the question of how participants in fallibilist practices under the post-Kantian predicament can accept the idea that their various descriptions refer to a shared environment is that the idea of a *common and shared environment that is independent of our beliefs* is *inseparably tied to the ability to form empirical concepts and make determinate factual claims at all*. The first puzzle is solved.

At this point, we can make the transition to conceptual pluralism as follows. In view of the account just given, we also have to say that the revision of one interpretation by another presupposes that both interpretations *count as alternatives in many situations of their application*. Unless the results of her applying the observational description yield at least some indications of objects that I would describe as H_2O, my decision to treat her description as an indication of water-samples wouldn't be motivated at all. For all those cases where our indications coincide, the descriptions each of us gives count as equally valid ways of speaking about water because both are parts of in-

terpreting "water". If fallibilism implies the anticipation of *better* alternatives, and if being an alternative implies, according to the contextual a priori status that interpretation-determinative descriptions have, *being functionally equivalent* to a sufficient degree, then fallibilism about the contextual a priori (i.e. anti-absolutism) trivially implies the *weaker* anticipation of the possibility of *functionally equivalent alternatives* for interpreting the same term under comparable circumstances.

V. Pluralism and Contradictions

We are now left with elucidating how post-Kantian fallibilists can live with contradicting *factual* claims that they see as concerning *the same phenomena* without sacrificing the idea that whether or not a statement is true does *not* depend on decisions alone. The problem for understanding the case of the Polish Logician and the Carnapian as one of a hidden agreement is how both can come to the opinion that the contradictions each of them can state in their respective language if directly incorporating the other's utterances are *factually inconsequential* in spite of the fact that each of their systems of counting taken separately has to be factually consequential if it is to do the work of contributing structure to the world they talk about.

One thing that is immediately apparent from Putnam's various descriptions of the case is that apart from the cases where both say "1", the Carnapian and the Polish Logician would *never* utter the same numeral in the same situation. Another thing that is clear is that, having both been instructed to count what they find on the table, and each knowing that both have been so instructed, the other's utterances in the situation are acknowledged by each as being *intended as counting results*. However, the results reached by the other cannot possibly be *produced by applying their own method*, and none of them can accept "3=7" as possibly true (they use the same number-series in reporting counting results). According to Putnam's description, the Polish Logician and the Carnapian necessarily reach different results in their counting because they *group differently*. Hence, if they come to the decision that their results are references to the same arrays of things, it cannot possibly be in function of shared (object-constitutive) beliefs about groupings. However, this means that their decision to take the other as counting is not determined by their sharing some (unknown) set of beliefs concerning what the objects in question are.[19] The question is whether this forces them to assume having *expressed different empirical beliefs* when they non-mistakenly uttered their numerals.

Now, from the discussion of Putnam's externalism it follows that to address the latter question, we have to start from the assumption that relevant utterances of participants in practices with shared epistemic goals have to be

counted *at least as indications of shared circumstances*. Under this assumption, and in view of the apparent contradictions, one of the two would have to resort to the procedure of interpreting a description as an indication that was originally used as a criterion by the other. Using her own description as a criterion to classify situations, e.g. as such that there are three objects on the table, the Carnapian might begin taking the Polish Logician's remarks "there are seven objects on the table" in such situations as an *indication* of a situation in which there are *three* objects on the table, etc.

The Carnapian thereby *grants the Polish Logician factuality* (determinate truth or falsity) for his beliefs without *identifying the expression of the belief with the belief expressed in the same way by her, the Carnapian*. The alternatives are that either *all* of the Polish Logician's number-utterances (apart from "1") would turn out *false* (if the Carnapian system is taken to say what the facts are) or that *all* of the Carnapian's (i.e. her own) number-utterances would turn out to be false. Both of these alternatives would force the conclusion that one of them isn't counting (i.e. succeeding in making relevant factual claims about numbers of objects) after all, contrary to their proven competence, shared knowledge of the instructions and the shared situation. Changing the interpretative status of the other's belief would therefore be an obligatory exercise of interpretative charity. Taking this line, it would turn out in this case that in *all situations that are relevantly similar for her,* i.e. situations in which the Carnapian reaches the result that *it is a fact that there are three objects on the table*, the Polish Logician states it as a *fact that there are seven objects on the table*.

In view of this, the attempt of the Carnapian to see the Polish Logician as *non-trivially* falsifying any of her empirical number-claims would *fail* because both versions can be put in a relation of systematic mutual reconstruction of extensions for the other's numerals. With this kind of extension-reconstruction in place, the difference in the beliefs and their structure *wouldn't show up as any empirical difference*, i.e. difference of the truth values of correlated countings. Thus, there would be no situation in which the suitably transformed non-mistaken judgements of the other concerning numbers of objects would ever count as *counterevidence for their own results*. It would thus be *arbitrary*, i.e. not justifiable in view of experience and interpretative success, to *deny one of the ways of counting its claim to factuality* and grant it to the other.

If we take it from Putnam's semantic externalism that we have to specify the environmental conditions under which empirical beliefs are formed in order to determine the empirical concepts used by the speakers, then we cannot identify the *empirical beliefs* each speaker expresses with a number-statement unless we specify some sample for a counting-result in an empirical situation. We need some exemplification or *performance of countings in empirical conditions* before we can decide which belief is expressed in a

given number-statement, and whether or not two different expressions actually amount to *making different empirical claims*. The number expressions used by the Polish Logician and the Carnapian can only be specified as *empirical concepts* if we see how they *employ them in publicly demonstrable situations*. Before we (and they) know *which situations they indicate with their countings*, interpretation and the development of a correlation wouldn't even get started. It is a corollary of externalism that whether the speakers uttering the results in the example actually *must* disagree in the sense of *being condemned to either talking about different situations or to disagreeing when they utter their respective results* is not a function of the different results alone.

The point of this is that as soon as the Polish Logician and the Carnapian *presuppose that they count in the same situations*, i.e. that each of them applies *some* method of counting to the same situation under the common goal of *determining the number of objects in the situation*, and both at the same time presuppose that *the results of their countings in a situation are not logically determined by their counting methods alone*, then both can come to try to *mutually interpret each other's discourse.* Without the contextual element in the determination of the other's utterances, on the other hand, they would not come to *any* interpretation that preserves even the *factuality* of the other's countings.

The conclusion seems to be that in an attempt to *save the factuality of the other's discourse* over a range of public occasions of use it may turn out that *all relevant factual disagreements disappear on reinterpretation*, just as in the revising case *some supposed factual agreements disappeared.* In short, it is not at all *in spite* of or in *taking exception to* their commitment to fallibilism and cognitivism that they come to the conclusion *not* to take the other's remarks as competing with their own. They exercise the very same interpretative ability that lies at the basis of the exercise of their fallibilism and cognitivism. They were mistaken in thinking that both ways of counting necessarily lead to contradictory empirical claims although they were right in thinking that the numerical statements necessarily contradict. Fallibilism remains intact. At the same time, the possibility of seeing both ways of representation as *legitimate alternatives of making factual claims* is evidently not based by any of them on the assumption of the availability of a *neutral perspective* into which both discourses could be translated *without conflicts*, because by their own lights *there is no such perspective*. Instead, their mutual reinterpretations makes essential use of the difference between contextually interpreting descriptions demonstratively and using them criterially, which depends on their externalist practice of interpretation. Post-Kantianism and contextualism regarding the a priori remain intact. Additionally, in view of this fact *neither of them* may presuppose that her perspective is the *unique* way of specifying what the facts are because this would immediately entail

that the other perspective is *non-factual*, i.e. also not *possibly informing them about the factual validity of their results*. Cognitivism and pluralism remains intact. Putnam's semantic externalism thus helps us preserve all pragmatist commitments, whereas without it we remain mystified how to square them in spite of practising each of them every day. In other words, Putnam's externalism has shown us how to be better (more realistic) pragmatists.

VII. Conclusion

One might be tempted to think that Putnam's account of conceptual pluralism in the last instance turns out to be quite modest, not to say (almost) empty. It appears that Putnam ends up saying that in cases of recognised conventionality we can talk either way. Of course, one might respond, we can measure the distance between the king's nose and his thumb by saying that it is 1 yard or some difficult number in meters, and of course we can, in the same way, measure the number of objects in a situation according to Polish logic or Carnapian standards. But this does nothing to solve the problems brought up by considerations concerning deep incommensurability that are construed around cases where this is precisely *not* the case. One might observe that demonstrating that there are cases of conceptual pluralism in Putnam's sense doesn't really address these cases but simply holds up a different class of cases where contradictions don't imply loss of objectivity because they are produced by conventions. In the remainder, I want to point out that such observations, even if true, are of little comfort to someone who would like to maintain certain sorts of incommensurability-theses with respect to conceptual schemes.

First, I think that there is some truth to the observations. Perhaps there are few and only recondite cases that work exactly as the case of the Polish Logician and the Carnapian. But this observation misses the most important point Putnam makes in his work on conceptual relativity, which lies less in his ingenuity in *finding* (previously philosophically unexploited) cases, but in his *treatment* of the cases. According to the reconstruction of Putnam's argument given here, we can discover (as opposed to stipulate or infer or tell from stipulations alone) that apparent factual differences actually are merely conventional. This an insight *resulting from a practice of empirical belief-fixation*: it is a *result* of investigation into the environment and into ways of reinterpreting the concepts of both parties that the differences between the two are consequences of their adoption of conventions rather than of their taking in different facts. Reaching this result in Putnam's example is only possible *under the assumption of common reference in a practice of empirical belief-fixation*. Furthermore, it is, like all other consequences reached in a public practice of empirical investigation, subject to justification under inclu-

sion of empirical circumstances. Thus, the objection that Putnam's cases are 'trivial', where true, is begging the question at issue.

In order to assess the effect these reflections have, I want to indicate two areas where Putnam's analysis of conceptual relativity can be felt most clearly: one very obvious set of consequences affects the tenability of metaphysical realism, and one less obvious set of consequences concerns the tenability-conditions for incommensurabilist views. Obviously, the first set of consequences results from Putnam's exploitation of *ontologically different* conceptual schemes that result in the same factual constraints on experience, while the second results from the fact that in his construction, Putnam has to make use of his *semantic externalism*.

As to the first set of consequences, it has been stressed by Putnam ever since he began writing about conceptual relativity that, if the foregoing is at least approximately correct, then Putnam is in a position to say that *externalism with respect to interpretation doesn't imply metaphysical realism*. We can assume to be talking about the same entities in the environment independently of which of a number of descriptions we use *without* having to assume that either one of these descriptions or a unique super-meta-description is the true account of what the objects are that we talk about. This assumption can be upheld as long as we assume that there are, along with the practices of investigation and theory-formation, successful demonstrative practices in place. Whether or not there are such practices is also not dependent on whether or not we have some one common extension-determinative description. It is perfectly compatible with our *having good reasons to suppose that there is no such unique description*. It just depends on whether there are such practices. Thus, Putnam does not have (nor need) a transcendental argument against metaphysical realism, just a pragmatic one. On this view, determinate reference doesn't presuppose a settled ontology. Likewise, taking theories to be true does not determine or presuppose one rather than another fitting set of 'ultimate' ontological commitments.

But what does all this mean if not that these schemes are, in some sense, incommensurable? What difference is there between Putnam's view and latter day incommensurabilism? To see how these questions are to be addressed most fruitfully, it should be clear that in Putnam's reconstruction, our entitlement to taking both conceptual schemes to be different conventions for the same purposes is (unlike in most incommensurability accounts) not merely the consequence of some purely *a priori* principle. In order to see this important difference, take this view as an example: two conceptual schemes containing the same general term are 'incommensurable' if they contain ways of applying the term that are so different as to make assertions with its help mutually epistemically irrelevant. Add to this the view that this is the case if the ontological commitments of both schemes are very different. Since they talk about different sorts of objects, the argument goes, what each says truly

about something needn't be even relevant for knowing what is the case about something else, even if both of these 'somethings' are designated by the same term in both schemes. On this view, ontology is constitutive of common reference and mutual relevance.

Taking this line, an incommensurabilist might be tempted to say that actually, the Polish Logician and the Carnapian are not talking about the same things at all, and hence their results of counting objects *cannot possibly* be relevant to each other. It's not that both have different conventions for describing the same facts, but that they do not (and cannot) describe the same facts at all: they have an *ontological* problem, not one about *conventions*. Putnam's example shows that this assumption is false, hence not *a priori* true. Not all differences in ontologically constitutive principles result *ipso facto* in factually indifferent descriptions. If you want to claim that two conceptual schemes are incommensurable in the sense described, *you have to establish that they are.* And this has to be achieved *within the practices of belief formation in which it would be relevant if they really turned out to be incommensurable conceptual schemes*. For all we know, the differences pointed to in supporting such a claim might be *conventional*. If so, nothing would follow about the conceptual schemes' capacity to mutually confirm, disconfirm, and criticize each other's factual consequences, just like the Polish Logician's observation of seven objects confirms the Carnapian's observation of three objects and disconfirms the latter's belief that there are four objects on the table. As opposed to incommensurabilism, here co-reference and all its epistemic import doesn't presuppose any determinate ontology. Rather, determining and ascribing ontology to a range of referential, interpretive and theoretical decisions is an (optional) constructive venue.

In response, an incommensurabilist might want to take a different line and say that the Carnapian's and the Polish Logician's respective conceptual schemes are rather than incommensurable, 'trivially' translatable, and hence Putnam's reconstructions don't really address the problem of incommensurability. (After all, one way of saving *a priori* arguments is by making them inapplicable). Thus, the incommensurabilist might want to claim that Putnam's case is one of conventional differences in belief. In this regard, Putnam's way of treating conceptual relativity shows that *if* you want to accept the obvious description of the cases as conventional differences in belief, then you have to accept that it is sometimes rational to assume a common reference to situations *in spite of differences in assumptions that are ontologically constitutive*. Therefore, in reconstructing the case as one of trivial conventional disagreement, the incommensurabilist would be forced to accept a more general principle that is incompatible with the gist of her view. In both ways, conceptual pluralism à *la* Putnam affects the credibility of incommensurabilist theses.

It seems to me that this second set of consequences is a side effect of the externalism implied in the reconstruction. Of course, the effects of exter-

nalism on incommensurability theses are much clearer in the classical cases like Putnam's treatment of the history of the use of "electron", "water", "gold", etc. But in those cases, it is more difficult to see that the success does *not* depend on a *metaphysical view* of the realist assumptions that are at work in our epistemic and interpretive practices. Be this as it may, it seems to me that the fact that Putnam's externalism *also* allows for a reconstruction of obvious conventionality without having to infer *factual indifference* of applying the corresponding schemes is actually another strength of this view.

May be the point of Putnam's study of conceptual relativity doesn't go much further, and probably his views still admit many cases of incommensurability. But, on the other hand, perhaps this is as it should be. What would it mean to *rule out* incommensurability 'as such', if not the absurd position that everything can be taken to talk about the same thing as everything else? According to Putnam, *it is an open question, to be decided within the corresponding epistemic practices* whether or not two conceptual schemes are actually incommensurable or not. Thus, Putnam doesn't have (nor need) a transcendental argument against incommensurability, but only a pragmatic one.

In sum, Putnam's reflections on phenomena of conceptual relativity seem to me to significantly contribute to 'pragmatise' both, our views on realism, and our views on the differences between the conceptual systems we use to make the environment into a world. Putnam has not only shown us how to be better pragmatists, but also how to be more reasonable realists.[20]

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NOTES

[1] This is clear throughout his more recent writings. A representative quote can be found in Putnam (1994a): "According to the semantic externalism that I defended (and still defend), the content of our words and thoughts is partly determined by our relations with things in our environment (including other people). The fact that what [we] speak of [as] *water* is water and not some other liquid has everything to do with the fact that the word *water* refers to water, for example" [p. 511].

[2] Cf. Putnam (1987): "The heart of pragmatism, it seems to me […] was the insistence on the supremacy of the agent point of view" [p. 70].

[3] Cf. Putnam (1995): "That one can be both fallibilistic *and* antiskeptical is perhaps *the* basic insight in American pragmatism. Now this may seem a delicate (some will say an impossible) balancing act, but it represents the situation in which we live" [p. 21] For his identifying such a stance with a minimal cognitivism, see the following passages form Putnam (1998): "The fundamental features of our cognitive situation

(are): that we are *fallible* (knowledge claims are defeasible), and that *we have the right to claim to know, in certain situations, at certain times, and for certain purposes*. […] Without genuine knowledge claims, there is nothing to be fallibilistic about." [pp. 254, 262].

[4] For his account of the conceptual ingredients of objectual assumptions, cf. Putnam (1994b): "It makes no sense to think of the world as dividing itself up into 'objects' […] independently of our use of language. It is *we* who divide up 'the world' — that is, the events, states of affairs, and physical, social, etc., systems that we talk about — into 'objects', 'properties', and 'relations'". For his identification of this stance with post-Kantianism, see the remark from Putnam (1987) mentioned in note 8.

[5] In order to avoid confusion of contextual a priori truths with empirical statements, the justification of which consists in (or is reducible to) what counts as direct experiential evidence, Putnam proposed in discussion to call these truths (in accordance with his more recent terminology) "grammatical". This implies, according to Putnam, that they are capable of empirical testability under adequate conditions, but not actually empirically testable under current epistemic conditions. However, since I want to stress that these assumptions cannot be inconsequential with respect to the content of knowledge ('the facts'), I think that 'factual' is more explicit than 'grammatical' (which might give the misleading idea that taking or leaving such assumptions is mainly a matter of talking the right way).

[6] Cf. Putnam (1992a): "Pragmatists have long emphasized that what is *functionally a priori*, i.e. not, in a particular context of inquiry, treated as 'empirical', may in another inquiry become simply an empirical claim (and possibly a refuted one)" [p. 393].

[7] Cf. Putnam's development of the idea of the contextual a priori in Putnam (1962), and (1962a). In this regard, Ebbs (1997) provides very instructive further hints. Cf. also Mueller (2001), part I.

[8] Cf. Putnam (1994b): "We do [the dividing the world of experience] in a variety of ways. […] We may partly describe the contents of a room by saying that there is a chair in front of a desk, and partly describe the contents of the same room by saying that there are particles and fields of certain kinds present. […] *Both* descriptions are descriptions of the room as it really is" [p. 243]. The commitment that each of the descriptions is factual is best put in Putnam (1987): "It is the philosophers who in one way or another stand in the Neo-Kantian tradition — James, Husserl, Wittgenstein — who claim that common-sense tables and chairs and sensations and electrons are *equally real*" [p. 12].

[9] Its general characterization is, according to Putnam (1987): "There are ways of describing what are (in some way) the 'same facts', which are (in some way) 'equivalent' but also (in some way) 'incompatible'" [p. 29]. An excellent article discussing Putnam's idea of conceptual relativity is Case (1997).

[10] For the following account of the two reactions, see Putnam (1992), ch. 6.

[11] For explicit statements that this is the form he has in mind for his externalism, see Putnam (1988), [p. 33], (1990a), [p. 61], as well as his approving description of Reichenbach's explanation of empirical concept use in Putnam (1991), [pp. 120-1]. It should be clear that this is a more generalized form of the sketch given in Putnam (1975b), [p. 225, and pp. 229-33]. For the continuities and changes in Putnam's ac-

count of the normal use of empirically intended general terms see Mueller (2001), chps. 6-9. Haas-Spohn (1997) offers a reconstruction that is in some ways similar, but she reaches different conclusions.

[12] The corresponding theses are formulated in Putnam (1975b) as follows: "*all* natural-kind words and physical-magnitude words are indexical" [p. 266] and "an *indexical* word cannot be represented as a [...] family of non-indexical words." [p. 265].

[13] This is an all-important qualification, namely that "belief" in this context is to be taken as what Putnam calls "narrow content". The whole point of the Twin-Earth arguments is precisely to show that 'beliefs' in this sense do not amount to what we might call 'determinate cognitive units', because some of their constituents (namely the used concepts) lack determinacy outside an environmentally contextualised practice of employment in statements. As in Putnam's later evaluations of his original work, my attempt here is to re-construct this line of argument as a *reductio* of the idea of free-standing "narrow contents". According to this considered view, free-standing 'narrowly' individuated beliefs do not amount to beliefs as we are used to individuate them because they are not determinately about anything at all; in a way, they are *pre*-beliefs or belief-*shells*. On the other hand, individually entertained ("subjective") beliefs with a determinate content and different individuation conditions than 'broad' beliefs are to be seen as *richer* in content, and thus as *not prior to* 'broadly' individuated beliefs. They are not 'free standing' or 'extension independent'. For accounts along these lines, cf. e. g. Recanati (1993) or Travis (2000). The necessity to underscore this aspect in the presentation of Putnam's case was pointed out to me by Maite Ezcurdia and Gary Ebbs. In the following, I will therefore (like Ebbs (2000) also refer to the resources that guide individual speakers' term-applications as "dispositions".

[14] In continuation of the last note, I would like to stress that a mental item's *characterisability* in what Gareth Evans calls 'non-semantic properties' does not preempt the question whether thereby one has achieved an *individuation* of the respective belief. My assumption is that mental items may be *characterisable* extension-independently, say, by abstraction from their semantic properties, and that this can be called a 'belief' for the common form it has with full fledged beliefs. That such a characterization can only be performed *subsequent on* and *on the basis of* a system of beliefs in the full-fledged sense, i.e. on a realm of the products of someone's ability to form beliefs within environment-related practices, is a consequence of the outcome of the argument.

[15] It should be obvious from the formulation that for any member of the class of samples it can turn out, on the strength of different relevant respects and *the same concept-structure* that, although they seemed to be the same in relevant respect to the rest of stuff called 'water', they actually aren't. As Putnam repeatedly has stressed, the sample-set consists of members each of which's counting as a member of the set is *defeasible* (if good reason for revision arises).

[16] This structure is, according to Putnam (1991), to be pragmatically derived from a previous practice of making and exchanging claims. This is an important modification of Putnam 1975b where the presupposition that "this" designates a member of the kind "water" was taken to be an "empirical presupposition" [p. 225]. While Putnam's position in (1991) doesn't directly falsify this view, it squares better with his account of contextual apriority in linking this presupposition explicitly to

practices of referring and the results recognized as correct in them. This was merely implicit in (1975b), where the empirical presupposition was expressed by taking the original sample group to be "the stuff that I and other speakers in my linguistic community have on other occasions called 'water'" [p. 225], which on the level of the object-language gives tokenings of "this is water" that are taken to be true in adequate contexts. One of the first to note that the so-called "empirical presupposition"' actually has a contextual a priori status was Zemach (1976).

[17] Some might wonder whether this actually conserves all the force that an account built around the notions of rigidity and necessary a posteriori truths was supposed to have. In my account, what has to be taken as 'rigid designators' (or standard naming devices) are the indicating means for the samples: if something is pointed out as a standard, then the object designated by a demonstrative act remains the same under all circumstances where it isn't subjected to physical alteration. This conserves the whole force of 'reference fixing' and accounts for the contextuality introduced into extension-determinations predicted by the 'classical' form of the 'new theory of reference'. According to this insight, empirical terms cannot be 'purely descriptional' and pragmatically determinate at the same time. However, this doesn't imply (nor exclude) that the general term "water" refers to some definite extension under all circumstances. When the identity criteria for, e.g., substances change due to theoretical advances, then the same standard objects, re-described in the terms of the new criteria, may yield different extensions, and some of them may cease to be samples although they were paradigmatic for, e.g. H_2O. In other words, assuming standard naming practices in demonstrative reference to individual entities in the environment does not necessarily entail a commitment to (metaphysically) necessary a posteriori truths or to standard naming practices with respect to kinds. The necessity of such truths as "water is H_2O" is, in this sense, also contextual: it depends on the availability of alternatives, on the empirical truth of "this is H_2O" uttered with respect to paradigmatic samples indicated by "this is water"-tokenings in the actual world, and on the presupposition that the circumstances of application for "H_2O" be governed by natural laws under which this compound is (a) significant for distinguishing chemically different stuffs and (b) applicable (as Putnam (1997) points out, this kind of necessity does not amount to more than *physical* necessity but preserves the strength of the semantics desired for normal, concept-preserving theoretical revisions). It is precisely the force of the theory that changes in criteria don't imply total changes in reference, although they do imply changes in the total extensions determined according to the new criteria on assumption of the old paradigms. In this sense, what changes with a change in either criteria or samples is actually the 'intension', i.e. rule for application of the terms, and in consequence of this, the extension. But such changes needn't affect the relevant class of token-references we are able to establish to members of the class designated by the general term. Similar conclusions as to the metaphysical underpinnings of the so-called 'new theory of reference' were reached in Salmon 1981. This work also clarified the relation between the contextuality of the 'fixing' and the presuppositions needed for disambiguating the two uses of "water" in the Twin Earth example. "Water" is, in this sense, not rigidly designating a kind, although "this" (or any other demonstrative device), as used on a certain occasion in a true statement of the form "x is water" rigidly designates a member of the class of things that is denoted by "water" in

our linguistic community and determined by applying the respective relevant criteria to arbitrary entities in any environment. This means that we can (under the noted presupposition) rigidly designate any number of members of the class denoted by "water" as used by us, without thereby being committed to the assumption of the necessary truth of any particular description that would apply to all of them. The basic idea for such an interpretation of naming with general terms is already hinted at in Cook (1980). A consequence of this is that the class of things designated by such contextually determinate "this"-uses is at our 'semantic' disposal even in such contexts in which we consider the question whether some of these things may actually not be water; after all, they have been rigidly designated as the very things we believed to be water but now have become doubtful about. This is all we need from the point of view of the language we use to be able to perform and evaluate such reflections, i.e. for the terms to perform the functions Putnam and others ascribe to our use of so-called natural kind terms. They have to be re-interpretable under most (and occasionally even radical) differences in criteria for application, and yet at the same time permit keeping track of the set (or a sufficiently substantial sub-set) of the things we applied the term to in a given context of use. According to Salmon (1981), we need an additional mechanism not implied by the strictly linguistic requirements for the production of the 'normal' use of empirically intended terms to get from here to a 'rigidified' *kind*. Putnam's work posterior to Salmon's study can be seen as a pragmatic analysis of the epistemology of such mechanisms. Salmon's subsequent work, and related accounts as the one given in Soames (2002), chps. 9-11, assume that we need the assumption of *rigidified* natural kinds (and thus *metaphysical* necessity) to capture the full force of natural-kind terms in counterfactual evaluations. Putnam's account and mine, in contrast, doubt that the very idea of such kinds can be made clear, hence doubt also whether they can be ('semantically') required or implied in the normal use of the corresponding terms. The need for this footnote was pointed out to me in discussion by Ronald Loeffler.

[18] For the interpretation of this difference as the key to the ideas behind the so-called 'new theory of reference', cf. Putnam's (1990a), [p. 58]. There has been considerable dispute over the question whether the distinction used in this context, which goes back to Donnellan's distinction between the 'referential' and the 'attributive' uses of descriptions, is actually semantically significant. As can be seen in my account, I think that there are clear reasons to think that it is. My terminology to make this point is, inspired by Wettstein's work (cf. the relevant articles collected in Wettstein (1991)).

[19] This remark is meant to indicate that a Davidsonian treatment of such an obviously quite trivial case faces obstacles. The case is trivial insofar as we actually have a highschool-formula to transform each other's counting results (if n is the Carnapian counting result, then 2^n-1 is the Polish Logician's result, under Putnam's description). However, the fact that "3=7" is false for any system of counting excludes the suggestion that the Carnapian and the Polish Logician come to a non-contradictory set of shared beliefs and 'therefore' become able to recognize each other as talking about the same situation. This is indeed the outcome, but requires the step of realizing that each of the two is talking about different extensions (set of individuals taken as basic) when talking about "objects"; and this means that of the relevant beliefs, most of the

other's object-constitutive beliefs have to be (literally) false in order to produce a shared concept of the entities in the situation. This constitutes a dilemma for a Davidsonian. Either the Carnapian and the Polish Logician are to be construed as agreeing. Then they have to be taken as sharing the set of relevant beliefs. However, the compound of both 'theories' is inconsistent, hence *no* truth-theory. Or the Carnapian and the Polish Logician are to be construed as disagreeing. Then their truth theories must be different. Thus there must be some fact such that the Carnapian asserts some sentence of his where the Polish Logician denies *the correlated* sentence. But by hypothesis and the formula, such a situation is impossible. This, by the way, also excludes a Kuhnian explanation that requires both participants to share the (extension- and reference- independent) object-constitutive concepts and beliefs first, and then explains a shared referring practice as the result of this shared background. The phenomenon of conceptual relativity shows in this direction that the order of explanation has to be inverted: shared beliefs and concepts are to be explained by shared references, not the other way around, if one is to reach the trivial result at all. Putnam's elaboration of this phenomenon is thus less a spectacular discovery of some novel fact, but rather a challenge to either non-externalist or truth-based externalist explanations of what is going on when we perform such trivial transformations.

[20] I would like to thank Hilary Putnam, Arthur Fine, Maite Ezcurdia, Guillermo Hurtado, Gary Ebbs, Cristina Lafont and Ronald Loeffler for comments on earlier drafts of this paper. They helped rectify some obscurities, and make other points more explicit. Further I would like the members of Northwestern's Department of Philosophy, the Instituto de Investigaciones Filosóficas at he UNAM in México, as well as the members of the Cognitive Science Colloquium at Northwestern, where earlier versions of the paper were read, to have helped improving the paper.

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