Nordic
Studies in
Pragmatism

Helsinki — 2015

Phillip Honenberger

"The Poverty of Neo-Pragmatism: Rorty, Putnam, and Margolis on Realism and Relativism"

Nordic Pragmatism Network,
Helsinki 2015

www.nordprag.org

The Poverty of Neo-Pragmatism: Rorty, Putnam, and Margolis on Realism and Relativism

Phillip Honenberger
Rowan University

1. Introduction

In his 1993 paper on "Hilary Putnam and the Relativist Menace," Richard Rorty wrote that "I entirely agree with, and fervently applaud, [Putnam's] relativist-bashing remark: 'Relativism, just as much as realism, assumes that one can stand within one's language and outside it at the same time.' But I do not see how this remark is relevant to my own ethnocentric position" (Rorty 1998 [1993], 51). Rorty's statement was part of an effort to clear himself from Putnam's charge that his own (Rorty's) position was a form of relativism (Putnam 1990, 18–26). In effect, Rorty argued that his position could not be relativist because, as "ethnocentrist" (in Rorty's special sense of that term), it denied even the coherence of supposing standards of truth to be relative to "conceptual scheme," in agreement with Donald Davidson's well-known argument for that conclusion (Davidson 2001 [1974]). Putnam, on the other hand, while consistently denying relativism (though not a similar position he has called "conceptual relativity"—see Putnam 1987, 16-21; 2004, 33–52; 2012, 56–58, 63–65), and while always defending one form of realism or another, has also changed his mind about which versions of realism he accepts or rejects several times in the course of his career (for an overview, see Putnam 2012, 51–71, 72–90, 91–108). In contrast to, and in dialogue with, Putnam and Rorty, Joseph Margolis has consistently defended a position that is self-avowedly both realist and relativist (Margolis 1986, 1992, 2002).

My aim in this paper is to clarify Margolis's own position on realism and relativism in contrast to those of Rorty and Putnam. I am generally sympathetic to Margolis's position and convinced by his arguments, and near the end of the paper I will say something about what I think we should take from them. Provocatively put, the position I defend amounts to the view that one *can* "stand within one's language and outside it at the same time" (which both Putnam and Rorty had claimed to be impossible). One attraction of a realist relativism along Margolis's lines is due to the epistemological significance of just such unusual standpoints.

2. Putnam and Margolis on Realism

Though the precise definition of realism itself is controversial, perhaps its defining commitment is that there is a world or reality apart from our thought or language that that thought or language is at least sometimes about, and which makes a difference to whether that thought or language is true or false. The versions of realism that Hilary Putnam has defended from the 1970s to today include *metaphysical realism*, *internal realism*, and *natural realism* (Putnam 1981, 1987, 1992, 1994; see Putnam 2012, 51–108 for review).[1] Putnam defended metaphysical realism briefly in the 1970s before rejecting metaphysical realism and defending (instead) internal realism through the 1980s (Putnam 1975, VIII–XI, 272–290; Putnam 1981, 1987, 1992).[2] But in the early 1990s Putnam publically abandoned internal realism and began defending a position he has called "natural realism" (also "naïve realism"), which he claimed to be inspired by William James, Ludwig Wittgenstein, and John McDowell (Putnam 1994, review in Putnam 2012, 58–62).

The *metaphysical* realist is distinguished, among other things, by his or her claim that our sentences and beliefs are true or false, when they are, because they correspond to, or fail to correspond to, the world as it is in itself. According to "the perspective of metaphysical realism," Putnam writes,

---

[1] See also Pihlström 1998, 49–59, and Hildebrand 2003, 155–162, for discussion.

[2] In a recent text, Putnam distinguishes his consistent adherence to *scientific* realism (which is a position in the philosophy of science concerning how to construe scientific theories) from his changing opinions about metaphysical, internal, and natural realism (which concern the more general realism issue in metaphysics and epistemology) (Putnam 2012, 51-56). Putnam writes that, contrary to many misreadings of his position, he has always been a scientific realist, even after he rejected metaphysical realism in the early 1980s (Putnam 2012, 51–56, 91–103).

the world consists of some fixed totality of mind-independent objects.
There is exactly one true and complete description of 'the way the
world is.' Truth involves some sort of correspondence relation be-
tween words or thought-signs and external things and sets of things.
I shall call this perspective the *externalist* perspective, because its fa-
vorite point of view is a God's Eye point of view.

Putnam 1981, 49 [3]

By contrast, the *internal* realist claims that the idea of our thought or
language corresponding to a world entirely independent of our thought
and language is incoherent (Putnam 1981, 1987). Whatever we imagine
in using phrases like "the mind-independent world," such phrases can-
not effectively refer to anything, since, in referring, they would thereby
demonstrate that the object referred to did not match the intension of the
concept (that is, would not be entirely mind-independent).[4] Despite the
rejection of metaphysical realism so construed, the internal realist affirms
that there is still a meaningful sense in which we can say that our thoughts
and language refer to reality, so long as we also recognize that the reality
referred to is identified solely by means internal to our interpretive frame-
work (Putnam 1981, 49–74; 1987, 16–40; and see Putnam 2012, 53–56, for
review). Putnam describes the internal realist view as follows:

> [I]t is characteristic of this view to hold that *what objects does the world
> consist of?* is a question that it only makes sense to ask within a theory
> or description. Many 'internalist' philosophers, though not all, hold
> further that there is more than one 'true' theory or description of
> the world.   Putnam 1981, 50

> In an internalist view ... signs do not intrinsically correspond to ob-
> jects, independently of how those signs are employed and by whom.
> But a sign that is actually employed in a particular way by a particu-
> lar community of users can correspond to particular objects *within the
> conceptual scheme of those users*. 'Objects' do not exist independently
> of conceptual schemes. We cut up the world into objects when we
> introduce one or another scheme of description. Since the objects and

---

[3] See Boyd 2013, 39–43, for a helpful list of distinguishable (arguably logically indepen-
dent) commitments that define what Putnam calls "metaphysical realism." These include
"truth is correspondence truth," "there is one true theory and one true ontology," "the ob-
jects of the true ontology are mind-independent," "reference is determined purely causally,"
and "bivalence holds for all sentences in the one true ontological vocabulary."

[4] This is one implication of Putnam's "brain-in-a-vat" argument, in Putnam 1981, 1–21,
and the main conclusion drawn at 49–50. I have left out of consideration Putnam's stronger
but more complicated "model-theoretic" argument, for reasons of space. Putnam now rejects
the latter argument (Putnam 2012, 74–80).

> the signs are alike internal to the scheme of description, it is possible
> to say what matches what.   Putnam 1981, 52

Finally, the *natural* realist affirms the validity of everyday notions of truth, reality, the world, and the direct relationship between our perception, action, thought, and discourse and the world (including, perhaps, correspondence or correspondence-like relations). Natural realism is a defense of the "realism of the common man."[5] It treats our epistemic situation as one of "unmediated" contact with, or "openness" to, a mind-independent world (Putnam 1994, 488–490 and *passim*; Putnam 2012, 61–62).[6] Furthermore, the views on all sides of the traditional realism/anti-realism debate (including metaphysical and internal realism) natural realism treats as relying on unjustified and highly problematic assumptions about perception, exemplified (among other places) in phenomenalism and verificationist semantics, but whose origins can be traced to the early modern period (Putnam 1994; and 2012, 58–62, 65–69, for review).

In what follows, I will compare Margolis's realist position to Putnam's internal realism (this section) as well as Putnam's natural realism (next section).

There have been at least three distinguishable strategies of argument for the conclusion that realism of something like the traditional kind (such as metaphysical realism) ought to be abandoned: (1) a (Cartesian) skeptical argument, linked to the impossibility of stepping outside our epistemic situation in order to evaluate the functioning of this situation in terms of a relation or lack of relation between mind and world; (2) the "incoherence of completely external reference" argument recounted above, which turns on the (putative) incoherence of supposing that our thought or language could refer to something entirely independent of our thought or language (as concluded on the basis of the famous "brain-in-a-vat" thought experiment, in Putnam 1981, 1–21); and (3) an argument that emphasizes the prima facie "incommensurability" (in the sense of Kuhn 1962 or something similar) of epistemic criteria. The last argument concludes, on the basis of (1) the incommensurability characteristic of varying competing accounts of what we might call "criterial" concepts like "truth," "justifi-

---

[5] The phrase is from William James, cited in Putnam 1994, 454.

[6] "I should not[in my internal realist phase] have seen us as 'making up' the world (not even with the world's help); I should have seen us as *open* to the world, as interacting with the world in ways that permit aspects of it to reveal themselves to us. Of course, we need to invent concepts to do that. There is plenty of constructive activity here. But we do not construct reality itself" (Putnam 2012, 61–2).

cation," "reality," "world," and so on (distinguishing these second-order, "criterial" concepts from first-order, "factual" ones), and (II) the lack of any objective (that is, not historically contingent and historically local) way to settle disputes between advocates of one or another such criterial notion, that (III) the validity of the ideas that the world or the facts are any particular way is inexorably contingent upon such historically local criteria of evaluation, themselves inexorably contingent.[7]

Among other things, Putnam intended his internal realist position to provide a more satisfactory position than either metaphysical realism or well-known "anti-realist" positions, such as Michael Dummett's verificationist anti-realism, on the one hand, and the "post-modern" views that Putnam then associated with Thomas S. Kuhn, Michel Foucault, and Richard Rorty, on the other (see Putnam 1981, IX–XI, 49–54, 113–126, 214–216; 1992 [1990], 18–26). But given that internal realism "relativizes" the reality described or referred to by any epistemic agent to that agent's experience, one might wonder what distinguishes Putnam's view from those he criticized during this period as "relativist" and hence "anti-realist." In fact, this is a charge that Rorty levelled at Putnam explicitly (in Rorty 1998 [1993]): Putnam's internal realism lacks resources to guard against such relativization; and Rorty's escape from such relativization (on his own account) derives not from preserving any component of realism, but rather from treating even the idea that there are open questions about alternative experiential frameworks, criteria, or conceptual schemes, as itself incoherent (following Davidson 2001 [1974]). This is the position Rorty dubs "ethnocentrism."

In an effort to guard against the collapse of his "internal realism" into either metaphysical realism or relativism (that is, to preserve both realism and internalism consistently), Putnam (a) distinguished between "truth" and "rational acceptability," (b) denied that we're ever in a position to evaluate the truth of our views directly, and (c) suggested that the notion of truth itself could be elucidated as "an *idealization* of rational acceptability" (Putnam 1981, 55). His reasoning in favor of the last identification was that "truth is expected to be stable or 'convergent'; if both a statement and its negation could be 'justified,' even if conditions were as ideal as one could hope to make them, there is no sense in thinking of the statement as *having* a truth-value" (Putnam 1981, 56). And, in at least one place, Putnam appeared to say that this point applied equally well to criterial claims as

---

7 See Kuhn 1962, Chs. 9–11, for an influential version of the original argument, and Baghramian 2004, 180–211 for discussion.

to factual ones: "[t]he very fact that we speak of our different conceptions as different conceptions of *rationality* posits a *Grenzbegriff*, a limit-concept of ideal truth" (Putnam 1981, 216). Rorty argued that Putnam's definition of truth as idealized rational acceptability, and his notion that discussion of truth or rationality itself implied a *Grenzbegriff*, were insufficiently supported, since nothing could guarantee us, from within the perspective defined by Putnam's commitment to internalism, that such convergence would or could occur in each case of disagreement, nor that the answers converged upon, if these answers were to converge, would necessarily be demonstrably superior to conceivable alternatives in general (Putnam 1981, 56, 216; Rorty 1998 [1993], 43–62; see also Margolis 2002, 30–34, for review). Putnam himself abandoned internal realism in the mid-1990s, partly (it seems) for this reason (Putnam 1994, 456–465, esp. 462), and partly due to Putnam's later rejection of the verificationist semantics that were the starting point of his argument for internal realism (Putnam 1994, 461–462; 2012, 58–60, 74–82, for review).

In a comparison of Putnam and Margolis on the realism/anti-realism issue, it is instructive to note that Margolis's position, which he calls "constructive realism," is quite similar to Putnam's internal realism, though without the assumption of a *Grenzbegriff* (Margolis 2002, 24–53, discussed below). At least this far, Putnam's internal realism *sans Grenzbegriff*, Margolis's constructive realism, and Rorty's (self-avowedly) non-realist and non-relativist "ethnocentrism" are on common ground. But further examination reveals important differences.

On Margolis's account in "Cartesian Realism and the Revival of Pragmatism" (2002), constructive realism is the view that we can meaningfully speak of a correspondence or aboutness relation between at least some of our thoughts or utterances and their objects. We must understand the objects in question, however, as accessible to us only in a way that is bound up with our constructed posits—our theories, practices, models, and conceptual schemes (Margolis 2002, 41–45). So far, Margolis's position appears very similar to Putnam's internal realism, with just three modifications: (I) absence of commitment to the definition of truth as "idealized rational acceptability," (II) absence of commitment to the view that a *Grenzbegriff* is implied in our use of criterial notions, and (III) emphasis upon something called "construction," which at least implies reference to material practice and historical contingency in a way that is lacking in Putnam's internal realism.

The principal non-constructive form of realism from which Margolis distinguishes his constructive realism, he calls "Cartesian realism." This, he claims, includes the basic accounts of the relation between knower and known defended by Descartes, Locke, and Kant, as well as (more contentiously, I would say) those of Putnam in his internal realist phase, Dummett, and Davidson. Margolis describes the contrast between Cartesian realism and his constructive realist alternative as follows:

> Cartesian realism [. . .] [i]n its most conventional form [. . .] is correspondentist in some criterially explicit regard, favors cognitive faculties reliably (even essentially) qualified to discern the actual features and structures of independent reality, is context-free and ahistorical, strongly separates human cognizers and cognized world, and is committed to one ideally valid description of the real world [. . .] Any doctrine that favors the objectivist drift of this sort of realism [. . .] counts in my book as 'Cartesian'   Margolis 2002, 38

This view closely corresponds to what Putnam describes (and rejects) under the heading of metaphysical realism, though Margolis intends his category to include quite a few more figures than Putnam's, as noted above. Constructivism, on the other hand,

> means at the very least that questions of knowledge, objectivity, truth, confirmation, and legitimation are constructed in accord with our interpretive conceptual schemes—the interpretive qualification of the indissoluble relationship between cognizer and cognized; and that, though we do not construct the actual world, what we posit (constructively) as the independent world is epistemically dependent on our mediating conceptual schemes. It is but a step from there to historicizing the entire practice   Margolis 2002, 22

And,

> [c]onstructivism holds that the objectivity of our beliefs and claims about the world *is itself a constructive posit* that we impose holistically and without privilege of any kind. It proceeds dialectically as a faute de mieux ["for lack of a better"] maneuver. Nothing hangs on it 'except' two very modest but all-important gains: (1) that we must (and may) put away every Cartesian longing [that is, every hope for a "correspondentism" consistent with "Cartesian realism"]; and (2) that, admitting (1), we must conclude that the appraisal of every logic, every semantics, every metaphysics and epistemology, proceeds only within the holism of our constructive posit: it never exits from it
>
> Margolis 2002, 45

Given the apparent similarities between Margolis's constructive realism and Putnam's internal realism, what are their differences? Among the most significance of these is, as just noted, that Margolis rejects Putnam's notions that truth is "idealized rational acceptability," as well as the notion of an unavoidably implicated *Grenzbegriff* (Margolis 2002, 30–34). I would argue, however, that there is another crucial difference between Putnam's "internal realism" and Margolis's "constructive realism": namely, that for Margolis, the matching of beliefs and the world that is recognized within the realism position is far more *robust* in the sense that it implies both a more concrete (say, materially, artifactually, socially and practically), and more historically and culturally contingent, instantiation than in Putnam's internal realism.[8]

When Putnam claimed (in his internal realist period) that the truth of a statement is internal to a language, he was inspired in large part by Dummett's verificationist anti-realism (Putnam 2012, 74–82, for discussion). One of the tasks that Putnam's internal realism was intended to fulfill was to answer the skeptical worry that we cannot know for sure that any of our beliefs match the world in itself (that is, anti-realist argument (1) above). Putnam's response is that the skeptical worry cannot be coherently stated (Putnam 1981, 1–21—in other words, anti-realist argument (2) above). Admitting as much, he argues, requires further admitting that we treat the words "truth," "reality," "world," and so on, as having meaning only from within the perspective afforded by our sense-data and experience and whatever interpretations we bring to that sense-data and experience. It would be fair to construe Putnam's internal realist view as a version of Kantian transcendentalism, a construal consistent with Putnam's frequent expressions of sympathy with Kant's views during this period (for instance, Putnam 1981, x, 16, 60–64, 118; 1987, 41–52).[9]

---

[8] See, for instance, Margolis's description and defense of "robust relativism" as a view that combines a more or less traditional realism about a certain core of first-order truth-claims, while also accepting a relativistic indeterminacy about the truth-values of other first-order claims, as well as second-order legitimative (criterial) claims, in Margolis 1986, 9–34; and his sympathetic presentation of both a "minimal realism" (shared even by so-called anti-realists like Dummett) and a more "full-blooded" (read "robust") realism that recognizes the epistemic relevance of non-deflated criterial notions like "truth," "correspondence,"and the like, without denying potential incommensurability in how these are applied and evaluated, in Margolis 1986, 109–124.

[9] This sympathy was not unqualified, however, particularly regarding Kant's view that the notion of a "thing-in-itself" is coherent and cognitively indispensable, either formally (as in Kant's epistemology) or substantively (as in Kant's moral philosophy): see Putnam 1987, 36, 41-44.

At least some of Margolis's arguments for his constructive realism, on the other hand, have a different starting point from that of Putnam's arguments for internal realism.[10] They proceed not from verificationist assumptions, or the similar assumptions of the Cartesian skeptic with only his or her experiences or sense-data to go on, to a Kantian denial of the sensicality of speaking or thinking about "things-in-themselves," but rather from what might be called a *third-personal* and *first-order* perspective of a sort like those of Kuhn, Benjamin Whorf, and the theoretical traditions of history of ideas and cultural anthropology in the late 19th and 20th century (without Margolis claiming to be engaged in original, first-order research himself, of course). Such a third-personal, first-order perspective characterizes, for instance, the approach of historians of science like Kuhn to case-studies like the Lavoisier-Priestley debate.[11] Margolis, following Kuhn in *Structure* (Kuhn 1962), presses the third rather than the second of the anti-realist arguments distinguished above: in other words, he takes it that our first-order studies of events of truth-claiming should motivate us to think of criteria for evaluating truth-claims as necessarily constructions of one sort or another, and, for the same reason, to think of our own convictions about reality, the world, or the facts as constructions of one sort or another. The first-order inquiries convince us that there is no room for insisting on a single privileged view of at least some of the matters with which philosophers have traditionally been concerned—including truth, reality, the world, linguistic meaning, or belief. And from this argument about the incommensurability, and lack of objectively demonstrable superiority between, "conceptual schemes," a conclusion is drawn about the merely relative objectivity of the factual claims made within these schemes. By parity of reasoning, we must understand our own criteria, theories, and beliefs as constructions of merely relative validity, just as we (for reasons drawn from our first-order inquiries) see those of the foreign tribes or past scientific research communities that social anthropologists and historians of science study.[12]

Beginning from such a first-order, third-personal perspective rather than from Cartesian skeptical or Kantian transcendental worries, Margolis's constructive realism then draws implications for the way we address the second-order, transcendental and first-personal, epistemological ques-

---

[10] Some do, some do not. Compare, for instance, Margolis 1986, Chs. 1 and 5.

[11] See Conant 1957 and the discussion in Kuhn 1962, 52–65, 118.

[12] See, for instance, Margolis's brief tally of the positive arguments in favor of relativism in Margolis 1986, 24–28.

tions. These in turn are taken to show the merely relative objectivity of first-order claims.

For reasons closely related to the reasoning just recounted, Margolis is not much attracted to the arms-race towards a greater and more consistent "internalization" of the acceptable evidence for philosophical theses that characterized the Rorty-Putnam debate, and led each to the rejection of so much of realism and relativism as it did. Putnam's later natural realism, as well as aspects of the views of Davidson, Rorty, and many others, take the argument from the incoherence of external standards (anti-realist argument (2) above) to problematic extremes. Minimalism, deflationism, and quietism are manifestations of such "internalization" tendencies, and Margolis is not generally sympathetic with those positions (see Margolis 1986, 109–124; Margolis 2003, 77–104). Rather, he emphasizes the profound cognitive and epistemological significance of the concepts of truth, reality, and correspondence, and recommends an enrichment of these notions in our analysis of human thought and belief (Margolis 2003, 77–104), while also emphasizing that, per the pressure of first-order evidence that any such concept is a construction, we cannot expect any such analysis to be the final word or to invalidate even apparently rival or inconsistent models of our cognitive situation (given the just mentioned first-order arguments for incommensurability about criteria).

3. Putnam and Margolis on Relativism

While Putnam and Rorty denied that they were relativists at the same time they rejected the label of (at least certain kinds of) realism, Margolis has affirmed both realism and relativism, though realism and relativism of a special sort. Margolis argues against a simple "relationalist" form of relativism: that is, a view wherein truth or falsity is relativized to languages or conceptual schemes, such that "true" is understood to mean "True-in-L1," "True-in-L2," and so on, or "Truth-relative-to-conceptual-scheme-A," "Truth-relative-to-conceptual-scheme-B," and so on (Margolis 1992; 1986, 9–34). Such a view, Margolis argues, is either incoherent or uninteresting. This is because such a position must (on pain of self-contradiction) ascribe truth to its own account that there are such relative truths. This, however, would be either (I) incoherent (if this truth is treated as more correct than these various relative truths) or (II) self-defeating (if this truth is treated as no more true than logically incompatible alternatives, and thus anti-relativism is admitted as true as relativism) or (III)

uninteresting (if the meaning of truth is treated as ambiguous between "absolutely true" and "relativistically true"). But Margolis goes on to argue that there are forms of relativism that do not fit the simple relationalist model. These include a view that drops the law of excluded middle, thereby acknowledging truth-values apart from true and false; and this is the form of relativism that Margolis favors.

In the previous section I suggested that Margolis's position is motivated by the sense that first-order inquiries have revealed the contingency of epistemic criteria. This contingency suggests that there are cases wherein some epistemic commitments are incommensurable with equally viable alternatives (at least in a particular epistemic context). In particular, in the kinds of cases Kuhn describes, the meaning of criterial terms or concepts like truth, validity, reality, world, and so on, appear to be infected by this contingency. One might wonder, therefore, whether the incommensurabilist argument about criteria (anti-realist argument (3), above) is not itself a version of the relationalist relativism Margolis rejects, and thus whether Margolis's position is inconsistent on this point. But acknowledging incommensurability and rejecting bivalence (the law of excluded middle) for discourse about matters affected by the incommensurability are logically compatible. Such incommensurabilities would not be *known* to be irreconcilable, yet also perhaps not actually ever "objectively" and univocally reconciled or reconcilable. The relativism supported by such cases is not self-contradictory in the way simple relationalist forms are bound to be. In particular, it escapes the objection that relativizing the meaning of truth to conceptual scheme is self-contradictory, as argued by Davidson (2001 [1974]). The fact that (A) the comparability of conceptual schemes is a condition of possibility of saying that (I) two cognitive practices diverge and that (II) there is no clear way of assigning superiority to either (as the legitimacy of Kuhn's account, and his own practice, in Kuhn 1962, requires), does not entail that (B) (I) the practices do not really diverge, nor (II) we must assume there *is* an objective way of assigning superiority to either. We can merely insist that cases of Kuhnian incommensurability, construed in the manner just indicated, allow for comparability.[13]

Margolis's version of relativism may be instructively compared to Putnam's notion of "conceptual relativity," which the latter has stressed since the late 1980s (Putnam 1987, 16–21; 2004, 33-52; 2012, 56–58, 63–65). Putnam argues that there cannot be a single correct way of conceiving of

---

[13] Margolis employs this line of defense against Davidson's criticism of Kuhn in Margolis 1986, 36–38, and Margolis 2003a, 42–76.

reality because there are cases where two entirely different conceptions de-
scribe only and exactly the same set of data. Consider the all-too-familiar
case wherein two philosophers direct their attention to a table. One claims
that the table is composed of five parts: four legs and a surface. The other
claims that the table is composed of just one part, which is identical to the
shape and volume inside its outermost surface. Putnam argues that these
two views are equally correct, yet inconsistent, and that this shows that
the world does not itself provide criteria of truth or falsehood for at least
some meaningful questions we might ask.[14] Putnam writes,

> Our concepts may be culturally relative, but it does not follow that the
> truth or falsity of everything we say using those concepts is simply
> 'decided' by the culture. But the idea that there is an Archimedean
> point, or a use of 'exist' inherent in the world itself, from which the
> question 'How many objects *really* exist?' makes sense, is an illusion.
>
> If this is right, then it may be possible to see how it can be that
> what is in one sense the 'same' world (the two versions are deeply
> related) can be described as consisting of 'tables and chairs' (and these
> described as colored, possessing dispositional properties, etc.) in one
> version and as consisting of space-time regions, particles and fields,
> etc., in other versions. To require that all of these must be reducible
> to a single version is to make the mistake of supposing that 'Which
> are the real objects?' is a question that makes sense *independently of
> our choice of concepts*.   Putnam 1987, 18; see also Putnam 2004, 2012

Margolis points out that Putnam's conceptual relativity works as it does
by assuming that the world itself is invariant across the different concep-
tual schemes compared, as well as that there is a common standpoint from
which these two views can be evaluated in terms of the binary truth-values
of their assertions (Margolis 2002, 151–154). The cases of relativity that are
most instructive for Margolis's position do not involve either assumption.
Putnam's relativism is thus considerably less radical than Margolis's.

   The distinction between Putnam and Margolis, on the issues of relativ-
ity and relativism, can be even more clearly seen when comparing Margo-
lis's view to that of Putnam in his latest, natural realist phase. Here Put-
nam appears to adopt a more third-personal and first-order perspective
on our epistemic situation, emphasizing (as had Dewey) a "transaction"
between human organisms and their environments, without questioning
the assumption that human perception and action puts the human organ-

---

[14] This argument may be compared to Quine's related arguments for the indeterminacy of
translation and for "ontological relativity."

ism (and hence, the human epistemic agent) in direct, epistemologically justified connection with a real, mind-independent world. So far, Putnam appears to have converged on the more third-personal, first-order view that characterizes Margolis's premise set. But Putnam's articulation of this "transaction" is largely put in naturalistic and organic terms, at the expense of consideration of the social, historical, artifactual and symbolic mediation of our relation to the world.[15] This contrasts sharply with Margolis's appeal to the indispensability of a recognition of, and analysis of, *interpretive tertia* (contingent and variable mediating structures, such as language, conventions, institutions, artifacts, and so on), within effective philosophical reflection upon our epistemic situation.[16] When Putnam describes his current position in the philosophy of mind, which he calls "liberalized functionalism," he emphasizes the connection between human minds and natural environments without mentioning any mediation of or modulation of this connection by conventional (historically contingent social, institutional, and symbolic) structures. Putnam writes:

> The liberalized functionalism I advocate is an antireductionist but naturalist successor to the original, reductionist, functionalist program. For a liberalized functionalist, there is no difficulty in conceiving of ourselves as organisms whose functions are, as Dewey might have put it, "transactional," that is, environment involving, from the start.
>
> What I have in mind in speaking of a 'liberal functionalist' is someone who, like me (or like me today), accepts the basic functionalist idea that what matters for consciousness and for mental properties generally is the right sort of functional capacities and not the particular matter that subserves those capacities, but (1) does not insist that those functions be 'internal,' that is, completely describable without going outside the organism's 'brain' (thus Gibsonian 'affordances' and Millikan's 'normal biological functioning' in an environment can all be involved in the description of the 'functional organization' of an

---

[15] But see Putnam 1994, 502–505, 516, for brief discussion of how scientific instruments and language can "extend" our natural perceptual capacities.

[16] Given that Putnam claims to draw much of the inspiration of his "natural realism" from the views of John McDowell, it is significant, for understanding the difference between natural realism and Margolis's constructive realism, that Margolis takes issue with the account of "second nature" (or *Bildung*) in the final chapter of McDowell 1994 for being problematically thin on precisely this point. According to Margolis's criticism, McDowell's view of second nature problematically underestimates its plausibly relativistic consequences by implying, through the comparison with Aristotle, a fixity to its content, and also fails to adequately precisely articulate the place of second nature within nature more generally—a story that would require at least passing reference to, for instance, paleoanthropology (Margolis 2002, 47–53).

> organism); (2) does not insist that those capacities be described as ca-
> pacities to compute (although she is naturally happy when computer
> science sheds light on some part of our functioning); and (3) does
> not even eschew intentional idioms, if they are needed, in describ-
> ing our functioning, although she naturally wants an account of how
> intentional capacities grow out of protointentional capacities in our
> evolutionary history.   Putnam 2012, 82–83

Though Putnam perhaps opens the door to consideration of the issue in his allowance of "intentional idioms," what is still missing from this picture is a sense of the way in which contingent artifactual factors such as language, technology, learned gesture, and social institutions, mediate or constitute these functional capacities, and that the changing fortunes of these factors may change the history of human beings, human societies, human norms and convictions, and human minds in an epistemologically significant way.[17]

4. Rorty and Margolis on Realism and Relativism

As is well-known, Richard Rorty was a longtime critic of the familiar idea that there is an epistemologically fruitful sense in which the relations of correspondence or of representation between our words and ideas, on the one hand, and the world, on the other, can be analyzed (Rorty 1979, 1992, 1998 [1993], 1999). But from a constructivist, realist, and relativist perspective such as that adopted by Margolis, this rejection of the epistemological relevance of correspondence and correspondence-like relations is too quick. One can begin to see why by considering Margolis's emphasis on the epistemic significance of "intermediaries," which he also calls "interpretive tertia." According to Margolis, Rorty, following his adopted ally Donald Davidson, "rule[s] out all constructivist intermediaries, even those 'intermediaries' that disallow any initial separation between consciousness and reality," whereas Margolis, rather than ruling out consideration of such intermediaries, actually emphasizes their epistemological significance (Margolis 2002, 46). Relatedly, Margolis's view is more amenable to talk of correspondence or representation than is Rorty's, though this allowance must be carefully qualified. From the perspective of this interpretation, Margolis's advocacy of the mind-world relation as "symbiotized" rather than Cartesian—that is, as disallowing any "initial separation between consciousness and reality" (Margolis 2002, 46)—would have to be

---

[17] But, again, see Putnam 1994, 502–505, 516,

understood in such a way that *non-initial* separations—separations con-
ducted, one might say, *in media res*, from within one or another position in
a "symbiotized world"—are not so excluded.

One can articulate the possibility of meaningful (and usefully analyz-
able) correspondence and representation relations from the vantage point
of the relativist realism Margolis advocates as follows. Consider a phe-
nomenon one might call *Hegelian externality*: namely, the possibility of dis-
tinguishing between the *Für-sich-sein* (the way things seem to be, to a sub-
ject) and the *In-sich-sein* (the way things "actually" are, at least from a van-
tage point that seems, to an external evaluator, more comprehensive than
the subject's own), where the details of this distinction are always relative
to one or another local phenomenological position.[18] This is a relation that
characterizes an adult's perspective on the beliefs and experiences of his or
her childhood; an ethnographer's perspective on the cosmological beliefs
of the culture he or she is studying; a historian's perspective on the beliefs
and decisions of historical actors; and a clinical psychologist's perspective
on the beliefs of his or her patients. Even after admitting the impossibility
of a fully external perspective on the event of belief and knowledge (what
Putnam calls a "God's eye view"), it is possible to distinguish a conscious-
ness B and reality C, from the vantage point of a consciousness D observing
consciousness B and reality C. Note that in order for a case of Hegelian
externality to be operative, consciousness B and consciousness D must *not*
share some properties or contents $(m_1, m_2, \ldots m_n)$, even while they *do*
share other properties and contents $(r_1, r_2, \ldots r_n)$.[19] In this case, why not
describe the relation between consciousness B and reality C as one of cor-
respondence between consciousness and reality, or a representation of the
former by the latter, even if this is not a correspondence or representa-
tion that can ever be evaluated from a fully external (that is, completely
non-subjective and non-relative) position?[20]

---

[18] This phenomenon is named after G. W. F. Hegel's well-known procedure in the *Phe-
nomenology of Spirit* (Hegel 1977 [1807]).

[19] This argument for the possibility of *differences* between conceptual schemes, on the basis
of familiar cases such as those of the adult-child or ethnographer-tribe, could be read as
the obverse of Davidson's argument for the incoherence of incommensurability on the basis
of the principle of charity. Compare Kuhn's argument for not just the historical actuality,
but the *necessity* of incommensurability and non-cumulative change in the sciences ("revolu-
tions"), given the characteristic pattern of change we see in the sciences from a first-order,
history-of-science perspective (Kuhn 1962, Ch. 9).

[20] For the examples of Hegelian externality given above (the ethnographer and the tribe,
the psychologist and the patient, and so on), I have deliberately chosen cases where there ap-
pears to be a difference of "epistemic authority" between the two consciousnesses. This does

Thus when Rorty writes that "[p]hilosophy, the attempt to say 'how language relates to the world' by saying what makes certain sentences true, or certain actions or attitudes good or rational, is, on [my] view, impossible" (Rorty 1992, xix), a constructivist armed with awareness of the possibility of Hegelian externality may ask, "Why suppose that this is impossible, or even not useful?" When Rorty counsels against an "impossible attempt to step out of our skins—the traditions, linguistic or other, within which we do our thinking and self-criticism—and compare ourselves with something absolute," which he also describes as a "Platonic urge to escape from the finitude of one's time and place, the 'merely conventional' and contingent aspects of one's life" (Rorty 1992, xix), the Hegelian externalist can respond: Maybe so, but is it not possible to "step out of our skins" *in any way*? Surely we can become aware of our beliefs in a way that *contextualizes* or *recontextualizes* them (similar to what Hegel recognized when he described various perspectives as more comprehensively contextualized, or "sublated" [*aufgehoben*] outcomes of others). Indeed, it is difficult to imagine how we could avoid such procedures in the process of earnestly seeking to orient ourselves to matters of great practical significance, including any effort (epistemological, empirical, or moral and political) to understand how our language use enables us (and might best enable us) to "cope with" the world (Rorty's preferred project).

Now about relativism. In "The World Well Lost," Rorty argues that the suspicions about the "given" that accumulated in the course of twentieth-century philosophy—where "the given" signifies those "bare facts" that are supposed to justify inferences: the sensory intuitions that Kant held to support empirical judgments; the observations that the positivists took to confirm or disconfirm theories and general laws; and the analytic truths that both Kantians and positivists have believed were inviolable and supported deductive inferences—should ultimately lead not to the recogni-

---

not preclude the possibility that this authority could be overturned from another perspective (say, consciousness ᴇ), nor does it presume an objective, external standard by which relations of epistemic authority can be evaluated. All that is really required for the phenomenon of "Hegelian externality" in question to hold, I would say, is that (ɪ) consciousness ᴅ perceive consciousness ʙ, and its relation to reality ᴄ, differently than consciousness ʙ perceives its own relation to reality ᴄ; and that (ɪɪ) consciousness ᴅ can also adopt the standpoint of consciousness ʙ—that is, can "place" consciousness ʙ's own perspective within the perspective that characterizes consciousness ᴅ. There is undoubtedly some vagueness attaching to both requirements. The intended lesson of my appeal to Hegelian externality is only that, even from a relativist position or from a perspective otherwise like Rorty's, the analysis of correspondence and representation relations via cases of Hegelian externality makes sense and is plausibly a fruitful activity.

tion of a multiplicity of equally well-justified, but mutually inconsistent, conceptual schemes (a familiar kind of nominalist or relativist conclusion, which is hinted at by Quine, among others), but rather (following Davidson) to a rejection of the scheme/content distinction itself and thus to the rejection of precisely this familiar relativist notion of radically different conceptual schemes (1992, 3–18). In other words, the rejection of "the given" ought to lead us, on Rorty's view, to a more fully and coherently bounded ethnocentrism.[21] If we accept this proposal, Rorty argues, we will continue to evaluate and revise our vocabularies, and acknowledge the legitimacy of these practices of evaluation and revision, but we will cease to suppose that we can evaluate the relation of these vocabularies to "reality" (as attempted by various realisms) or even to one another in any way that exits our own vocabulary, as Rorty supposes relativisms must try to do.

From a constructive realist perspective that acknowledges the possibility of Hegelian externality, however, we may suspect that Rorty's view underestimates the extent to which we *can* and do "exit" our own vocabularies, at least insofar as we can change our mind or acquire a new perspective that reveals the partiality of an earlier perspective. Relatedly, Rorty's rejection of the epistemological relevance of interpretive tertia, and his associated rejection of both realism and relativism, lead to the result that we problematically and arbitrarily limit ourselves in the project of explaining how and why it is that theories of various kinds function to produce one or another result. These results may include those that we "want"—thus, Rorty's restriction will plausibly limit the successful achievement even of his own proposed instrumentalist goals for intellectual activity. The construal of the functioning of our theories in terms of correspondence or representation between beliefs and extra-bodily reality may have had problematically restrictive consequences in the past, but an appropriately relativistically qualified realism promises to provide resources for avoiding these common pitfalls.

---

[21] It should be noted that this proposal is qualified by Rorty's commitment to the (contingent) liberal value of open-mindeness to one's cultural "others," as when Rorty writes "I use the notion of ethnocentrism as a link between antirepresentationalism and political liberalism. I argue that an antirepresentationalist view of inquiry leaves one without a skyhook with which to escape from the ethnocentrism produced by enculturation, but that the liberal culture of recent times has found a strategy for avoiding the disadvantage of ethnocentrism. This is to be open to encounters with other actual and possible cultures, and to make this openness central to its self-image. This culture is an *ethnos* which prides itself on its suspicion of ethnocentrism—on its ability to increase the freedom and openness of encounters, rather than on its possession of truth." Rorty 1991, 2, quoted in Hildebrand 2003, 164.

For Rorty, the philosophical and/or epistemological effort to map the relations between linguistic conventions and the world is ruled out as impossible, passé, or counter-pragmatic. Yet one might say that this mapping (along with the transcendental and other epistemological puzzles that arise in regard to it) has long stood and still does stand as a productive challenge to philosophy, and does so in a way that is pragmatically relevant, perhaps even pragmatically indispensable. When Michel Foucault or Hans-Georg Gadamer (for instance) show us some dimension of our traditions and our assumptions that have restricted our self-interpretation and self-understanding, this involves an exploration of precisely the middle ground between our beliefs and the world—a middle ground that is—because contentious—both empirically articulated and epistemologically relevant.[22] This line of reasoning suggests that, despite Rorty's own avowed intention to promote a more scientifically and politically satisfactory "post-philosophical culture," his denial that analysis of correspondence or representation relations between language and world, or of mind and world, could be useful, has implications that would keep at least a good many attractive cultural projects from being realized.

It could be argued that Rorty's objection to the employment of "representation" or "correspondence" notions is limited to their epistemological use. But here one would have underestimated the extent to which one's understanding of human perception, cognition, and action, as these occur in natural and social environments, could have epistemological import. Indeed, Rorty's own conception of the available theoretical alternatives here seems surprisingly narrow. He writes that the

> Davidsonian way of looking at language lets us avoid hypostatizing Language in the way in which the Cartesian epistemological tradition, and particularly the idealist tradition which built upon Kant, hypostatized Thought. For it lets us see language not as a *tertium quid* between Subject and Object, nor as a medium in which we try to form pictures of reality, but as part of the behavior of human beings. On this view, the activity of uttering sentences is one of the things people do in order to cope with their environment. The Deweyan notion of language as a tool rather than picture is right as far as it goes.
>
> Rorty 1992, xix

---

[22] For instance: Foucault 1994 [1966]; Gadamer 2004 [1960]. This middle ground may, and often does, have transcendental import. The same argument could be made for Marx, Nietzsche, and many other historicist thinkers.

But, as I have been arguing (consistently, I think, with Margolis 1986, 141–163; 2002, 54–83), the description of language as a *tertium quid* or a *medium*, or even as a "picture," and the description of language as a tool, as part of the behavior of human beings, are not at all incompatible. In fact, it could well be argued that neither can be understood without the other.[23]

5. Conclusion: Towards an Enriched, Unbounded, and Mediated Realism

The foregoing survey has distinguished quite a variety of philosophical realisms, anti-realisms, and relativisms. In particular, we've noted Putnam's opposition to *metaphysical realism*, Putnam's defenses of *internal realism* and *direct realism*, Rorty's *anti-representationalist anti-realism*, and Margolis's defense of *constructive realism*. Intimations of relativism (of various kinds) have appeared throughout the analysis as well: Putnam's "conceptual relativity"; Kuhn's incommensurabilist relativism; Davidson's argument that incommensurabilist relativism of the Kuhnian sort is incoherent; and Margolis's defense of a special construal of incommensurabilist relativism—which turns on abandonment of the principle of bivalence as an appropriate requirement or expectation for all meaningful discourse—against Rorty, Putnam, and Davidson.

In what follows I will describe a position that, like Margolis's constructive realism and unlike Rorty and Putnam's self-avowedly non-relativist anti-realisms, enriches the account of epistemically-relevant mediating structures in human cognition—what Margolis calls "interpretive tertia"—in a manner consistent with relativism, yet without denying or violating the possibility of a commitment to realism either.

To begin with: Why reject the commonplace view according to which we do have access to a real world, but only have access to it "mediately"? The discussions considered so far have really only suggested four arguments against that commonplace view: the (1) skeptical, (2) incoherence-of-externalism, and (3) incommensurability arguments (summarized in section 2 above), as well as (4) the Davidsonian ethnocentric argument that alternative conceptual schemes or paradigms cannot sensibly (again, on pain of incoherence) be imagined, and hence that there is no alternative to considering things as we do in fact consider them: hence, the very questions of realism and relativism cannot (coherently) arise.

---

[23] This is part of Margolis's point about the need to "restor[e] the bond between realism and truth" (Margolis 2003, 77-104).

Neither (1) nor (2) show that realism is incoherent. To use a well-known example from the discussion of Kant's epistemology: (1) and (2) provide no proof that "things in themselves" do *not* have the spatial and temporal structure that characterizes (one or another) human experience. Perhaps they show that we can't have *justification* for a positive belief in realism, or, anyway, not justifications of certain kinds; but this does not demonstrate the falsity of realism itself. Furthermore, (4), the ethnocentric argument, must at the very least be qualified by recognition of the prevalence of the phenomenon of Hegelian externality: for instance, that we sometimes change our minds and come to see an earlier set of beliefs as incomplete and inadequate in comparison to a later perspective. Likewise, thinking of alternatives to our present "conceptual scheme" is not an impossible exercise; such efforts at thinking of things in very different or unusual ways are sometimes harbingers of major changes in the sciences and in other speaking and thinking human communities. Ethnographers, ethologists, novelists, and theoretical physicists, among others, have long taught themselves and others how to think in such previously foreign and unaccessed ways.

This leaves (3) as the only convincing argument against the "mediate realist" view described, which is an argument against only the "realism" side of the view. A question that is raised but not directly answered by Kuhnian incommensurability arguments, however, is whether "nature" or "reality" itself, and the entities (the objects) within "nature" or "reality," are themselves constructed or unconstructed: that is, do these exist in a manner relative to, or not relative to, a conceptual scheme (in Kuhn's language, a "paradigm")? At first glance, it would seem that, just as in the case of (1) and (2), so here as well, the argument does not put realism (even metaphysical realism) to rest. The fact that we can't decisively determine whether our theories do or do not correspond to reality is no proof that they *don't* correspond to reality.

But by emphasizing the mediation of our access to reality or nature by constructed, historically-contingent entities (paradigms or conceptual schemes), Kuhn's argument has a stronger bite. Whether we say that our theories do or do not capture (or represent, or "relate us to," in whatever epistemically-desirable way one would like to treat) one or another aspect of nature, reality, or the world, we must recognize—*for first-order, "empirical" reasons drawn from the history of science*—that the notion of "capturing" (or representing, or relating to) is *criterial*, and that its validity is relative to whatever ensures the validity of such criteria. On the early

Kuhn's account, this is the historically contingent consensus of a scientific community. If the validity of criterial notions is relative to community agreement, then it is impossible that some criteria could be supplied independently of, and free from the relativism attendant upon, this contingency. On the other hand, one could indeed say that, *so long as these criteria are set*, the question of whether one or another specific claim is true (or corresponds, or whatever else the criteria specify) might indeed be settled decisively. Thus, we can acknowledge a relativism about *criteria* while nonetheless maintaining a realism about particular claims (let us call these claims "factual" ones), so long as we evaluate each claim by one or another criterion. Then, by forming a catalogue of criterially-defined perspectives (or "paradigms"), we could say that there is (perhaps) not one nature, or world, or reality, but many, yet be realists about all of these separate (or perhaps partially overlapping) natures, worlds, and realities. However, this risks putting us in the position of affirming a simple "relationalist" relativism, which has been shown to be problematic (in Section 3 above).

Furthermore, just as a realist can argue from (i) the possibility of realism about criterially-settled "facts" to (ii) the possibility of realism about criterially-indexed sets of such facts, so also an anti-realist can argue from (i) the apparent impossibility of a trans- or sub-criterial realism about criteria to (ii) the impossibility of any non-relativist view about the "facts" themselves. If we assume that realism and relativism are opposed positions, here we have a standstill we have no way of reconciling.

The response to this situation that I propose is (consistently, I think, with the views of Margolis and the early Kuhn) to abandon "hard" or "uncompromising" incommensurability, as well as "hard" objectivity (that is, any standard of truth that is necessarily free from fallibilist or relativist undecidability). This means only that we neither rule out the possibility that some future or other conceptual scheme would classify apparently incommensurable judgments otherwise, such that they fit into a single, coherent picture of reality, nor that they will not be permanently incommensurable. At the same time, if the incommensurability argument about criteria holds, we will never be in a position to know, *sans* all relativity of standpoint, the superiority of one picture or another. And none of this entails that our thoughts and beliefs *do not* refer to (or represent, or correspond to) mind-independent "facts" or reality (by one or another sense of the terms "refer," "represent," or "correspond"). This is a standpoint from which realism and relativism are not mutually exclusive.

Relatedly, I think we should avoid "bounded" realisms, such as Putnam's internal realism, as well as "non-realisms" such as Davidson's and Rorty's, and instead favor what might be described as an *unbounded*, *mediated*, and *enriched* realism, which is also a form of relativism. Such a view finds allies or near allies in many historicist thinkers: Hegel, Kuhn, Margolis, Gadamer, Foucault, Karl Marx, and Friedrich Nietzsche, for instance. Such a view recognizes and emphasizes the epistemological significance of epistemically mediating factors, often if not always *contingent* rather than *necessary*, *local* rather than *global*, and *constructed* rather than *innate*. The presence and co-functioning of these factors is recognized to be subject to variation across time, history, community, psychology, and so on, and the events of knowledge, reflection, and evaluation are constituted and mediated in part by their presence and their functioning. A decisive difference between this view and those of Putnam and Rorty, as well as those of metaphysical realists, verificationists, and deflationists, lies in its emphasis on the epistemological significance of these contingent mediating factors, so that the interpretive intermediaries that both connect us to the world, and limit our access to it, are understood as variables whose role and functioning is epistemologically relevant, but can vary and change from one historical or phenomenological situation to the next. Finally, our entire conception (as philosophers, as representatives of other disciplinary frameworks, or simply as reflective human beings) of this contingent opening and closing of our access to one or another world whose existence exceeds that access itself, must itself be understood as a contingently mediated perspective. It is merely our own "best guess" about how this access works: an answer, *faute de mieux*, to an epistemological puzzle that has appeared again and again throughout our history.

Perhaps at this point it would be fair to conjecture that there is no principled, universal limit to our cognitive access that we could ourselves identify and articulate—including that limit that would rule out one or another kind of correspondence between our beliefs and a mind-independent world—but there is always a *de facto* limit, brought about by contingent factors that constitute the conditions of our experience at any given place and time.[24]

References

Baghramian, Maria (2004). *Relativism*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Boyd, Richard (2013). "What of Pragmatism with the World Here?", in: M. Baghramian (ed.), *Reading Putnam* (pp. 39–94). New York, NY: Routledge.

Conant, James B. (1957). "Overthrow of the Phlogiston Theory: Chemical Revolution of 1775–1789", in: J. Conant (ed.), *Harvard Case Histories in Experimental Science, Vol. 1* (pp. 67–115). Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Davidson, Donald (2001). [1974]. "On the Very Idea of a Conceptual Scheme." In *Inquiries into Truth and Interpretation* (pp. 183–198). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Foucault, Michel (1994). *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences*. New York, NY: Vintage Books.

Gadamer, Hans-Georg (2004) [1960]. *Truth and Method*. 2nd, rev. ed. Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall, trans. London, UK/New York, NY: Continuum.

Hegel, G. W. F. (1977) [1807]. *The Phenomenology of Spirit*. A. V. Miller, trans. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

Hildebrand, David L. (2003). *Beyond Realism and Antirealism: John Dewey and the Neopragmatists*. Nashville, TN: Vanderbilt University Press.

Kuhn, Thomas S. (1962). *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Margolis, Joseph (1986). *Pragmatism without Foundations: Reconciling Realism and Relativism*. Oxford, UK: Basil Blackwell.

Margolis, Joseph (1992). *The Truth about Relativism*. Oxford, UK: Blackwell.

Margolis, Joseph (2002). *Reinventing Pragmatism: American Philosophy at the End of the Twentieth Century, Vol. 1*. Ithaca, NY/London, UK: Cornell University Press.

Margolis, Joseph (2003a). *The Unraveling of Scientism: American Philosophy at the End of the Twentieth Century, Vol. 2*. Ithaca, NY/London, UK: Cornell University Press.

Margolis, Joseph (2003b). *Selves and Other Texts: The Case for Cultural Realism*. University Park, PA: Penn State University Press.

Margolis, Joseph (2010). *Pragmatism's Advantage: American and European Philosophy at the End of the Twentieth Century*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Margolis, Joseph (2012). *Pragmatism Ascendent: A Yard of Narrative, A Touch of Prophecy*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Putnam, Hilary (1975). *Mind, Language, and Reality: Philosophical Papers, Vol. 2*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Putnam, Hilary (1981). *Reason, Truth, and History*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Putnam, Hilary (1987). *The Many Faces of Realism: The Paul Carus Lectures*. La Salle, IL: Open Court.

Putnam, Hilary (1990). "Realism with a Human Face." in: J. Conant (ed.), *Realism with a Human Face* (pp. 3–29). Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Putnam, Hilary (1994). "Sense, Non-sense, and the Senses: An Inquiry into the Powers of the Human Mind." *The Journal of Philosophy* 91, 445–517.

Putnam, Hilary (2004). *Ethics without Ontology*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Putnam, Hilary (2012). *Philosophy in an Age of Science: Physics, Mathematics, and Skepticism*, ed. by Mario de Caro and David Macarthur. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Pihlström, Sami (1998). *Pragmatism and Philosophical Anthropology: Understanding Our Human Life in a Human World.* New York: Peter Lang.

Rorty, Richard (1979). *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*. Princeton, NK: Princeton University Press.

Rorty, Richard (1982). *Consequences of Pragmatism (Essays: 1972–1980)*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.

Rorty, Richard (1991). *Objectivity, Relativism, and Truth: Philosophical Papers, Vol. 1*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Rorty, Richard (1998) [1993]. "Hilary Putnam and the Relativist Menace." In *Truth and Progress: Philosophical Papers, Vol. 3*, 43–62. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Rorty, Richard (1999). *Philosophy and Social Hope*. London, UK: Penguin Books.