

ESSAY FOUR

Literary Interpretations¹

*Every word is a doorway
to a meeting, one often cancelled,
and that's when a word is true: when
it insists on the meeting.*²

Y. RITSOS (1977)

*"Overcoming relational conceptions of truth is not equivalent to retiring
or overcoming relativism."*³

J. MARGOLIS (1991)

In 1956 the modern Greek poet Yannis Ritsos (1909-1990) completed his modernist dramatic soliloquy, "Moonlight Sonata." Ritsos imagines here "an old woman dressed in black," who is describing a strange and elaborate feeling to a young man sitting beside her in an old house in the spring night, as "a relentless moonlight streams through the two windows."⁴

From time to time, at the hour of dusk, I have the feeling
that outside the windows the bear trainer is passing by with his
very aged, plodding bear. . .

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and the bear, fatigued, marches within the wisdom of her loneliness not knowing where she is going –
she's grown heavy, she can no longer dance on her hind legs,
she can no longer wear her little lace cap to
entertain the children, the idlers, the demanding,
and the only thing she wants is to lie down on the ground,
letting them step on her belly, playing her final game in this way,
manifesting her terrifying strength for resignation,
her disobedience of the interests of others, the rings on her lips,
the needs of her teeth
her disobedience of pain and of life
with the sure alliance of death – even of a slow death –
her ultimate disobedience of death with the continuity and
the knowledge of life
going uphill with the knowledge and action beyond
her slavery.
But who can play this game to the very end? . . .

This image of the tired and aged female bear – her wisdom, her strength for resignation, her disobedience, and something beyond her slavery – reflects in important ways different strains in the woman's own desires to leave her old house and to set out with the young man in the moonlight that “will turn my hair gold once more.” At the end of this much-celebrated poem, the young man will leave alone, pause after a while, laugh, and then mutter, “the decadence of an epoch.”

The fate of the woman in black however is left uncertain. “I don't know if she finally went out,” says the poet. And the poem's readers are left to muse once again, as earlier in the readings and later singings of Ritsos' *Epitaphios*, a poem publicly burned by the Metaxas dictatorship, then later set to music by Theodorakis, on the echoes of freedom and repression set ringing indistinctly by the muted similarities here between yet one more of Ritsos' women in black and

an aged bear in chains, between Greece and her people, the Balkans and their violated and still tortured history even today.⁵

Here, I would like to take Ritsos' poem as an instance of what I have called elsewhere the twentieth-century's high modernist poetry of suffering.⁶ Further, I would like to move from a consideration of the meaning and truth of such poetry as problematic aspects of rational interpretation.

I begin with an extended description of Ritsos' poetry, and I set up a contrast between two differing interpretations of that poetry. This contrast brings into focus the question as to how any interpretation of poetry can be, not improperly speaking, objective. After setting out two different accounts of objectivity, one relativistic and the other not, I then return to the task of trying to offer a reasonable interpretation of Ritsos' poetry.

1. Interpretive Disagreements

Part of the many-sided richness of Ritsos' sustained lyrical as well as dramatic soliloquy must also include its echoes of other mature twentieth-century Greek poetry since Cavafy, a poetry particularly sensitive to Greece's tragic history in the modern era. Perhaps one such echo can be heard in a passage from "The Sacred Way," one of the many poems in the demotic tradition that the still now less well-known Angelos Sikelianos (1884-1951) wrote before the full horrors of the German occupation engulfed the country and, in the autumn of 1941, provoked his great poem of prophetic wisdom, "*Agraphon*," with its single repetition as a final coda of the lines:

a great pledge, mirror of the Eternal, but also,
the harsh lightning flash, the hope of Justice! ⁷

Although "The Sacred Way" is a simpler poem than "*Agraphon*," it manages to fuse elements of traditional folklore with evocations

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of the Greek myths and personal tragedy. On the long and crowded road to “the ruins of the Soul’s temple at Eleusis,” a gypsy leading in chains two dancing bears comes upon the poet and, tugging “fiercely at the chains,” makes the bears dance.

And the two bears
rose on their hind legs heavily. One of them,
the larger – clearly she was the mother –
her head adorned with tassels of blue beads
browned by a white amulet, towered up
suddenly enormous . . .

And the small bear at her side, like a big toy,
like an innocent child, also rose up, submissive,
not sensing yet the years of pain ahead
or the bitterness of slavery mirrored
in the burning eyes his mother turned on him.

But because she, dead tired, was slow to dance,
the gypsy, with a single dexterous jerk
of the chain hanging from the young bear’s nostril –
bloody still from the ring that had pierced it
perhaps a few days before – made the mother,
groaning with pain, abruptly straighten up
and then, her head turning toward her child,
dance vigorously.

Then, as the gypsy
at last went on his way, again dragging
the slow-footed bears behind him, and vanished
in the dusk, my heart prompted me once more
to take the road that terminates among
the ruins of the Soul’s temple, at Eleusis.

PART ONE. POETICS

And as I walked my heart asked in anguish:
“Will the time, the moment ever come when the bear’s soul
and the gypsy’s and my own, that I call initiated,
will feast together?”
And as I moved on, night fell,
and again through the wound that fate had opened in me
I felt the darkness flood my heart . . .⁸

Although the poem ends with a barely heard murmur of assent in answer to the poet’s question, readers of Sikelianos’ “The Sacred Way” are left once again, just as at the end of Ritsos’ “Moonlight Sonata,” with uncertainty about which of the poem’s many implications for Greece’s tragic history are to be taken as the central ones.

Some readers may think of Sikelianos singing the forbidden national anthem under the eyes of the German occupiers mixed in with the mourners at the burial in February 1943 of the poet, Kostis Palamos; others of Sikelianos reciting his own poem, “Palamos,” at the graveside – “Blow bugles. . . .”⁹ Still others may wonder at the vision here of a larger suffering than that of Greece, a suffering large enough to encompass the heart of the poet, the gypsy, and the bear.

Each of these poems may invite searching reflection on its own terms. The passages I have cited here need to be reinserted into their fuller contexts and then interpreted amply in those contexts. Moreover, nothing requires the reader to move beyond these individual poems to extract passages from each and then juxtapose them as I have done. Part of what interpreters mean by the richness of Ritsos’ postwar poem, however, is its only vaguely intimated suggestion of Sikelianos’ prewar, modernist work.

Ritsos’ aged bear in “Moonlight Sonata” certainly plays an importantly different role than “the mother” in “The Sacred Way” where Sikelianos (1884-1951) explicitly alludes to “the Great Goddess,” “the Eternal Mother,” “Demeter,” “Alcmene,” or “the Holy Virgin.”

Yet in each case the great and aged female bear is represented, in strong anthropomorphic terms that are at times almost sentimental, as aware of the pain and suffering of a slave.

With Sikelianos' poem occasionally in mind, Ritsos' readers, not all of them Greek, might well recall the aftermath of the four-year Civil War – the massacres, the deportations, the denunciations, the betrayals, the settling of accounts. They might well remember all the horrors still to come after Ritsos composed this poem in 1956, in this case as just one among so many, during the years of hospitals and island prisons. And these interpreters might well claim that the two dramatic images of the chained dancing bears either passing by on a sacred road or in the nighttime fantasies of an old woman in black belong together.

We might then focus our discussion of literary interpretation in this way. Suppose you claim, in an interpretive essay argued in your native modern Greek, that the figure of the chained dancing bear in Ritsos' "Moonlight Sonata" is, objectively speaking, an intentional allusion to the different but importantly similar figure of the larger chained dancing bear in Sikelianos' "The Sacred Way." Suppose I in turn claim, in an interpretive essay written in English, that, whatever the persuasiveness of any eventual case you might make in attempts to justify your views, there can be, objectively speaking, no fact of the matter. What clearly is at issue here is the putative objectivity of a crucial element in an interpretation of fictional states of affairs like the ones the poems present.

These of course are both strong claims. You are committed to providing a thorough and convincing story about what is to count, in poetry, as an "intentional allusion." Additionally, you must also argue conclusively that what you count as an intentional allusion can be established "objectively speaking." In turn, I am willing to grant you some suitable (say, coherent, consistent, fruitful, etc.) account

of “intentional allusion,” thereby waiving the first question altogether. But I take my stand on the second issue. Not only do I seem ready to argue against any construal of “objectively speaking” you might make, but I also seem prepared to deny that you, or anyone else, can make such a case.

The issue between us, then, is not at the level of any first-order question about, for example, whether we have sufficient evidence of some sort or another to sustain your interpretation that, objectively speaking, Ritsos intended in his “Moonlight Sonata” to allude to Sikelianos’ “The Sacred Way.” Rather, the question is a second-order one about whether the expression, “objectively speaking,” can objectively refer. And, whereas I want to espouse for our purposes here some kind of relativism such that talk about objectivity must remain relative to a particular culture, or conceptual scheme, or language, or family of language uses, or whatever, you want to hold out for there being at least in some important cases certain ways the world is independent of our particular cultures, conceptual schemes, and so on.

On your view, once I grant that sufficient evidence is available to strongly support the interpretation that Ritsos intentionally alludes to Sikelianos, then, objectively speaking, it is the case that Ritsos indeed does so. On mine, when you put sufficient evidence on exhibit, then you have indeed rationally justified your interpretation – but nothing more. For there is no additional objective fact of the matter beyond your now rationally justified interpretation.

What condones your interpretation is sufficient to save your view from the vagaries of merely solipsistic interpretation (at least someone besides yourself can now find that evidence convincing too). It need not convince me, however, for there is no determinate fact of the matter to be discovered that would overrule my possibly regrettable but nonetheless tenacious relativistic tendencies.

Is there then no way around this dispute between us? Is there no way around a fundamental relativism about the objectivity of literary interpretation, about the interpretation of literary works of art? One fruitful way to investigate such general issues is to examine some particular questions about objectivity in important work on the varieties, strengths, and weaknesses of philosophical forms of relativism. This examination may well lead me to abandon my present claims for the rationality of interpretation as radically relativistic. I would then be ready to concede in your favour that for interpretation to be rational, even in the domain of the arts, interpretation must be objective in some basic, non-relativistic sense.

2. Weak and Strong Relativisms

The American contemporary philosopher Joseph Margolis has proposed a strong form of relativism that he believes can capture many fundamental results of contemporary philosophical inquiry without succumbing to the equal number of fundamental problems with relativism over the course of philosophy's long history.¹⁰ This strong form of relativism, moreover, also promises progress in a number of different domains such as moral philosophy, art and interpretation, philosophical psychology, and so on. Part of the promise here is a way out of the usual kinds of issues that arise about relativism and interpretation in the arts – for instance, the problem of reconciling divergent readings of Ritsos' poetry. A fair amount is at stake, then, in whether Margolis can succeed in making a strong form of relativism viable.

Margolis relies on a number of strategies to elaborate this sophisticated relativism. He has taken up the diverse tasks of reconciling not just incongruent claims in different areas of philosophy but more largely in different domains of intellectual inquiry generally.¹¹

Central to this work of exploring the dimensions of a strong relativism, one that can withstand both classical and contemporary criticism, has been a thorough and thoughtful reading of much contemporary work both in the English-speaking philosophical world and in European philosophical contexts as well. One of the most important and fruitful strategies he repeatedly deploys is the inventorying of salient features of apparently successful anti-relativistic critiques, and then devising apparently viable strains of relativism that are immune to these treatments.

Although Margolis has drawn on a good deal of important contemporary work in order to pursue this strategy, he has examined with particular care the work of an internationally distinguished American philosopher Hilary Putnam. Putnam's critiques of relativism have proved especially interesting because of their frequent variations – Putnam has changed his position repeatedly over the years, gradually working out very nuanced critiques of relativism. Moreover, Putnam has explicitly linked his critiques of relativism not just to continuing work in contemporary philosophy, but also to key figures in the history of philosophy, notably to Aristotle, Kant, and Peirce (1839-1914).

To the quite marked degree in which Margolis has been able to articulate his own robust relativism as a way of side-stepping the central features of the classical and contemporary attacks on relativism, his views remain centrally dialectical ones.¹² That is, they arise, not completely but in very large measure, out of opposition to the philosophical assumptions and preoccupations of attacks against relativism. This means that the operative elements in such opposed views as Putnam's need to be very carefully scrutinized if we are to take the critical measure of Margolis' own proposals.

To mine this controversy between Margolis and Putnam for our own purposes in mediating our disagreements about Ritsos' in-

tentions, we need to put on exhibit the picture Margolis gradually sketches of Putnam's critiques of relativism. I also want to show the different ways in which countering the presuppositions of those critiques generates some of the cardinal features of Margolis' formulations of his own version of a robust relativism. I then want to suggest that Margolis' sketch is, in the light of Putnam's own most recent work, importantly incomplete. The consequence will be that, if robust relativism is to continue to elude some of the strongest critiques that can be brought against it, several of the central features of Margolis' concept of a robust relativism need reexamination, especially the crucial notion of objectivity.

3. Critiques of Relativism

Putnam's repeated criticisms of relativism are long and varied. Although we will need to look at least briefly at some of the nuances, I want to focus initially on the several major discussions that Margolis highlights in his own attempts to defend a version of relativism against its most able critics like Putnam and, in the process, provide a more perspicuous understanding of some strong version of relativism. (Since an essential point of Margolis' own attempts to establish a viable contemporary form of relativism follows from his virtuoso critiques of sophisticated classical and contemporary attacks against relativism, it is important to look at those critiques carefully.)

If Margolis has gotten Putnam's views right, then his own version of relativism, designed to incorporate defenses against just those powerful criticisms, becomes extremely persuasive. But has Margolis read Putnam correctly? Perhaps not quite. But, if not quite, then what philosophical consequences, if any, actually follow for our concerns with objectivity and the understandings of reason and rationality that inform so many of our practices of interpretation?

Margolis sees some of the middle work of Putnam as particularly instructive. In Putnam's 1981 book, *Reason, Truth and History*¹³ for example, Margolis has called repeated attention to an extended passage from "Two Conceptions of Rationality" where Putnam accuses the relativist of failing to see that "some kind of objective 'rightness' exists." This objective rightness Putnam takes as "a presupposition of thought." The fuller passage, which Margolis cites, reads as follows:

The whole purpose of relativism, its very defining characteristic is . . . to deny the existence of any intelligible notion of objective "fit." Thus the relativist cannot understand talk about truth in terms of objective justification conditions. . . . The relativist must end by denying that a thought is about anything in either a realist or a non-realist sense; for he cannot distinguish between thinking one's thought is about something and actually thinking about that thing. In short, what the relativist fails to see is that it is a presupposition of thought itself that some kind of objective "rightness" exists.¹⁴

Rich in nuances and presupposing wide acquaintance with an extensive literature, this passage remains largely persuasive for many philosophers today. In his comment on these views, however, Margolis underlines four points he views as serious deficiencies. First, the assumption here that paradoxes of self-reference must be part and parcel of any relativism worth the name has good historical support (Socrates versus Protagoras) but remains finally unconvincing. Margolis thinks he can get around such paradoxes. Part of that task is formulating a strong version of relativism that sidesteps such paradoxes.

Second, the assumption that relativism entails the rejection of objectivity is left, at least here, without any supporting argument. While sidestepping any paradoxes of self-reference, Margolis wants to propound a version of relativism that would recover some central senses

of objectivity and yet partly reconstruct that notion too. Moreover, the notion of objectivity that relativism is claimed to exclude relies here on a speculative doctrine that parses “objectivity” in the obscurer terms of “fitness.” Yet, as Margolis is quick to remind us, the very notion of “fitness” to which Putnam wants to appeal in the interests of denoting what sense of objectivity is at issue here, is one that Putnam himself has repeatedly criticized. Margolis’ version of relativism would recover some other sense of objectivity than the strongly controversial notion here of objectivity as fitness.

Finally, the distinction on which this critique of relativism relies, namely the line between “thinking one’s thought is about something” and “thinking one’s thought,” is not clear enough. For once again Putnam himself has called into question the possibility of making what he called in 1987 “Dedekind cuts” between very similar matters, not just between the definition of real numbers in terms of rational ones but between the subjective and the objective.¹⁵

Margolis wants to articulate a form of relativism that would incorporate just such a denial of clear-cut distinctions between subjective and objective. And this is the relativism that would resolve problems about divergent interpretive judgments of Ritsos’ poetry without succumbing to a defeasible form of relativism.

4. Relativisms and Realisms

In responding to Putnam’s critique of relativism, Margolis sketches a more robust version of relativism. His doctrine is a strong relativism, one that would avoid paradoxes of self-reference while making a central place for non-speculative construals of objectivity, yet one that would forego trying to make any sharp cut between objectivity and subjectivity. More pertinent to our own concerns with reason, rationality, and interpretation, however, is just how Margolis

construes Putnam's understanding of relativism. On the evidence Margolis marshals here, Putnam takes relativism as centrally vulnerable to self-referential paradox, incorporating a controversial notion of objectivity, and committed to some clear-cut distinction between the objective and the subjective – Putnam directs his criticisms at each of these features. But Putnam's own nuances here suggest some hesitations, and we are left to ask why.

Putnam's understanding of relativism in 1981 already represented, as Margolis reads the matter, a "reversal" of the position Putnam expounded earlier, for example in 1978, in his important paper "Meaning and Knowledge."¹⁶ Putnam had urged the view there that, regardless of some entities being no more than theoretical artifacts, the executive terms within two mature competing scientific theories "typically refer" when they are functioning explanatorily. Yet, at the same time, Putnam rejected any traditional correspondence relation holding between scientific statements and any world independent of the mind.

This tension forced Putnam, Margolis thinks, to give up "any pretence that the regulative principles [terms referring typically] . . . could yield, distributively, anything like a determinately confirmed (or converging) reference to given theoretical entities."¹⁷ Putnam then went on to abandon his initial view in favor of a more nuanced perspective on the unconfirmability of sameness of reference for terms in competing explanatory theories. And these nuances are what brought Putnam to the hesitations about just which relativistic understandings of reference, objectivity, and subjectivity were to be his proper targets.

Besides looking at Putnam's earlier views on relativism, however, Margolis also examines some later ones. In a key discussion in the third volume of his 1983 *Philosophical Papers*,¹⁸ for example, Putnam tries to preserve some nuance in his understandings

of relativism when urging a non-relativistic position in the philosophy of science. There, Margolis sees Putnam trying “to separate the question of the nature of reality, of what there is, from the question of the nature of truth” (154). Margolis will go on to criticize this strategy roundly.

Putnam’s concern here is to hold metaphysical realism at bay. His strategy, however, as Margolis sees it, leads him to a view about truth that entails a very strong commitment both to a bivalent logic and to some kind of Peircean optimism about eventually converging lines of inquiry based on Peirce’s belief in some kind of “affinity” between mind and nature itself.¹⁹ For in order to overcome any restrictive account of truth in terms of “verification” or confirmation or the selection of “right versions” or the like, Margolis thinks Putnam winds up after all with truth as correspondence.

Margolis puts it this way: “It is true, he [Putnam] would say, that ‘the world’ is not describable independently of our description” . . . ; but the revisability of any statement makes sense only in a logical space in which we hold [he would add] to the conception of objective truth (correspondence, in effect) which verificationism (positivism) and decidability (Dummett [1925-2011]) and right versions (Goodman [1906-1998]) do not and cannot make provision for” (154-5). We find ourselves then right back with questions about a putative line between the subjective and the objective.

Precisely here, with the question whether or not any line can be drawn, is where Margolis wants to locate Putnam’s Kantianism. And it is his Kantianism, Margolis claims, that keeps Putnam from imagining a more robust relativism. Putnam thinks, at least on Margolis’ account, that the various theories of reality our different practical philosophical inquires cannot fail to support must “capture what is real” (155). But this view leads not so much to Kantian internal realism as to a Kantian “symbiosis of realist and idealist elements.”

When Putnam's views about objectivity and his pragmatic optimism are added to this Kantian "symbiosis," Margolis thinks Putnam becomes blind to the possibility that "realism (internal realism) and relativism are compatible." The key element in this incapacity is Putnam's largely implicit assumption that "a logic committed to bivalence or at least to *tertium non datur*" is both compatible with relativism and irreplaceable by anything else. The consequence is that Putnam cannot accept Margolis' own program of applying many-valued logics to some domains and thereby "laying the necessary ground. . . to honour incongruent claims" (156).

The "secret argument" here is one that, on Margolis' reading, Putnam shares with not only Kant and Peirce but also with Husserl, Derrida, Popper, and Habermas. Margolis calls this argument the Enlightenment prejudice that:

"(a) humanity forms one inclusive inquiring community over the whole of time; (b) human reason, by which that inquiry is guided, remains essentially invariant over the length of its history; (c) cultural relativity, therefore, functions entirely benignly with respect to the long-run goals of objectivism (even within internalist constraints); and hence (d) a bivalent logic need never be abandoned during the diachronic run of approximations to objective truth" (160).

For Margolis, however, these beliefs all share a basic problem: they leave no place for the radical and pervasive phenomena of incommensurabilities, undecidabilities, and discontinuities so characteristic of our own era. All of these phenomena require a new attempt at understanding "what may be meant by objectivity or methodological rigor" in such conditions (160).

The problem with contemporary understandings of objectivity, then, even as we find them in Putnam's subtle formulations, are unreasonably and so far indissolubly linked to a bipolar logic. Even

when sophisticated versions of reductive materialism and “uncompromising extensionalism” are, as also in Putnam’s instance, rightly abandoned, Margolis thinks that the commitment to bivalence remains.

This concern to safeguard the commitment to bivalence is what motivates Putnam’s repeated opposition to relativism. And without effectively undermining this commitment, we cannot do justice to our understanding of an objectivity flexible enough to accommodate divergent interpretations of poetry like Ritsos’, yet robust enough to withstand the familiar arguments against the usual forms of relativism.

5. Strong Relativism and Relationalism

Basic to the different attacks on relativism that Putnam has developed over the years out of this commitment to bivalence, Margolis believes, is Putnam’s assumption that relationalism and relational conceptions of truth entail the defeat of relativism. “Relationalism” here is the view that “true in L” can replace “true,” where “L” designates “disjunctively one language or another, one world or another, or some such context of application” (98). Putnam purports to show that relativists of this ilk, namely relationalists, must fall prey to self-referential dilemmas and paradoxes. The reason is that these relationalists must claim that what is “true in L(1),” say in your Greek interpretation of Ritsos, can be compared with what is “true in L(2),” say in my English interpretation of Ritsos. Claiming this, however, commits such relationalists to the further view that “there must be an idiom . . . available to us (and to the partisans of relationalism) in virtue of which distinctions relationalized to L(1) and L(2) are, there, truly assigned their truth values “ (98). But this claim is what generates paradoxes of self-reference.

Precisely here, Margolis thinks, Putnam is mistaken, for Putnam first identifies all pertinent forms of relativism with relationalism. Then, from the argument that all relationalist views succumb to self-referential paradoxes, Putnam generalizes mistakenly that all relativisms are untenable. But, on the assumption that viable “non-relativized (or, better, nonrelational or nonrelationalized)” conceptions of truth are available, Margolis counters Putnam’s move.

“Overcoming relational conceptions of truth,” Margolis claims, “is not equivalent to retiring or overcoming relativism” (99). As Margolis sees things, Putnam effectively combines in his understanding of relationalism’s conception of truth both epistemic and alethic elements. But, even when Putnam allows for important qualifications in his own position where truth-values are ascribed in such a way as to allow for repeated revisions, the combination Putnam makes leads to fatal objections based on the paradoxes of self-reference. By contrast, Margolis construes relativism in such a way as to avoid these fatal paradoxes to relationalism by separating “the meaning of ‘true’ and the epistemic appraisal of truth-claims” (67-8). For Margolis, relativism is not an epistemic claim but an alethic one. This requires clarification.

One way to clarify just which elements in Putnam’s critique of relativism Margolis wants to deny is to look more closely at Putnam’s repeated criticisms of one widely remarked contemporary version of relativism, that of Richard Rorty (1931-2007). For whether relativism can be avoided, Margolis thinks, depends on “whether first order truth claims and inquiries can be disciplined in ways that invite assessment of their comparative success (their perceived success) without implicating second order legitimating questions” (22). Rorty would dismiss this talk of first and second order issues outright. For Rorty thinks this way of taking relativism conceals a residual, and discredited, Kantian concern for transcendental arguments. Rorty wants

therefore to disallow “legitimative second order questions about science, knowledge, truth, and the like” (57; 154). In fact, Rorty sometimes thinks relativism is not only untenable; he thinks it unnecessary.

The basic difficulty Rorty finds in the usual talk of relativism is with legitimation. He thinks that we can have first order inquiries, namely scientific ones, without calling them that because talk of any legitimations of science (namely with the help of second-order inquiries) is no longer viable. His reason for this claim is, as Margolis reads Rorty’s *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* (1979)²⁰ that “every would-be legitimation must be committed to privileged, cognitively transparent, ahistorical, context-free, universally exceptionless, timeless, linguistically understated, objective, a priori conditions governing meaning, truth, validity, values, and the like” (199). For Rorty, we simply have to give up legitimation.

Unfortunately, Rorty’s dismissal of legitimation cannot work. Rorty’s quarrel is not really with legitimation; rather, as his repeated concerns both to hold open some kind of talk about science and its priorities show, his quarrel is with the, for him, unacceptable ways in which legitimation is understood. In short, if we can change the description of legitimation in order to dissipate the philosophical prejudices that trouble Rorty, then we can continue to talk about science, after all.

Regardless of Rorty’s occasional impatience with this kind of relativism in other places,²¹ he seems to be advocating some kind of cultural relativism. At least, this is the way Rorty’s frequent critic, Hilary Putnam, understands him. Putnam goes on to criticize Rorty’s relativism in several papers with a lengthy argument outlining the inconsistency of cultural relativism, very much along the lines we have already seen.

Whatever its intrinsic interest, this protracted discussion suggests to Margolis a distinction between two doctrines. This distinction fills

out more fully his sketch so far both of Putnam and of certain central features in his own robust relativism.

The two conceptions of relativism in question here are (1) the doctrine “that the same proposition can be at once both true or false,” and (2) the doctrine “that ‘true’ and ‘false’ are (alethically) relationalized to the insulated life and experience of one particular society (or person) or another” (58). The second view of course is stronger than the bare epistemic claim that “particular claims are (epistemically) decided in accord with whatever such life and experiment may recommend,” a claim Margolis sees as trivially true.

Now, the stronger, second view is what Margolis sees Putnam attacking, namely what Putnam himself calls “cultural relativity” and what Margolis calls more simply “relationalism.” It is precisely this strong view, one that incorporates alethic as well as epistemic elements, that Margolis wants to affirm. For this is the view he thinks that enables the robust relativist to sidestep the apparent contradictions between incongruent judgments in some areas of inquiry. To see clearly what Margolis is denying, though, we still need a better hold on just what Putnam thinks he is attacking when he assaults Rorty’s brand of relativism.

6. Causal and Logical Independence

In an exchange between Rorty and Putnam, some of Putnam’s own views about relativism come out quite clearly.²² Rorty wants to put Putnam on the spot. Calling fresh attention to Putnam’s 1983 article, “On Truth,”²³ Rorty points to Putnam’s suggestion that there is a relation called “making true.”

The idea is that, unlike whatever relations that may or may not hold between some beliefs and others (for example, “justifying”), there is at least one relation that holds between belief and non-belief,

a relation called “making true.” Rorty recalls that Davidson denies any such relation.²⁴ Davidson writes: “Nothing, however, no thing, makes sentences and theories true; not experience, not surface irritations, not the world, can make a sentence true.”

Given that Putnam himself rejects the doctrine of any totality of objects existing independently of our descriptions, and hence his rejection as well of the idea that the word “object” is independent of language, Rorty is puzzled as to just what, if not “objects,” could ever make statements true. In responding to this worry, Putnam glosses some of the views we have already caught sight of and brings us much closer to the subject of our concern with making good sense of the key expression, “objectively speaking” in accounts of rational interpretation.

Putnam disputes Rorty’s reading here that objects cannot, in some sense, make our sentences true. (Note however that Putnam talks of sentences being true, which he thinks is the proper idiom, unlike Rorty who continues to talk of statements being true.) As Putnam reads the issue, what Davidson is attacking is not a particular doctrine about objects but about states of affairs. The point is that we must not inflate our ontology by thinking “that some sentences correspond one by one to things called ‘states of affairs.’” The issue then is about states of affairs not objects. As for his own view, Putnam states very clearly “that whether a sentence is true or not typically depends on whether certain things or events satisfy the conditions for being described by that sentence – conditions which depend upon the ongoing activity of using and reforming language.”

Two points are important here for understanding Putnam’s position more fully. First, Putnam insists that all of our thinking is caught up in a continuous process of change, of what he calls both the using and the reforming of language. So any particular term, whether “object” or “state of affairs” or “event” or “thing,” is going

to be subject to shifts in its uses and hence in its meanings. Second, Putnam insists that the cardinal issue is not whether a particular term like “object” has a determinate meaning, but whether the determinate meaning it has is closed or fixed. The question is “whether notions like ‘state of affairs’ are conceived of as having a single determinate meaning, or an open and forever extendable family of uses – the same question that we must ask about ‘object,’ ‘event,’ etc.” As he describes further in his Gifford Lectures *Renewing Philosophy*,²⁵ different sentences can describe the same state of affairs precisely because notions like “state of affairs” can have such an extendable family of use.

Rorty’s problem arises then not from substantive objections about whatever could make sentences true. Rather, the problem arises from how objects could make sentences true when objects are taken to be independent of our ways of talking. Putnam immediately highlights the general notion here of independence. He goes on to claim that in issues about truth, what is at stake is the putative independence from our language about something that would make sentences true. This kind of independence is “neither ordinary causal or ordinary logical independence.”

The point is an especially important one for our concerns with the putative objectivity of rational interpretations. To clarify, Putnam offers an extended example of how something can be the case independent in both causal and logical ways of the ways we talk.

“That the sky is blue is causally independent of the way we talk; for, with our language in place, we can certainly say that the sky would still be blue even if we did not use colour words. . . . And the statement that the sky is blue is, in the ordinary sense of ‘logical independence,’ logically independent of any description that one might give of our use of colour words. For these reasons, [unlike Rorty] I have avoided stating the thesis of conceptual relativity as a thesis of the dependence of the way things are on the way we

talk. . . . In any sense of 'independence' I can understand, whether the sky is blue is independent of the way we talk."

Putnam's point is not that what makes a sentence true is either causally or logically independent, or both, of the way we talk. Rather, what makes a sentence true is independent of the ways we talk in none of the above ways. "If language users had not evolved," Putnam adds, "there would still have been a world, but there would not have been any truths about the world." Putnam does not say directly *how* what makes a sentence true is independent. He does say, however, that recognizing that the sky is blue is independent in some way of how we talk. And the reason for Putnam is quite basic. No one way of describing the world can be privileged, because we continue to reform language while using it. Nature does not lend itself to any unique description that is somewhere waiting to be discovered, a unique description that would say what nature is "in itself." As Putnam writes, "the 'in-itself' doesn't make sense."

Still, this view might seem to let the door open for the idea that, just because the world is not divisible into things describable in words of fixed uses (instead of ever-expanding families of uses), we can never pin down at least some of the ways in which the world is divided. Yet Putnam closes this door emphatically – "it does not follow," he underlines, "that when a particular use of 'object,' 'event,' etc. is already in place, we cannot say how the particular statements we can make in that particular vocabulary relate to those particular objects." (emphasis added)

In order to support this strong claim, Putnam provides once again an example. He asks us to consider how things in a room can be counted in two different vocabularies, one using the vocabulary of objects, the other that of mereological sums of objects. This practice shows that, even when as here vocabularies are not semantically interdefinable, one can still talk variously about each vocabulary

relating to the different things in the room. In short, “given a definite language in place and definite scheme of ‘things,’ the relation between ‘words and things’ is not at all indescribable; but it does not have a single metaphysically privileged description any more than the things do.”

This comes to the view that some things do make some sentences true – some things make assertions about them true. Yet what makes these sentences true cannot have unique, fixed, and closed meanings. Rather, what makes such sentences true both has a definite meaning where a particular use of the vocabulary at issue is already in place, and keeps this definite meaning open to change in the ongoing continual uses and reforms of this vocabulary.²⁶ In that sense, what makes sentences true is not independent of language. However, as Putnam puts the matter persuasively, “the nature of the dependence changes as the kind of language games we invent changes.” In these language games, as Putnam explains in Lecture IV of his Gifford Lectures, some things are right and wrong, for right and wrong in these activities, these language games, is not determined completely either by majority vote, or by consensus, or by convention.

Putnam has drawn some further conclusions about different forms of relativism from recent discussions such as those with Rorty. Thus, again in his Gifford Lectures, he distinguishes carefully between various relativist positions – largely what he sees as standard forms of cultural relativism and first-person relativism – and a relativistic attitude. He thinks that, as positions, the familiar forms of relativism succumb to problems with consistency or with solipsism. The relativistic attitude, however, Putnam takes as indefeasible by rational argument and in fact ineliminable. While linking relativism with scepticism, he writes: “It is not that relativism and scepticism are irrefutable. Relativism and scepticism are all too easily refutable

when they are stated as positions; but they never die, because the attitude of alienation from the world and from the community is not just a theory, and cannot be overcome by purely intellectual argument.”²⁷

Putnam favours at times this link between relativism and scepticism, for it allows him to endorse Stanley Cavell’s (1926-2018) views that scepticism is part of the human condition.²⁸ At other times he also wants to link relativism with its opposite, foundationalism, as if relativism and foundationalism could be taken as manifestations of a similar phenomenon, of different attitudes towards a misplaced concern about metaphysical certainty or a “transcendental guarantee.” There is however no such thing. What is needed, so far as Putnam is concerned, is something else altogether, something quite unexpected. To the relativist, Putnam says: “some things are true and. . . some things are warranted and some things are reasonable, but of course we can only say so if we have an appropriate language. And we do have the language and we can and do say so, even though that language does not itself rest on any metaphysical guarantee like Reason.”²⁹

But then the relativist quite understandably presses the issue. He or she asks: on what does such a language rest, if not on at least some kind of metaphysical guarantee? Putnam’s surprising move is to answer with Wittgenstein – the language that enables us to say that some things are true, warranted, and reasonable rests on... *trust*. Putnam quotes *On Certainty* paras. 508 and 509:

508 What can I rely on?

509 I really want to say that the language game is only possible if one trusts something. (I did not say ‘can trust something’).

This trust, as Putnam takes the matter here in the light of Cavell’s views, comes to curing our “inability to accept the world and

to acknowledge other people, without the guarantees.”³⁰ And since the inability is persistent, basing the language on trust comes to learning how “to live with both alienation and acknowledgment.”³¹ But can such a trust sufficiently justify claims that some interpretations are, objectively speaking, right, and others are, objectively speaking, wrong? Can the language of interpretive objectivity rest on trust alone?

7. Interpretation, Language, and Truth

To see the pertinence of these points to our concerns with reason, rationality, and interpretation, we may return to some of the poetry with which we began these reflections on relativism and to the questions about its interpretation that we initially formulated. Consider this time however not just excerpts from one of Yannis Ritsos’ extended dramatic monologues like “Moonlight Sonata” and its possible echoes in some of the work of Angelos Sikelianos’ like “The Sacred Way.” Instead, consider the full text of one of Ritsos’ most celebrated short lyrics, written in the very difficult years of 1946-1947 but only first published as part of a collection entitled “Parentheses I”, inside the larger work of Volume II of his poems.³²

Ritsos joined the EAM (the National Liberation Front in Greece) and went to northern Greece to work in the theatre there and in Macedonia before returning later to Athens. His activities would result in the banning of his published work, and then four very difficult years during the first of two extended imprisonments from 1948-1952 in different camps. His work was banned again under the Papadopoulos dictatorship, and he was imprisoned in the camps from 1967 to 1968, then hospitalized, then later confined to house arrest.³³ During imprisonment Ritsos wrote many short poems which he hid in bottles and buried for safekeeping in hopes that either he

himself or at least one of the two or three of his prison friends to whom he confided the secret could retrieve them much later.³⁴

The short poem, in Kimon Friar's translation, goes:

The Meaning of Simplicity

I hide behind simple things that you may find me;
if you don't find me, you'll find the things,
you'll touch what my hand touches,
the imprints of our hands will merge.

The August moon glitters in the kitchen
like a pewter pot (it becomes like this because of what I tell you)
it lights up the empty house and the kneeling silence of
the house –
always the silence remains kneeling.

Every word is a way out
for an encounter often cancelled,
and it's then a word is true, when it insists on the encounter.

Despite its uncharacteristically abstract title that immediately puts his usual reader on guard, Ritsos' poem presents us with a dramatic scene very much like the scene in "Moonlight Sonata", in the darkened house with the moonlight streaming through the window and the long dramatic monologue of the woman in black. But much else is going on here that bears directly on our concern with questions about interpretation, relativism, and objectivity.

One way to make these connections is to reflect on the translator's own interpretive comment on this poem which we need to cite at length:

"The poet informs us (parenthetically) that if the moon is glittering in the empty house like a pewter pot, this is because he has

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chosen to tell us so, thus warning us that the poem we are reading and its themes exist only in the words he had chosen. . . . “Every word,” he tells us, “is a way out / for an encounter often cancelled,” and in so telling us leaves us in doubt as to whether the “way out” is an opening toward that meeting or an escape from a meeting that, anyway, has been cancelled. But having once heeded the poet’s parenthetical warning that we are entering a private house of words (where silence remains forever kneeling), where no two seemingly similar words for inhabitant and visitor ever denote or connote the same things or meanings, we must not be misled by the impasse of this encounter, because it is exactly the words themselves which are not only a bridge between each other, and so between ourselves, but also a bridge between ourselves and whatever they symbolize, whether things of the world inside each of us or outside us all. The imprints of our hands will merge, though not completely, for no two imprints are exactly alike, but sufficiently enough for an over-all pattern to be discerned. The miracle is that communication is at all possible, and to the extent it is. The meaning of simplicity is complex (412).”

Now, part of what makes these interpretive comments suggestive for our own concerns here is their sharp focus on the last of the three stanzas, where the poet treats of language and truth in a way that his earlier parenthetical comment about the glittering of the moon renders ambiguous. Another ambiguity comes clear besides the one Friar points out in the expression “every word is a way out” – and this second ambiguity concerns truth. “A word is true” when one has kept to it and insists on what was promised, as here, on a meeting. But perhaps another suggestion is that “a word is true” when words are used in such a way that things are made to be seen as reflections of language only, when the glittering of the moon becomes the glittering of a pewter pot just because someone says so.

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Contrast for a moment the translation of the final stanza here in Kimon Friar's version –

Every word is a way out
for an encounter often cancelled,
and it's there a word is true, when it insists on
the encounter (4ll-12)

with the translation of the same stanza in Edmund Keeley's version –

Every word is a doorway
to a meeting, one often cancelled,
and that's when a word is true: when it insists on the meeting
(125).

Keeley's version is, among other things, more concrete – "doorway" for "a way out," "a meeting" for "an encounter." This difference subtly influences whatever awareness we may gradually come to of possible ambiguities here in the fuller expression, "a word is true."

Worrying here with the Greek text of the poem would be foolish, for both Keeley and Friar are distinguished translators of Greek poetry with many years' experience in rendering Ritsos's poems and those of other Greek poets into English. Moreover, each knew Ritsos personally and had the benefit of discussing the English translations of his poetry with him on numerous occasions before his death in November 1990 at the age of 81. We should notice nonetheless the different versions of at least one very important expression in the poem, the expression the poet puts almost at the center of the poem, midway into the middle stanza, and which the poet puts into parentheses in a collection of poems he has entitled "Parentheses." Where Keeley translates "(it gets that way

because of what I'm saying to you)," Friar has "(it becomes like this because of what I tell you)."

The difference here seems quite small, even when we pin down the indefinite pronoun's referents to the moon's getting "like a tin-plated pot" and the moon's becoming "like a pewter pot." Yet the connections between the parenthetical remark and the ambiguous expression in the last stanza are important. The ambiguity comes out perhaps more strongly (although less artfully?) in Friar's more abstract renderings – "becoming" for "getting," "it's then a word is true" for "that's when a word is true."

When is a word true? On Keeley's version we may want to answer: just when the invitation, as it were, in the particular use of an expression in a conversation ("I'm saying something about the moon, perhaps in response to what you've been saying") is accepted. Or, on Friar's version, we may want to answer instead: just when a possibility projected by the use of a particular expression is apprehended ("I'm telling you something about the moon that I can't quite put into suitable words yet"), then actualized in a particular use of the expression ("You know, it's, well, it's – it's glittering!").

Besides the first answer's being more particular than the second one, the crucial difference here is between taking oneself as sometimes committed ("it insists on," says the poet) to exploring the conversational implications of certain actual linguistic uses, and taking oneself as sometimes committed to inventing possible linguistic instantiations for barely surmised abstract possibilities which are not yet linguistic in form (say, the suggestive gesture in the shadows lengthening on the prison camp's rock quarry). In the case here of difficult talk about a word or expression being true or false, contrasting the two versions attentively suggests an opposition between determining the truth or falsity of an expression, usually by checking with the way things already are, and

determining the truth or falsity of an expression by telling a story about the way things are.

Some people want to say an expression is true or false in a particular context because of things happening to be one way or another – “that’s the way it is,” we sometimes say. Other people want to say an expression is true or false in a particular context because we make it that way – “there never was a world for her,” Wallace Stevens wrote, “except the one she sang, and, singing, made.”

Envoi: Rational Interpretation?

Suppose, in concluding, we sharpen the discussion as we did at the outset, and imagine the two of us disagreeing all over again. This time, however, the disagreement is not about an interpretation – whether Ritsos in his “Moonlight Sonata” can be said, objectively speaking, to have alluded intentionally to Sikelianos’ “The Sacred Way.” Rather, we disagree this time about the nature of rational interpretation – just when, as in Ritsos’ “The Meaning of Silence,” interpretation holds a word to be true, objectively.

You say, with Edmund Keeley, it is when an expression, opening out “like a door” on what are often cancelled meetings with the world, insists on the meeting with the world taking place. With Kimon Friar at my elbow, I reply it is when an expression, “like a way out” for what are often cancelled encounters with the world, insists on the encounter taking place with language.

Each of us – and the evidence here seems rather strong – may in fact be equally unhappy interpreters of Ritsos’ beautiful work. But is there some way around, if not our glaring incapacities as reasonable interpreters of poetry, at least the disagreements about objectivity, about my interpretive relativism and your interpretive realism?

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Notice that the disagreement here is only in part about a properly literary matter. In the earlier case of Ritsos' putative allusion to a passage in Sikelianos, we could have resolved the disagreement in a number of empirical ways. For example, we may have come upon correspondence, say letters Ritsos wrote in which he said that he had drawn on Sikelianos' "The Sacred Way." Or we may have come upon a draft Ritsos made of "Moonlight Sonata" which had the Sikelianos passage in the margins. Of course we still would have been left with explaining the difficult matter of what intentional allusion comes to – how can what is an allusion be unintentional? But that, as we say for convenience, is a separate matter.

Here, the nature of the disagreement is such that no empirical strategy can be adequate for its resolution. What stands at issue is not a matter of fact at all. For the question is not whether Ritsos in some way intended the expression, "it's then a word is true," to be taken one way or another. Even if he took the expression to be ambiguous in just the way we were imagining – and this is implausible – there is no kind of empirical evidence that would allow either one of us to claim that Ritsos intended further that his intended ambiguity be parsed one way rather than another. Each of the understandings of interpretation we have relied on has modified Ritsos' own words in important ways – first by interpolating the notion of meetings with a world, and then by distinguishing meetings with a world from encounters with language.

In the case of the first disagreement where empirical evidence of some sort, did it exist, would be directly pertinent, we are in the familiar domain of literary history. But in the second case, where no empirical evidence of any sort could be pertinent just because what Ritsos wrote has been modified, we are in the less familiar domain of philosophy. The two domains are often, as here, closely related; but they are not the same. We can say more generally that the first

extended example about Ritsos and Sikelianos occasions a literary disagreement about interpretation, whereas the second about hypothesizing the basis of ambiguities expressed in poetry occasions a philosophical disagreement about the nature of rational interpretation.

Our philosophical argument here concerns relationalism, relativism, and objectivity. The issue between us, clearly, is not whether two incongruent judgments must be construed as a contradiction. For the quarrel is not about whether Ritsos' "it's then a word is true" means *X* is true or not true. This would be a first-order dispute. Were we to disagree about this matter, then of course we would have to get clearer as to whether, in the domain of the interpretation of poetry, competing critical judgments always accommodate bivalent as opposed to multi-valued logical commitments.

Our disagreement rather is about whether interpreting Ritsos "it's then a word is true" refers mainly to something's always making a sentence true by virtue of this something's being the case in the world, or rather by this something's being the case in language. But at this level we are still dealing with first-order questions about whether, and if so to what extent, truth is a matter finally of linguistic conventions.

We move, however, to a second-order level as soon as we notice that our disagreement about interpretation reaches to just how we are to talk of truth itself when we talk of what it is that makes something true. For here, unlike the situation so far, it appears that the true sentences we are concerned about in the sense of wanting to know just what it is that makes them true are not sentences about the nature or limits of linguistic conventions but are true sentences about what makes sentences true.

We come then to our most basic disagreement about rational interpretation. You say that what makes true sentences about sentences

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being true is, in particular contexts with particular vocabularies already in place, the give and take between the standing uses of families of language games and their ongoing reforms – in short, a dynamic objectivity. And I say that what makes such self-referential sentences true is nothing other than the particular alethic options we choose, together with consistency in their epistemic applications, in short, not any objectivity but subjective constructions. Can we decide this issue between us? Or is such an issue a matter of convention all over again?

Endnotes for Essay Four

- ¹ This is revised and extended version of a paper first published under the title “Interpretation and Objectivity,” in: *Interpretation, Relativism, and the Metaphysics of Culture: Themes in the Philosophy of Joseph Margolis*, ed. M. Krauss and R. Shusterman (Amherst, NY: Humanity Books, 1999), pp. 75-104.
- ² In *Voices of Modern Greece*, tr. and ed. E. Keeley and P. Sherrard (Princeton: PUP, 1981).
- ³ J. Margolis, *The Truths About Relativism* (Cambridge, MA.: Blackwells, 1991).
- ⁴ *The Fourth Dimension: Selected Poems of Yannis Ritsos*, tr. R. Dalven (Boston: Godine, 1977), p. 57. Cf. “Moonlight Sonata,” tr. P. Green and B. Bardsley, in: *Yannis Ritsos: The Fourth Dimension* (Princeton: PUP, 1993), pp. 43-44.
- ⁵ See R. Beaton, *Greece: Biography of a Modern Nation* (London: Allan Lane, 2018).
- ⁶ Peter McCormick, *Aspects Yellowing Darkly: Ethics, Intuitions, and the High European Modernist Poetry of Suffering and Passage* (Krakow: Jagellonian University Press, 2010), p. 85.
- ⁷ In *Voices of Modern Greece*, p. 82.
- ⁸ In *Voices of Modern Greece*, p. 75.
- ⁹ See the moving account in E. Keeley, *Modern Greek Poetry: Voice and Myth* (Princeton: PUP, 1983), p. 42.
- ¹⁰ For a summary statement of Margolis’ views see his article, “Plain Talk about Interpretation on a Relativistic Model,” and the two responses by Stephen Davies, “Relativism in Interpretation,” and Robert Stecker, “Relativism about Interpretation,” *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 53 (1995), 1-18.
- ¹¹ Much of that work is on view in his trilogy, *The Persistence of Reality*, a series of related investigations that explores different strategies of philosophical reconciliation under such provocative titles as *Pragmatism Without Foundations*, *Science Without Unity*, and *Texts Without Referents* (Cambridge, MA: Blackwells, 1986, 1987, and 1989 respectively). See also his *The Flux of History and the Flux of Science* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), esp. pp. 195-6, and *Interpretation Radical but Not Unruly: The New Puzzle of the Arts and History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), passim.
- ¹² See, for example, his accounts in *The Truth About Relativism* (Cambridge, MA: Blackwells, 1991), p. 62. This work is the most comprehensive of Margolis’s investigations into kinds of relativism and I will rely on it largely although not exclusively here. Further references to this book are incorporated in the body of the text.
- ¹³ Cambridge: CUP, 1981.
- ¹⁴ Putnam, pp. 123-24; cited in Margolis, p. 80. See the essays in *Words and Life*, ed. J. Conant (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994), and *Pragmatism: An Open Question* (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1995).
- ¹⁵ Cf. Putnam’s Carus Lectures in his *The Many Faces of Reason* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1987), esp. pp. 26-40.

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- ¹⁶ H. Putnam, *Meaning and the Moral Sciences* (London: Routledge, 1978), esp. pp. 20 ff. Margolis 1991, p. 130.
- ¹⁷ Margolis 1991, p. 130.
- ¹⁸ Cambridge: CUP, 1983.
- ¹⁹ See Margolis 1991, p. 155; and Peirce, *Collected Papers of Charles Sanders Peirce*, ed. C. Hartshorne and P. Weiss (Cambridge, MA: HUP, 1934), Volume 5, para. 47, p. 603; cited in Margolis 1991, p. 164.
- ²⁰ Princeton: PUP, 1979.
- ²¹ Cf. Rorty's American Philosophical Association Presidential Address that Margolis cites (p. 59), "Pragmatism, Relativism, Irrationalism," in his *Consequences of Pragmatism* (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 1982), pp. 160-75.
- ²² See *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, 52 (1992), *passim*. Cf. further criticism of Rorty's versions of relativism in Putnam's *Pragmatism* (Cambridge: MA: Blackwells, 1995), pp. 74-5.
- ²³ *How Many Questions*, ed. L. S. Cauman (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1983), p. 56.
- ²⁴ Rorty cites Davidson's "The Very Idea of a Conceptual Scheme" in Davidson's *Inquiries into Truth and Interpretation* (Oxford: OUP, 1984), p. 194.
- ²⁵ Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1992.
- ²⁶ Note however that while relying generally on the idea that meaning is use, Putnam is attentive to Wittgenstein's qualification in the *Philosophical Investigations*, para. 43 that in some cases the meaning of a word is not its use, a point Putnam stresses in his Gifford Lectures (Lecture VII).
- ²⁷ Putnam, *Renewing Philosophy*, Lecture VIII, p. 164.
- ²⁸ See J. Conant's discussion of the influence of some of Cavell's ideas on Putnam in H. Putnam, *Realism with a Human Face*, ed. J. Conant (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1990), pp. lvii-lxxiv.
- ²⁹ Putnam, *Renewing Philosophy*, p. 177.
- ³⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 75 and 178. See also Putnam's preface, "Introducing Cavell," in *Pursuits of Reason* (Lubbock, Texas: Texas Technical University Press, 1992).
- ³¹ Putnam, *Renewing Philosophy*, Lecture VIII, p. 178.
- ³² See K. Myrssiadis's chronologies in *Yannis Ritsos: Selected Poems 1938-1988*, ed. K. Friar and K. Myrssiadis (Brockport N. Y.: BOA, 1989). The translation is taken from p. 25.
- ³³ See the helpful biographical information in Keeley 1983. The historical backgrounds of the persistent nationalist tragedies in modern Greek history can be found in S. Gourgouris, *Dream Nation: Enlightenment, Colonization, and the Institution of Modern Greece* (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1996).
- ³⁴ See, for example, J. Levinson, "Intention and Interpretation: A Last Look," in: *Intention and Interpretation*, ed. G. Iseminger (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1992), pp. 221-56.