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**HILARY PUTNAM ON LANGUAGE AND REFERENCE: THE
CASE OF DISEMBODED BRAINS**

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Abstract

‘What would happen if all human beings are brains in a vat?’ is a sceptical question that is raised by American philosopher Hilary Putnam. His thought experiment 'Brains in a vat' is a renewed approach to the problem of scepticism or global scepticism first proposed by Rene Descartes. His ‘Brain in a Vat’ argument is one of the critically acclaimed notions apart from model theoretic argument, that refutes a non-epistemic understanding of truth as posited by Metaphysical Realism. Refuting global scepticism is intrinsic to Putnam's pursuit of 'internal realism' and denial of Metaphysical Realism. Internal realism surfaces in Putnam's middle phase, between his allegiance to metaphysical realism and natural realism. Internal realism is itself a moderate position as well, between realism and anti-realism. This phase is characterized by the famous dictum: ‘the mind and the world jointly make up the mind and the world’, a proposition that looks forward to Kant and refutes scepticism. According to Putnam the question ‘What would happen if all human beings are brains in a vat?’ is simply a story that humans construct through their linguistic capabilities. Through the paper I shall elaborate on ‘Brains in a Vat’ thought experiment, the implications of it, and Putnam's refutation of this global scepticism. I shall also seek to posit Putnam's understanding of reference, which is the key factor of his philosophy of language.

Keywords: Brains in a vat, Reference, Skepticism, Internal Realism, Metaphysical Realism