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AUTHOR'S NOTE

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1. Introduction

- In his last decades, Hilary Putnam spent much effort criticizing the fact/value dichotomy, the idea that while facts are understood as objective worldly entities, values are deemed as subjective or intersubjective projections. According to Putnam, this dichotomy is the main source of subjectivism about value. Against this view, Putnam has developed a battery of arguments partially drawn from a pragmatist legacy devoted to discrediting what he viewed as the empiricist misconceptions at the heart of the dichotomic approach. Willard van Orman Quine's criticism of the analytic/synthetic distinction plays a relevant role in the overall structure of Putnam's arguments. According to Quine, we cannot sharply distinguish between analytic statements – those that can be true or false based only on the meanings of the words involved, like “vixens are female foxes” – and synthetic statements – those that can be true or false also on the basis of the relevant empirical facts, like “the frog is on the log.” If Quine is right and we cannot isolate these types of statements in a satisfactory way, we find ourselves with the consequence that we cannot anymore sharply isolate factual statements; factual and conceptual statements become intertwined and not easily untangled (Quine 1951; Putnam 2002: 2). This criticism entails the blurring of a distinction between what is “empirical” and what is “conceptual.” The category of purely factual statements is thus implicitly put into question. Not surprisingly, according to Putnam this has powerful entailments for the putative arguments in favor of the fact/value dichotomy,

as it involves a basic problem in our understanding of facts and factual statements, so that there is a basic difficulty in isolating facts. From this premise, important consequences follow.

- 2 First, such arguments rely heavily on understandings of central concepts like “fact,” “value,” “convention,” “description,” and “evaluation.” If Quine’s criticism is right, then we must understand these concepts differently. With convincing examples, Putnam showed how these concepts are all strongly interrelated and that dichotomic readings, notwithstanding a widespread and commonsensical presence in the current cultural scene, are ultimately flawed and untenable (Putnam 2002, chap. 2).
- 3 Another argument of Putnam’s relies on examples taken from the history of science, in which the contribution of epistemic values is undeniably relevant in determining scientific facts: if epistemic values play a role in shaping the basic facts, then (epistemic) values and facts cannot be separated to the effect that in order to get facts we need values (Putnam 2002: 30-4, 132, 141-3). Hence, according to Putnam, the very notion of fact presupposes and embeds evaluative features and dynamics.
- 4 This view was presented by Putnam in the years when he defended internal realism, the idea that our knowledge of reality is somehow filtered, in a Kantian fashion, by our conceptual schemes. This directly entails some legitimate role for values in our knowledge of facts, as values are connected with our conceptual schemes (see below). Hence, internal realism offers favorable terrain to develop such a view against the fact/value dichotomy. Yet, Putnam also continued defending the collapse of the dichotomy after his transition to a further epistemological phase: natural realism, the idea that realism is basically aligned with common sense and that our contact with the world is naturally direct and hence not mediated by conceptual schemes or sense data. This view contains a naïve realist understanding of perception, according to which objects and portions of reality are “directly present” in perceptual episodes (Putnam 1999: 10-1).
- 5 A major change in this epistemological transition concerns the concept of truth. After the early epistemic conception understood as “idealized rational acceptability,” the basis of the internal realist phase, Putnam developed a personal route to “alethic pluralism,” roughly the idea that the truth predicate plays a different functional role for different discourse areas (Putnam 1999: 64-70). For example, truth is “correspondence” in the case of empirical statements, but it is “warranted assertibility” in the case of ethical or aesthetic judgments.
- 6 This view, at least *prima facie*, raises an issue for Putnam’s perspective on the dichotomy: these discourse domains, which are useful to define the roles played by the truth predicate, seem to be a forbidden step for him in view of his arguments against the fact/value dichotomy. If facts and values are as tangled as Putnam says, it is not clear how he can afford distinctions of discourse domains that intuitively rely on such a dichotomy between facts and values. If there is an effective collapse of the dichotomy, a factual domain would comprise values and valuations as well. This consequence would hinder the possibility of reading “true” in terms of “correspondence” for empirical statements, for instance, as values would be embedded into facts and also understood in terms of correspondence. However, if “correspondence” is acceptable both for facts and values, then it is not clear why there is a need for alethic pluralism – a view motivated also by the possibility of accepting “correspondence” for empirical facts without endorsing it for value judgments. Hence, a closer inspection is due.

7 In what follows, Section 2 summarizes Putnam's arguments against the fact/value dichotomy. Section 3 addresses the transition from internal to natural realism and alethic pluralism. Here, we find the first incompatibility between alethic pluralism and the abandonment of the fact/value dichotomy. Section 4 explores in more depth this putative incompatibility by looking more closely at Putnam's alethic pluralism. As a matter of fact, Putnam endorses genuine distinctions of "discourse areas" or "language games" in order to explain his pluralist views. Section 5 reexamines Putnam's arguments in view of a more precise take on his alethic pluralism, providing a better assessment of the putative incompatibility between alethic pluralism and the fact/value dichotomy: if the fact/value dichotomy collapses, then he cannot afford a tenable distinction between factual and nonfactual discourse domains. Furthermore, to also reinterpret this view by accepting the entanglement of fact and value together with the idea that this is how empirical statements correspond entails further complications. Section 6 therefore concludes the article by briefly restating the main points of this incompatibility.

2. Against the Fact/Value Dichotomy

- 8 Putnam started criticizing the fact/value dichotomy in the period of his endorsement of internal realism, the idea that truth is epistemic – he understood it as "idealized rational acceptability"¹ – and that reality is accessed cognitively by means of certain conceptual schemes. This epistemological perspective was especially congenial for criticizing the dichotomy, since values here belong to the conceptual frameworks which are responsible for the very identification of what counts as facts: "[a] being with no values would have no facts either" (Putnam 1981: 201). According to Putnam, values are embedded into conceptual schemes, and choices among schemes presuppose and involve values: "any choice of conceptual scheme presupposes values, and the choice of a scheme for describing ordinary interpersonal relations and social facts [...] involves, among other things, one's moral values" (*ibid.*: 215).
- 9 Thus, the activities involved in describing and evaluating belong to the same enterprise and cannot easily be detached and isolated in the analysis. If description and evaluation are intertwined and the concepts of "facts," "values," and "conventions" cannot be sharply separated, then facts depend on our values and conventions (Putnam 2002: 4). This can be paraphrased by stating that facts depend in an important sense on our conceptual framework, thus endorsing internal realism across the board.² In an important sense, the facts studied by science presuppose a great deal of epistemic values such as "coherence," "reasonableness," "plausibility," "simplicity," "elegance," and so forth (Putnam 2002: 30-4, 141-3). Hence, concludes Putnam, the idea of detaching values and facts is irremediably flawed.
- 10 However, Putnam's epistemological views changed over time, leading him to abandon internal realism and to endorse what he called "natural" realism, which he deemed much closer to common sense.³ This view against internal realism rejects the idea that conceptual schemes play the role of epistemic intermediaries between mind and world. Natural realism rejects also the "verificationist semantics" presupposed by internal realism: it was the idea that the meaning of a generic statement S can be understood in terms of its use by looking at its circumstances of verification CV, and that there is a tight connection between meaning and understanding.⁴ Furthermore, perception,

according to this new approach, directly discloses and presents a world to our experience, without the need of any epistemic intermediaries. Truth, finally, is now understood as plural, or, to put it differently, as playing different roles in different discourse domains (see below).

- 11 A recurrent theme in Putnam's late philosophy is the tendency to avoid metaphysical readings of philosophical views. For example, according to him, we should avoid crystalizing philosophical distinctions into metaphysical dualisms. This is a general attitude that Putnam shows in this discussion: metaphysics tends to crystalize, and to make rigid, concepts and categories that are actually "flexible" in ordinary usage. According to this point of view "[...] ordinary distinctions have ranges of application, and we are not surprised if they do not always apply" (Putnam 2002: 11). Putnam affirms that such distinctions are often blurred in ordinary usage and that sometimes the intervention of philosophy can draw lines and boundaries where this is not necessary – and this perspective clearly revives an attitude once common in ordinary language philosophy and in the later Wittgenstein.

- 12 The criticism of the fact/value dichotomy is a case in point for this attitude: the fact that we can trace relevant distinctions, also in this specific issue, does not necessitate drawing metaphysical consequences from this possibility. We should resist the impulse to understand distinctions as having a metaphysical import or as carving reality at its joints. This becomes particularly relevant for the fact/value dichotomy: "[...] there is a distinction to be drawn (one that is useful in some contexts) between ethical judgments and other sorts of judgments. [...] *But nothing metaphysical follows from the existence of a fact/value distinction in this (modest) sense*" (Putnam 2002: 19). Thus, this is a practical and intuitive distinction concerning what we do when we use ethical statements and what we do when we use empirical statements, without any need to involve metaphysical substantial differences between Facts and Values (capital letters stand, in a Rortyan fashion, for the metaphysically loaded understanding of facts and values, in order to distinguish the dichotomy from the merely conceptual distinction). Here we have clear functional differences, accompanied by different ways to discuss these concepts, which are embedded in our ordinary uses but without a relevant metaphysical significance under the surface: "[f]acts remain distinct from values (when they do) because of the way we treat them and talk about them, in everyday contexts as well as within specialist discourse" (Marchetti & Marchetti 2017: 12). After the introduction of this low-profile⁵ metaphysical attitude about how to properly handle philosophical distinctions, Putnam makes his main points concerning the intertwining of fact and value – arguments that, as we saw, presuppose an acceptance of Quine's criticism of the analytic/synthetic distinction.

- 13 Describing and evaluating are activities that we perform in everyday life, and we should resist the temptation of conceiving of them as separate boxes, without any overlaps. Description and evaluation can be distinct in terms of the functions enacted by our thoughts and speech acts, but the presence of a description never automatically rules out some evaluative aspect in it and vice versa. Conventional aspects of discursive practices, furthermore, combine in relevant ways with what we do in describing and in evaluating. The upshot is an image of ordinary practices where there is a constitutive intertwining of descriptions, evaluations, and conventions, and in which this ensemble hinders any unilateral metaphysical untangling (Putnam 2002: 4, 27, 39-40, 62, 103-4).

This is the basis of what can be understood as an entanglement of fact and value, which I call “the entanglement thesis.”

- 14 Another line of Putnam’s argument, already introduced, concerns the role of epistemic values in actual science and in shaping the very facts. This argument must be read as consistent with this low-profile metaphysical attitude, showing as it does that there is an effective role of epistemic values in science, one that is relevant in shaping facts: but this does not show any metaphysical significance about facts or epistemic values, as there is only an undeniable and useful functional connection.
- 15 Finally, Putnam accuses Hume’s metaphysics of facts to be the actual theoretical basis of the strong fact/value dichotomy (a view which deeply influenced Logical Positivism, for instance); facts, according to Hume, can be stated by using the epistemic role of the senses (*ibid.*: 14-22). This view is untenable, Putnam claims emphatically, as it would disqualify as nonfactual much theoretical physics, at least all the theories that assign explanatory import to theoretical entities (*ibid.*: 29). It is here with this Humean legacy, according to Putnam, that the innocuous distinction between facts and values inherited a metaphysically loaded understanding.
- 16 These arguments – a) the role of (epistemic) values in science, b) the intertwining of fact, value, and convention, and c) the scientific untenability of the Humean notion of fact (which had a foundational role for the dichotomy) – must be understood as questioning the Fact/Value Dichotomy as metaphysical. This means that Putnam acknowledges a legitimacy to the fact/value (conceptual) distinction that he tries to distinguish from its metaphysical interpretation (the Dichotomy). This means, in practice, that according to Putnam we do something different by stating facts and by evaluating actions, for instance.

3. Putnam’s Alethic Pluralism

- 17 As we already saw, in the 1990s Putnam abandoned internal realism and embraced the view that he called “natural realism” (Putnam 1999). This epistemological transition entailed an important change in the conception of truth he endorsed; after abandoning the previous epistemic conception of truth as idealized rational acceptability,⁶ Putnam adhered to a version of alethic pluralism, the view that truth works differently in various discourse domains. For example, we can rehabilitate a correspondence view concerning the factual domain while admitting epistemic conceptions in many nonfactual domains such as ethics, aesthetics, and so forth (Wright 1992; Lynch 2009; Pedersen & Wright 2013). This option in many versions is gaining consensus among philosophers who see it as a valuable alternative to deflationary views, which affirm that “true” is nothing more than an expressive disquotational device for generalization and semantic ascent deprived of any explanatory or metaphysical import.⁷
- 18 Putnam did not retract his criticisms of the fact/value dichotomy during his epistemological and metaphysical transition from internal to natural realism. However, while internal realism was the original epistemological ground for this view, natural realism inherits this criticism rather automatically. He endorsed the compatibility of these views as a non-problematic transition; one can fairly say that this attitude belongs to his endorsement of pragmatism during his internal realist phase which survives his transition toward natural realism. However, there are relevant questions that can be raised in this respect. Some considerations may undermine at least in

principle the compatibility between alethic pluralism and the criticism of the Fact/Value Dichotomy. Alethic pluralism, for example, is established by the acknowledgment of different discourse domains, the most relevant of which are those that are factual and those that are nonfactual. Thus, “true” is understood in terms of “correspondence” in sentences like “it is true that the frog is on the log,” which obviously belong to the empirical domain and is understood in terms of “warranted assertibility” (or sibling notions) in sentences like “it is true that the death penalty is wrong,” which obviously belong to a nonfactual (in this case ethical) domain. We can imagine many other discourse domains and consequent changes in the meaning of “true.” Highly intuitively, this view has the interesting and promising feature of relocating old counterexamples to traditional conceptions of truth in terms of domains: “it is true that the death penalty is wrong” does not count anymore as a counterexample to “correspondence theories” because it belongs to a different (nonfactual) domain, but correspondence works nicely for empirical sentences. This contextualization of “true” in terms of domains neutralizes old counterexamples by emphasizing how they were based upon the conflation of distinct discourse areas in which sentences when true are true in different ways. However, despite this promising insight for traditional views on truth, this alethic pluralist perspective faces an intuitive challenge, and one potentially unpleasant for Putnam: 1) alethic pluralism requires distinguishing among discourse domains; and 2) distinguishing among domains seems to be in tension with the criticisms to the Fact/Value Dichotomy, which can be interpreted also as a rejection of the intuitive force of domains’ distinctions.

- 19 The problem, which is straightforward, is the following: if facts, values, and conventions are intertwined with each other and inseparable, and if evaluations and descriptions are likewise, then we cannot afford a useful and tenable distinction between factual and nonfactual domains. If we cannot afford such a distinction among domains, we lose any sound grip on the very (intuitive) definition of alethic pluralism, as it depends on taking such domains to be somewhat distinct; otherwise, it would not be intuitive to think about truth as playing different roles in those contexts.⁸ Domains are simply taken at face value – one would add that this is so “in ordinary usage.” At the very least, Putnam would need a version of alethic pluralism that is not compromised with the distinction between factual and nonfactual domains.⁹ Why is “true” understood in one way in “it is true that the frog is on the log” and in another way in “it is true that the death penalty is wrong” if we cannot afford an intuitive distinction between the two domains as ruled out by Putnam’s arguments against the Fact/Value Dichotomy, which would hinder factual domains as genuine? In fact, if the Dichotomy is untenable the empirical domain turns out to be an “entanglement of fact and value” which cannot be understood as “purely” factual.
- 20 A defender of Putnam’s view could be tempted to reply that this distinction of domains should not be seen as metaphysically substantial, as if it would serve as a distinction of ontological import. According to an attitude like this, we could think of such domains as distinctions that we find handy in ordinary practice, without the need of philosophical principles acting under the surface. We also noticed that this “metaphysical interpretation” of the Fact/Value Dichotomy would leave the conceptual distinction between fact and value on the table as legitimate. The legitimacy of this distinction, furthermore, would also be the basis to argue for the legitimacy of distinguishing factual and nonfactual domains, and so would be nicely compatible with alethic pluralism. Hence, from this point of view mainly concerning the tenability of

alethic pluralism, we find ourselves facing a pressing question: If the fact/value distinction is legitimate and consistent with the desired alethic pluralism, then why all the insistence on rejecting the (metaphysical) Fact/Value Dichotomy, which is inconsistent with alethic pluralism? A fair reply is that rejecting the dichotomy is not meant, at least at the beginning, to address any problems concerning truth. This is sure enough, but do such commitments align on closer inspection?

- 21 One could say that such a rejection of the Dichotomy is not that effective, and if it were effective in establishing that facts depend also on values (the entanglement thesis), then we could not coherently exploit factual and nonfactual discourse domains in order to articulate and motivate alethic pluralism; furthermore, it would even put into question the legitimacy of the conceptual distinction. If our statements enact forms of entanglement between fact and value, then the distinction between facts and values becomes an instrumental and pragmatic one; this is a distinction that may be helpful for certain purposes, but it is not involved in the conceptual role of “facts” and “values.” Another consequence if Putnam was right on the Fact/Value Dichotomy would be the need to define and defend alethic pluralism without acknowledging the legitimacy of the distinction among discourse domains or simply changing one’s theory of truth.
- 22 The point I am making here merely concerns an everyday life distinction about what we do when we utter some sentences like “the frog is on the log” and others like “the death penalty is wrong,” especially in the circumstances in which we say that these are “true.” This is something that is acceptable legitimate in our ordinary experience, and I am not loading it with unnecessary metaphysical baggage. Thus, tension remains if we maintain a low-profile metaphysical attitude concerned with everyday usage; we usually distinguish between what we do with factual and nonfactual statements and indeed between discourse areas. This distinction is rather in question with the refutation of the Fact/Value Dichotomy, which has an intuitive conceptual connection with the distinctions among discourse domains; according to the refutation of the Dichotomy, empirical facts would usually involve values, so empirical statements cannot count as belonging to a proper factual domain. Therefore, we need to look more closely at how alethic pluralism understands such domains and the ways in which they can be said to be distinct. The present situation can be stated as a dilemma: we wish to reject discourse domains, as effective and not just a *façon de parler*, when we think about the Fact/Value Dichotomy, but we also wish to admit them when we think about the many uses of truth. Granting all the possible flexibility to ordinary usage, here something clearly must be rejected, as the commitments involved are not easily compatible with each other. This does not mean, however, that there is anything wrong with rejecting the dichotomy or with endorsing alethic pluralism per se; these views are clearly live options in their respective fields.¹⁰ The problem is that such views apparently require being handled with special care when they are both endorsed as in Putnam’s case.
- 23 Let us give a closer look to how Putnam’s alethic pluralism understands discourse domains.

4. Discourse Domains in Putnam's Alethic Pluralism

- 24 Discourse domains play a major theoretical role for the standard understanding of alethic pluralism. Popular pluralist proposals such as Crispin Wright's and Michael Lynch's all assign a relevant role to this distinction of domains.¹¹ As Douglas Edwards put it: "[i]ndeed, some commitment to the idea [of discourse domains] is ingrained in the very motivations for the view"; furthermore, "[i]f this idea is given up, then a central motivation for the view is lost" (Edwards 2018: 85-6). Such statements mark a kind of conceptual pervasiveness of discourse domains for alethic pluralism that serves a central motivating role. However, this acknowledgment is not enough to automatically attribute the view to Putnam. This issue requires closer examination.
- 25 Putnam sometimes says that his pluralist remarks on truth barely deserve to be called a proper "theory," and that are mostly features to consider when we talk about truth in order to avoid saying things like "truth is correspondence,"¹² "truth is warranted assertibility," "truth is coherence," and so forth. With these remarks, noncommittal and low-profile as they are, he says something that certainly may resemble an attitude that is consistent with alethic pluralism. He mostly talks of "discourse areas" rather than discourse domains, but this difference, on close inspection, simply amounts to a terminological one (nothing in Putnam's texts is evidence to the contrary).
- 26 This is how Putnam characterizes the factual discourse area, which concerns empirical facts: "[w]hen we confine attention to empirical statements, both correspondence and disquotation are features of truth" (Putnam 2012: 98). Here, "empirical statements" show up as a discourse area in which we talk of empirical facts, and thus can be understood as a category containing a certain type of statements clearly pointing to the factual realm. Hence, Putnam continues, "'true' varies from language game to language game" (*ibid.*). Here, language games play the role usually assigned to discourse domains, certifying that Putnam is moving in this territory. However, the later Putnam is never eager to talk about principles and categories. For instance, here he talks of "language games" in a Wittgensteinian fashion, and this problematizes the proper attribution to Putnam of a pluralist "theory" of truth.¹³ Concerning these intuitions as belonging or not to a theory of truth, Putnam affirms that "[t]he difficulty in giving a picture of our notion of truth (I doubt we can give anything that deserves the title of a "theory") is to do justice simultaneously both to the *unity* of the notion, and the *plurality* of the correctness-conditions that go with it and give it content" (Putnam 2012: 98).
- 27 Clearly, Putnam is distancing himself from anything like a theory of truth, but he remarks how different applications of the concept of truth have different "correctness-conditions." This means that discourse areas are effective in distinguishing such conditions, and therefore play effective roles in ordinary discursive practice.¹⁴ However, putting aside the issue of the aforementioned attribution of a "theory," we can also recognize some of the intuitions which are typical of alethic pluralism, like the idea of doing justice "both to the unity of the notion, and the plurality of the correctness-conditions that go with it." This is implicitly testified to by an intuitive trust in distinguishing between empirical and ethical statements, and an intuitive endorsement of the view that truth plays plural roles for different types of statements. The basic idea underlying this approach is that "true" is correctly applied to different statements in different ways; a unitary concept applies differently to many discourse areas where statements are correct (and true) in different ways. Different discourse

domains permit different uses of the truth predicate, and this is the pluralist core of Putnam's view as "different kinds of statement are responsible to reality in their own way. This means that different uses of 'true' are allowed by different properties, and these are all genuine" (Dell'Utri 2017: 19); these discourse domains permit "an extendable family of uses of the predicate 'true'" (*ibid.*: 17).

- 28 After this brief summary of Putnam's views on truth associated with alethic pluralism, we can say that he based his ideas and insights on an intuitive distinction between discourse domains. This attribution is therefore legitimate, and Putnam helped himself with something like genuine notions of factual and nonfactual contexts even though he did not understand them as a theory. Hence, our previous doubts are still on the table: Does this endorsement of alethic pluralism based on acknowledging genuine factual discourses become incompatible with rejecting the Fact/Value Dichotomy as denying genuine factual discourses (the entanglement thesis)?

5. Discourse Domains and the Arguments Against the Fact/Value Dichotomy

- 29 Distinguishing factual from nonfactual domains intuitively requires that we have some grasp of what it means to talk about empirical facts. It also requires that we have some grasp of what it means to talk about things that do not necessarily entail describing empirical facts, for example talking about ethical or aesthetic matters. When we loosely talk of empirical or ethical discourse areas, we are implicitly distinguishing between a context where we describe how things are and a context where we mostly evaluate deeds rather than describe them. I assume these remarks as intuitive and loose – I am not attaching a great deal of philosophical significance to them. However, if I must choose a view or an attitude in order to give philosophical substance to these ways to talk, the best account I can find is that of functionally "distinguishing what we do" by talking of facts or by talking of values, for example. Such an approach can be found in the work of authors like Ludwig Wittgenstein, Wilfrid Sellars, Simon Blackburn, Allan Gibbard, Robert Brandom, Paul Horwich, Huw Price, Michael Williams, and many others.¹⁵ Therefore, there are basically functional differences among these discourse areas or vocabularies; with them we do different things. Some of these authors, furthermore, endorse deflationary views on truth which can accommodate much better the functional differentiations of the many discourse areas, since truth is understood as insubstantial so that "it is true that the frog is on the log" can be true in the same insubstantial way of "it is true that the death penalty is wrong."¹⁶ At least *prima facie*, this neopragmatist approach seems quite sound; however, this is merely how I would frame the issue, so let us return to Putnam's view.
- 30 The problem is whether Putnam is capable in view of his arguments against the Fact/Value Dichotomy of distinguishing clearly among such discourse domains. More specifically, if facts systematically presuppose values (the entanglement thesis), are we entitled to talk about a "proper" factual domain (and so of purely empirical statements)? If we cannot distinguish properly between "describing" and "evaluating," are we entitled to the corresponding discourse areas? If we are not, how can we use them to define our plural uses of "true" and to say that in certain statements truth works in terms of "correspondence" and in other statements in other ways?

- 31 There is apparently something more explicit in Putnam's words that seems to proceed toward answering these questions. In particular, he seems to be somehow aware of the implications of these views on truth for his rejection of the Fact/Value Dichotomy. An eloquent passage is the following: "[...] by the way, my rejection of the fact/value dichotomy doesn't mean that there's no use for a distinction between descriptions and evaluations" (Putnam 2012: 98). Here, Putnam is clearly defending an ordinary distinction between "descriptions" and "evaluations" and is also commenting that it is not ruled out by rejecting the Fact/Value Dichotomy, even though more by fiat than by argument. Hence, we have a clear statement of concern here about the compatibility between rejecting the Fact/Value Dichotomy and endorsing some pluralist views of truth. I see this as revealing Putnam's awareness of a potential issue as the quotation above is taken from a discussion about truth. Naturally, we can ask if the intuitive distinction between descriptions and evaluations suffices to distinguish discourse areas legitimizing and motivating alethic pluralism. A first thing that is easily noticed is that Putnam implicitly understands the differences among the many types of statements in pragmatic terms by looking at what we do with them, and this is very close to the neopragmatist and Wittgensteinian approaches that I mentioned above.
- 32 This is, however, too soon to establish the point. When Putnam attacks the Fact/Value Dichotomy he just denies this: "'Valuation' and 'description' are interdependent" (Putnam 2002: 77); "description and valuation can and must be *entangled*" (*ibid.*: 27). Thus, he apparently claims that "valuation and description are interdependent and entangled" when it is comfortable to him in order to attack the Fact/Value Dichotomy; quite differently, he also claims that "[this] doesn't mean that there's no use for a distinction between descriptions and evaluations" when it is comfortable to him in order to defend the distinction between discourse areas that sustains his alethic pluralism.
- 33 Again, Putnam could say that in the former case he is rejecting the (metaphysical) Dichotomy and that in the latter case he is legitimizing the (conceptual) distinction. Yet, this is not the solution since it would make the criticism of the Dichotomy ineffective in affirming that facts really depend on values and hence that the entanglement thesis would not bear relevant implications. If the collapse were effective, meaning that we may understand facts and values as actually tangled, then the fact/value distinction and the distinction between factual and nonfactual domains would lose their intuitive strength for us. If this does not happen, then the collapse of the Dichotomy does not play a relevant philosophical role, but only denies an understanding of facts and values as distinct metaphysical substances. First, however, in this case such a metaphysical understanding would be a sort of philosophical fetish, an easy (and empty) target whose collapse bears no relevant consequences. The only interesting consequence here would be that facts and values really are tangled (the entanglement thesis) to the effect that we cannot distinguish between facts and values (and between factual and nonfactual domains). If these consequences do not follow, though, then the collapse/entanglement does not possess much significance and becomes the mere criticism of an artefactual conceptual fetish – one that nobody, not even Logical Positivists, defended. If there were really a collapse of the Fact/Value Dichotomy, this would entail a problem for the legitimacy of the distinction, too, and this would also forbid admitting the legitimacy of domains based on the possibility of talking about factual statements as genuine. In other terms, the present situation is one

in which we put on our “ethical glasses,” and as a consequence we do not see any distinction between fact and value; we rather see them entangled. Vice-versa, when we put on our “alethic glasses” we must trace that distinction in order to define and motivate our pluralist perspective. Distinguishing between facts and values would become an artificial operation enacted when needed in a context where fact and value belong to the same entanglement. Are we, however, allowed to say that “empirical statements” are “true” in terms of “correspondence with the facts” and that “value judgments” are “true” in terms of “epistemic conditions” if facts and values are “actually” tangled? Should we not say that truth is rather some correspondence for this entanglement? Finally, would this not be mostly incompatible with alethic pluralism by endorsing the correspondence view across the board? Let us push this reasoning a little further.

- 34 This final way to read Putnam’s perspective is by denying that when we read the truth predicate in terms of “correspondence,” it depends on the fact that the statement here called true is solely (or entirely) empirical, meaning it is an entanglement of fact and value. A corollary of this view would be that value judgments also comprise factual or descriptive aspects. Putnam’s discussion of “thick ethical concepts” like “cruel,” which are presented as playing both a descriptive and a valuative function, seems to be a case in point for such a reading (Putnam 2002: 34-43; see also Bernstein 2005, and Rosiak-Zięba 2018). However, if we admit the insertion of values in our understanding of “empirical” statements, and that “truth” can be “correspondence” for such statements (statements that correspond to an entanglement of fact and value), then to my mind many unpleasant consequences follow:
- 35 1) *A placement problem for ethical vocabulary*: since such an entanglement “corresponds” to our statements, we embark on representationalism about values as well as about facts, generating a “placement problem” for moral facts: Where then are moral facts located in the natural world? (Price 2011: 187). By the way, assuming also that the standard understanding of empirical facts is not controversial, we can also ask: Would not this entanglement also be a way to make empirical facts much more controversial and muddier than they are usually taken to be?
- 36 2) *Bad metaphysics* (all over again): if one accepts representationalism about moral vocabulary and its consequences, it follows that one endorses a type of metaphysics of (fact and) value that Putnam avoids by the very criticism of the Dichotomy. One could say that by endorsing this kind of moral realism Putnam would avoid subjectivism, which is his greatest foe here, yet at the price of reinstating the type of metaphysics that he deemed responsible for the spreading of subjectivism.¹⁷
- 37 3) *Uselessness of alethic pluralism*: if we can understand “truth” as “correspondence” for the entanglement of fact and value, we lose the basic motivations to defend alethic pluralism; this is precisely the view that we may adopt to save a “correspondence” view for the empirical realm while endorsing epistemic views on ethical and aesthetic matters, for instance. Why should one endorse alethic pluralism at all if the point of rejecting the dichotomy is to counter subjectivism and the main strategy for this is a version of metaethical cognitivism in which truth can be “correspondence” in the case of entanglement?
- 38 Hence, combining a correspondence view and the entanglement thesis does not solve our basic problem.

- 39 However, we can admit a potential final defensive move for the theorist that nonetheless tries to endorse both truth pluralism and the entanglement thesis; this means taking the entanglement at face value and endorsing it when talking about values (so to counter subjectivism and noncognitivism) and drawing innocuous but useful conceptual distinctions between facts and values and among discourse domains when talking about truth (so to legitimize and endorse truth pluralism). This is perhaps a bit cumbersome, but it can be in principle feasible, at the very least with some additional work. However, I see a problem here: it would entail understanding “the frog is on the log” as an entanglement when one is not concerned with truth and understanding it as an empirical statement when one is concerned with truth so that the same statement is both empirical and “hybrid” depending on the context. Rather than simply cumbersome, I deem this implausible.
- 40 Again, facts and values are tightly and clearly tangled with each other in the denial of the Dichotomy, but they must be easily and conveniently untangled when we distinguish discourse areas in order to say how the truth predicate behaves contextually. This view undeniably involves some stretching of ideas and distinctions, and again this can be one of the underlying motivations for Putnam’s reservations about calling them “theories” and for his metaphysical low-profile attitude. Nevertheless, as far as I can see, Putnam should have pulled the feet from at least one of those boots as these commitments hardly stand together. Either Putnam rejects the Dichotomy and finds another way to defend alethic pluralism (without embracing discourse areas at face value)¹⁸ or he accepts the Dichotomy to maintain alethic pluralism. Hence, at least one of these incompatible commitments must give way – but again, this incompatibility entails no problems on the independent tenability of these views.
- 41 Finally, there are intelligible reasons why Putnam endorsed this argumentative trajectory and never the other neopragmatist approach I sketched above. Putnam has always been critical of the nonfactualist and noncognitivist views sometimes associated with many neopragmatist options (especially Blackburn’s quasi-realism).¹⁹ This means that such views on distinguishing what we do with different statements cannot be interpreted as being between a factual domain where we describe facts with empirical statements and a nonfactual domain where we express our attitudes with ethical statements, for instance. The noncognitivist trajectory drawn by this expressivist stance in metaethics marks a significant distance from Putnam’s cognitivist intuitions.
- ²⁰ Furthermore, the neopragmatist views sketched above more or less agree on a deflationary understanding of “true” that permits successful distinguishing among discourse domains only in terms of the different functions enacted (e.g., describing, evaluating, and so forth). Additionally, nothing concerning truth bears on this except that *qua* deflationists neopragmatists may claim both that “it is true that the frog is on the log” and that “it is true that the death penalty is wrong” without any change in the meaning of “true” and without the need of attaching any controversial metaphysics to these statements. This deflationary attitude, always criticized by Putnam, ruled out this potential neopragmatist route as viable for him.

6. Conclusion

- 42 Putnam has been a fierce adversary of the fact/value dichotomy, and this became apparent already in the phase when he defended the view called internal realism. He later changed his main epistemological and metaphysical views by endorsing natural realism, with the consequence of embracing another view on truth: alethic pluralism, which is the idea that the truth predicate works differently in various discourse domains. Despite these changes of mind in epistemology and in theories of truth, Putnam continued criticizing the fact/value dichotomy as a central aspect of his pragmatist commitments. However, alethic pluralism entails distinguishing between discourse domains, especially between factual and nonfactual domains, and this distinction is in tension with the rejection of the fact/value dichotomy, as this would hinder, by endorsing the entanglement thesis, factual domains as genuine. This acknowledgment raises compelling doubts concerning the compatibility of these views.

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NOTES

1. Truth is what can "be asserted in epistemically-good-enough-conditions" (Dell'Utri 2017: 7).
2. Bergström (2002) challenges the connection between internal realism and the collapse of the dichotomy.
3. Putnam 1999. Dell'Utri defines this transition as follows: "Putnam came to realize that this was not realism enough, beginning his way back to a view in which the independence of the world from the mind and its theoretical products is more definite" (Dell'Utri 2017: 9). Natural realism, according to Dell'Utri, must be understood as a kind of "direct realism" as it is called in theory of perception once we abandon those approaches based on sense data. See Dell'Utri (2017: 10).
4. The *locus classicus* for this view is Dummett 1978.
5. Other times Putnam seems to embrace, more directly, an anti-metaphysical attitude, to the point of writing an "obituary" for ontology understood in the fashion of post-Quinean analytic metaphysics. See Putnam (2004: 71-85).
6. This view was undermined by an argument provided by Wolfgang Künne (2003: 425-52), based on a version of Frederic Fitch's paradox of knowability.
7. See Horwich 1998, and Armour-Garb & Beall 2005.
8. As argued by Edwards (2018: 85-6).
9. A view like this can be found in Lynch 2013. See Wyatt 2013 for the specific problem motivating such a version of alethic pluralism. For other problems concerning alethic pluralism see Sainsbury 1996, and Tappolet 1997.
10. See, for example, Angelides 2004, Bagnoli 2017, Ben-Menahem 2005, Bernstein 2005, and Scheman 2017 about the dichotomy – but see Bergstrom 2002 and Dall'Agnol 2013 for criticism. See Pedersen & Wright 2013 for an overview of alethic pluralism.
11. See Wright 1992, Lynch 2009. However, Lynch recently modified his pluralist account by abandoning the idea of discourse domains. See Lynch 2013.
12. Even though "correspondence" deserves pride of place for this pluralist account. Dell'Utri comments on this as follows: "Above all, correspondence may account for some truths, but not all the truths" (Dell'Utri 2017: 10). So, there is a scope problem for correspondence, and pluralism mostly enters the scene when correspondence is not tenable: "even if we admit the plausibility of a correspondentist explanation of the truth of empirical propositions, it turns out to be much more difficult to apply the same explanation to the truths in ethics, mathematics and the like" (*ibid.*).
13. The later Wittgenstein explicitly avoided putting forward philosophical theses and was seriously concerned with the legitimacy of philosophical theories which he deemed as pseudo-theories. See Wittgenstein (1953: §§124, 126-8). It is not by chance, in fact, that Putnam first introduced his alethic pluralism in the context of discussing Wittgenstein's ideas. See Putnam (1999: 64-70). Stoutland (2019: 77-88) understands Putnam's latter views on truth as closer to deflationism (and perhaps to quietism).
14. Dell'Utri talks about "'scopes' in which truths can be stated, where the empirical scope is but one of many" (Dell'Utri 2017: 11).
15. See Price 2013 for an overview of these neopragmatist options.
16. Putative differences among truths in different domains can be accounted for by pointing out the differences among the things we talk about: e.g., one between "the frog being on the log" and

“the death penalty being wrong.” This is the Quine-Sainsbury objection to alethic pluralism, which naturally supports deflationary perspectives. See Quine 1960 and Sainsbury 1996.

17. Putnam understands subjectivism and relativism as consequences of bad metaphysics and bad philosophy (the Dichotomy) and seems to read this as the reason why subjectivism is so popular in our culture. However, I think, with Stephen Turner (2010: 41-7), that the evidence in support of subjectivism and relativism, as a matter of fact, comes from “diversity”: the fact that local types and varieties of normativity, comprising also ethical normativity, are so different across the globe and sometimes incompatible with each other. I do not think that philosophy can be seen as influential as Putnam sees it under this respect. See Bernstein 2005 for a diagnosis closer to Putnam’s.

18. Or even abandons alethic pluralism in order to maintain the rejection of the dichotomy.

19. See Blackburn 1984, 1993.

20. See Putnam (2004: 53-5, 83-4).

ABSTRACTS

Hilary Putnam spent much of his career criticizing the fact/value dichotomy, and this became apparent already during the phase when he defended internal realism. He later changed his epistemological and metaphysical view by endorsing natural realism, with the consequence of embracing alethic pluralism, the idea that truth works differently in various discourse domains. Despite these changes of mind in epistemology and in theory of truth, Putnam went on criticizing the fact/value dichotomy. However, alethic pluralism entails drawing distinctions among discourse domains, especially between factual and nonfactual domains, and these distinctions are in tension with the rejection of the fact/value dichotomy, as this would in principle hinder factual domains as genuine. This issue raises, *prima facie*, some doubts about the effective compatibility of these views.

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