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TOWARD A PRAGMATICALLY NATURALIST METAPHYSICS OF THE FACT-VALUE ENTANGLEMENT: EMERGENCE OR CONTINUITY?

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Abstract

This paper examines the metaphysical status of the fact-value entanglement, which, according to Hilary Putnam among others, is a major theme in pragmatism. The pragmatic naturalist must make sense of the entanglement thesis within a broadly, non-reductively naturalist account of reality. Two rival options for such pragmatist metaphysics are discussed: values may be claimed to emerge from facts (or normativity from factuality), or fact and value may be considered continuous. Thus, pragmatic naturalism about fact and value may be based on either emergentism or Peircean synechism. This is a crucial tension not only in pragmatist philosophy of value but in pragmatically naturalist metaphysics generally.

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This paper examines the metaphysical status of the fact-value entanglement, which, according to Hilary Putnam among others, is a major theme in pragmatism. The pragmatic naturalist must make sense of the entanglement thesis within a broadly, non-reductively naturalist account of reality. Two rival options for such pragmatist metaphysics are discussed: values may be claimed to emerge from facts (or normativity from factuality), or fact and value may be considered continuous. Thus, pragmatic naturalism about fact and value may be based on either emergentism or Peircean synechism. This is a crucial tension not only in pragmatist philosophy of value but in pragmatically naturalist metaphysics generally.

1. Introduction

Pragmatists, early and late, have heavily criticized the so-called *fact-value dichotomy*. Hilary Putnam (1990, 1994, 2002a, 2004a), in particular, plausibly suggests that the rejection of this age-old dichotomy has been a key pragmatist theme since the work of William James and John Dewey. While I find Putnam's elaborations on the *fact-value entanglement* – and his attribution of that entanglement to the classical pragmatists – highly interesting and worth developing further (cf. also Pihlström 2005), I want to inquire into the *metaphysical status* of this entanglement. There is no reason for pragmatists to abandon metaphysics; metaphysical theorizing is, rather, part and parcel of an adequate pragmatist analysis of our practice-embedded being-in-the-world (Pihlström 2009). A crucial issue for a pragmatist metaphysician is the exact nature of the fact-value entanglement. This problem is particularly important for a *pragmatically naturalist* metaphysician, because it is vital to investigate how our valuational activities are entangled with – continuous with and/or arising from – nature.

This paper will proceed as follows. First, I will present Putnam's argument for the fact-value entanglement and connection with pragmatism. In contrast to Putnam's own primarily

conceptual and linguistic approach,¹ focusing on the relation between factual and evaluative judgments rather than the (metaphysical, worldly) items those judgments are about, I suggest that the fact-value entanglement ought to be studied in an unashamedly metaphysical manner. I will then propose two different metaphysical ways of understanding the entanglement, on the basis of the concepts of (i) emergence and (ii) continuity. Both are (pragmatically) naturalist, but in different ways. The former may be used to explicate the idea of “novelty” – especially the “new” levels of organization that come into existence in complex systems – and thus to argue that values in a sense emerge from their factual base. Normativity is “new” in relation to the merely factual ground upon which it is based; nevertheless, *contra* reductive forms of naturalism, it is not reducible to that basis, though “growing out of it”. The latter concept, epitomized in Charles S. Peirce’s doctrine of synechism, may, however, be used to question the very idea of emergence. The Peircean synechist insists on continuity, abandoning any “mysterious” leaps onto new levels of reality. Accordingly, the synechist views facts and values as continuous with each other, without any gap that ought to be crossed by means of an emergence-like qualitative transformation. The question is whether we should, or could, explicate the relation between fact and value in terms of emergence (with values emerging from facts, presupposing yet transcending them) or in terms of continuity and synechism (without fact-value gaps). This key pragmatist tension lies at the heart of the Putnamian neopragmatist “entanglement thesis”, because both emergence and synechist continuity seem to explicate aspects of the relevant kind of entanglement. The pragmatic effects and significance of both options should be carefully scrutinized. Such a work can only barely be begun in this paper, but pragmatists are invited to study the issue further.

In investigating this tension, I will not claim that one of the alternatives is clearly superior to the other. They might even be, pragmatically, indistinguishable – at least if a proper use of the pragmatic method (intended to “make our ideas clear”, as Peirce famously put it) does not yield any conceivable practical difference between them. We might thus have here a case of a metaphysical issue to be treated by means of the pragmatic maxim (the pragmatic principle) developed, in their distinctive ways, by Peirce and James. Yet, the fact that there are tensions in

¹ Arguably, this approach results from Putnam’s own background in Carnapian logical empiricism. For a critical discussion of Putnam’s Carnapian assumptions in his “internal realism” and the related doctrine of conceptual relativity, see Westphal (2003). Niiniluoto (2009), criticizing the pragmatist entanglement thesis, also (justifiably) wonders why Putnam formulates his position in terms of evaluative judgments; Niiniluoto himself prefers to discuss values themselves as ontologically emergent, culturally constructed entities.

pragmatism – e.g., the one between realism and idealism (cf. Pihlström 1996, 2008, 2009), or between emergent novelty and panpsychism, another doctrine of continuity (cf. Pihlström 2008) – makes the pragmatist tradition a truly living one. It is crucially constituted by the open questions that its advocates are entangled with.² I will, hence, not only be concerned with the fact-value entanglement but, through this special case, more broadly with the kind of metaphysical tensions pragmatic naturalism both vitally needs and continuously seeks to settle. Thus I hope to examine the viability of two main non-reductively naturalist options available to pragmatist metaphysicians of value.

2. Putnam on the fact-value entanglement

One of Putnam's central arguments for the fact-value entanglement and the related picture of moral objectivity he defends, is the one he labels the "companions in the guilt argument" (see especially Putnam 1990), which also is a kind of "indispensability argument". Putnam points out that objective, action-guiding moral values (that is, values that are no more subjective than facts) should not – *pace* moral skeptics, radical relativists, and "error theorists" like J.L. Mackie (1977) – be regarded as "queer" objects hard to locate in the natural-scientific picture of the universe. Were values queer, *all* normative notions, including the ones we need to rely on in defending the scientific conception of the world that Mackie and other critics of objective values regard as ontologically superior to ethical, value-laden conceptions, would be equally suspect. We would have no "empirical world" at all as the object of our (scientific and non-scientific) descriptions, if we did not subscribe to the objectivity of at least some values. In order to have a coherent concept of a fact, Putnam believes, we must invoke values. The ways in which we discuss factual matters reveal and presuppose our entire system of value commitments; values are, in this sense, indispensable in our dealings with the world. There is no coherent way to deny the normative, action-guiding role played by the notions of rational acceptability, warrant, justification, and the like, and if such notions are allowed in our scientific conceptual scheme(s), then there is no clear motivation for excluding moral values.

² In their recent introduction to pragmatism, Talisse and Aikin (2008) also defend the view that pragmatism is a living tradition precisely because it cannot be captured into any single unified doctrine. For their discussion of Putnam's entanglement thesis and its problems, see pp. 123-128.

Far from being located in any transcendent realm beyond the natural and social reality familiar to us, values are, according to Putnam's pragmatism, entangled with the ordinary, natural facts we find ourselves immersed in.³ The pragmatist questions the error theorist's tendency to regard virtually everything non-scientific as "queer". In short, the error theorist's naturalism is reductive (or eliminative), while a truly pragmatic naturalism must be non-reductive, preserving the natural features of our human world, including normativity. There is no reason to see the pragmatist's defense of the objectivity of moral values as non-naturalistic; on the contrary, we need to rethink our very idea of naturalism and accommodate distinctively human activities, including valuation, within nature, just as Dewey – the paradigmatic pragmatic naturalist – did (see Putnam 2004b).

It is one of the defining features of the pragmatist tradition, from James to Putnam, that ethical issues are no less cognitive or rationally negotiable than scientific or everyday ones (see especially Putnam 1994, 2002a).⁴ The rejection of the fact-value dichotomy can be traced back to the most important predecessor of the pragmatist movement, Ralph Waldo Emerson, whose writings offer a true mixture of metaphysical and ethical perspectives on fundamental human issues such as civilization, society, solitude, art, and fate.⁵ Putnam fails to acknowledge Emerson in this context, but he (cf. Putnam 1987, 1994, 1995) also supports his case by invoking the Kantian idea of the primacy of practical reason and our moral "image" of the world (as compared to other, including scientific, images of reality). Such images are continuously painted by us through the evaluative language-use we engage in. Moreover, Putnam repeatedly refers to Iris Murdoch at crucial points of his argument against the fact-value dichotomy:

Our life-world, Murdoch is telling us, does not factor neatly into "facts" and "values"; we live in a messy human world in which seeing reality with all its nuances, seeing it as George Eliot, or Flaubert, or Henry James, or Murdoch herself can, to some extent, teach us to see it, and making appropriate "value judgments" are simply not separable abilities.

³ Putnam's reasoning can be reconstructed as a pragmatic transcendental argument (cf. Pihlström 2003a, ch. 7; 2005, ch. 2). Nothing in this paper depends on the possibility of interpreting pragmatism as a (naturalized) form of transcendental philosophy, though.

⁴ On James's and Dewey's ways of rejecting the fact-value dichotomy, see also R.A. Putnam (1998) and (2002). It may, admittedly, be more difficult to find support for this view in the work of the father of pragmatism, Peirce (but cf. Misak 2000, 2004a, 2004b). An essentially pragmatist defense of the fact-value entanglement can be found in Morton White's writings on the topic (e.g., White 2002).

⁵ See, e.g., the essay "Fate", in Emerson (1860).

[...] It is all well and good to describe hypothetical cases in which two people “agree on the facts and disagree about values,” but in the world in which I grew up such cases are unreal. When and where did a Nazi and an anti-Nazi, a communist and a social democrat, a fundamentalist and a liberal, or even a Republican and a Democrat, agree on the facts? Even when it comes to one specific policy question [...], every argument I have ever heard has exemplified the entanglement of the ethical and the factual. There is a weird discrepancy between the way philosophers who subscribe to a sharp fact/value distinction *make* ethical arguments sound and the way ethical arguments *actually* sound. (Putnam 1990, pp. 166–167.)⁶

Putnam draws attention to the actualities defining our practices of ethical evaluation and argues that as soon as that practical context is adequately taken into account, as any pragmatist should, there is no room for an artificial philosophical dichotomy between factual and evaluative discourse – nor, consequently, for a reductively naturalist (physicalist) picture of reality that takes only scientifically established facts seriously and disregards values as “queer”. The human world is “messy”, he tells us. If there is any distinction at all, it is inevitably fuzzy and contextual. Putnam also defends the objectivity of moral value judgments as an element of “commonsense realism”, analogously to the objectivity of mathematical judgments (Putnam 2001, pp. 143, 185–186). According to this (allegedly) commonsensical view, there is no need to postulate “moral facts” in any strongly realist sense in order to avoid radical moral relativism and to account for the objectivity of morality (or of mathematics) (see *ibid.*, pp. 182–183). We just need to understand “the life we lead with our concepts in each of these distinct areas” (*ibid.*, p. 186). Putnam, thus, talks about “objectivity without objects”, applying this notion to values, mathematics, and other areas of discourse and practice: there is no need to postulate abstract entities as “really existing” in such areas of reflection (see Putnam 2002a, p. 33).

⁶ Compare: “The use of the word ‘inconsiderate’ seems to me a very fine example of the way in which the fact/value distinction is hopelessly fuzzy in the real world and in the real language. The importance of terms like ‘inconsiderate’, ‘pert’, ‘stubborn’, ‘pesky’, etc., in actual moral evaluation, has been emphasized by Iris Murdoch in *The Sovereignty of Good*. [...] When we think of facts and values as independent we typically think of ‘facts’ as stated in some physicalistic or bureaucratic jargon, and the ‘values’ as being stated in the most abstract value terms, e.g. ‘good’, ‘bad’. The independence of value from fact is harder to maintain when the facts themselves are of the order of ‘inconsiderate’, ‘thinks only about himself’, ‘would do anything for money’.” (Putnam 1981, p. 139.) For similar references to Murdoch, see Putnam (1990), p. 150, and (1992), pp. 85–88. Murdoch’s central article, “The Sovereignty of Good over Other Concepts” (1970), can be found, e.g., in a selection of her papers (Murdoch 1997, pp. 363–385).

In a more recent book, Putnam goes on to defend “ethics without ontology” and even sketches an “obituary” for what he calls “Ontology”, with a capital “O” (Putnam 2004a, Part I, Lecture 4). His aim is to avoid both inflationary and deflationary (eliminativist, reductionist) forms of Ontology (or metaphysics), and to replace such confusions by a “pragmatic pluralism”, noting (again) that our everyday language consists of different discourses or “language games” and that it is therefore an illusion to think that there is a privileged language-game sufficient for describing reality as a totality (ibid., pp. 21–22). We should, especially in the ethical case, reject the metaphysical quest of absoluteness, because ethics, and hence the reality of values, is *prior* to any metaphysical inquiry into the relation between our conceptions and the world. An ethical orientation is *presupposed* by anyone’s genuinely engaging in such an inquiry (cf. also Pihlström 2005). This is what it means to begin from our practices rather than from any supposedly prior metaphysical project.⁷

In *The Collapse of the Fact/Value Dichotomy*, Putnam (2002a) reminds us that a pragmatist attack on a dualism is *not* automatically an attack on a corresponding distinction; the distinction between facts and values may be useful in different contexts, but an essential dichotomy or dualism is pernicious (see pp. 9–10). Hence, we must note the crucial distinction between a philosophical dualism and a philosophical distinction (ibid., p. 10). Moreover, Putnam appears to think that while “valuings” (a Deweyan term) are not simply to be contrasted with factual descriptions, these are not identical, either, because there are (ethical) valuings that are descriptions and valuings that are not (Putnam 2004a, p. 74) – and even the latter are not beyond the notions of truth and falsity, or good and bad argument (ibid., pp. 76–77). As he reflects:

If we *disinflate* the fact/value dichotomy, what we get is this: there is a distinction to be drawn (one that is useful in some contexts) between ethical judgments and other sorts of judgments. This is undoubtedly the case, just as it is undoubtedly the case that there is a distinction to be drawn (and one that is useful in some contexts) between *chemical* judgments and judgments that do not belong to the field of chemistry. *But nothing*

⁷ However, as this paper also demonstrates, I cannot follow Putnam (2004a) into a wholesale rejection of Ontology (cf. Pihlström 2006, 2009). A pragmatic middle ground is needed here, as it so often is: we may abandon what Putnam used to call “metaphysical realism” (and what Kant called “transcendental realism”) without abandoning metaphysics as such, that is, we can reinterpret metaphysics itself pragmatically. This broader meta-metaphysical issue cannot, however, be engaged in here.

metaphysical follows from the existence of a fact/value distinction in this (modest) sense.
 (Putnam 2002a, p. 19; emphasis in the original.)⁸

A worry that a critic might raise here is that if some valuing is not a description but can nonetheless be called true or false, then we must be able to apply the notion of truth to something that is not a (mere) statement of facts. But here Putnam's pragmatism comes to the rescue. On a pragmatist conception of truth (as distinguished from a standard correspondence conception), it is possible to say that an evaluative judgment whose aim is not just to "copy" the facts can be (or fail to be) satisfactory, rewarding, etc., and (hence) pragmatically true; still, such pragmatic truth need not be subjective or idiosyncratic, as it can be based on our social interests and criteria of satisfaction.⁹ In short, we should not expect the truth of ethical evaluations to be grounded in the purely factual (correspondence) truth of the factual constituents of such evaluative judgments. There are no such purely factual constituents – for us. There is, according to Putnam (and presumably other pragmatists), no purely factual truth to be found anywhere in human affairs. The pragmatist conception of truth – irrespective of how, in the end, it should be technically formulated – offers a richer perspective on the "truth-aptness" of our irreducibly normative ordinary language, in which ethical judgments are phrased. It is hopeless to try to find a more fundamental language from which ethical elements would have been eliminated.

As in his earlier writings (see Putnam 1990, 1992), Putnam once again criticizes Bernard Williams's (1985) notion of "absoluteness", arguing that the dream of an absolute (scientific) conception of the world fails to make sense (Putnam 2002a, pp. 40–42).¹⁰ Putnam ends up with the ungrounded, non-foundationalist (and therefore fundamental) status of the ethical:

The language of *coming to see* what [the ethical] standpoint requires of one is internal to that standpoint and not a piece of transcendental machinery that is required to provide a foundation for it. [...] Ethical talk needs no metaphysical story to support it (or, in a postmodernist version of the metaphysical temptation, to "deconstruct" it); it only needs

⁸ We might, of course, ask whether the distinction between a dualism and a (mere) distinction is itself a dualism (or a dichotomy) or only a distinction. As a dualism-debunking pragmatist, Putnam should perhaps opt for the latter alternative. Or perhaps *this* distinction is itself contextual, construable strongly or weakly depending on our pragmatic purposes. As this meta-level issue is not central to our concerns, I simply leave it open.

⁹ I must leave the much debated pragmatist theory of truth aside here. For Putnam's own reflections on it, see, e.g., Putnam (1995); for comparisons between James and Putnam, see Pihlström (1996) and (1998).

¹⁰ See also Dilman (2002), chs. 4–5, for a lucid treatment of Williams.

what ethical talk – both in the narrower senses of “ethical,” and in the wide sense of talk about the good life – has always needed: good will, intelligence, and respect for what can be seen as grounds and difficulties from within the ethical standpoint itself. (Ibid., pp. 94–95.)

Again, Putnam appeals to the classical pragmatists (especially Dewey) when reminding us that experience is not value-neutral but “comes to us screaming with values” (ibid., p. 103) and that value is something that “has to do with all of experience” (ibid., p. 135). He approves of Dewey’s notion of philosophy as criticism and the importance of the criticism of valuation, yielding a vital distinction between the valued and the valuable (ibid., p. 103). On Deweyan grounds, it is possible to maintain that the (pragmatic) principles governing inquiry in general also hold for value inquiry (ibid., p. 104). Furthermore, Putnam praises Dewey for observing, with Aristotle, that from a non- or pre-ethical standpoint the reasons for being ethical are “not apparent”, that is, that “one must be *educated* into the ethical life” through a “transformation of one’s interests”; there is no way of justifying ethical life or giving reasons for the objectivity of ethical judgments from an outside perspective, or on the basis of non-ethical reasons (Putnam 2004b, p. 18; cf. Putnam 2002b; 2004a, pp. 3, 29, 102). What the Deweyan approach reminds us of is that it by no means follows from this that reason and argument – epistemic concerns – have nothing to do with ethics. People who are seriously committed to ethical life tend to *disagree*, seriously, about how to live, and therefore reason, argumentation, and justification do have a significant role to play within the ethical standpoint itself, although mere argumentation can rarely settle ethical questions. The ethical and the epistemic are entangled, mixed up, inseparable. So are, then, facts and values – for us, in the natural world we live in and continuously (fully naturally) structure through our world-categorizing practices.

Epistemic values are also values; this observation is familiar from the above-mentioned “companions in the guilt” argument (Putnam 2002a, pp. 30–31; see further ibid., ch. 8). There are differences between epistemic and ethical values (ibid., p. 31), but their difference, Putnam points out, is *not* that epistemic values are related to the project of objective description and ethical ones are not. Both types of value open up, for us, a distinctively human world. Even epistemic values admit no “external” justification: “[...] if these epistemic values [e.g., simplicity, coherence, predictive success, etc.] do enable us to correctly describe the world (or to describe it *more*

correctly than any alternative set of epistemic values would lead us to do), that is something we see *through the lenses of those very values.*" (Ibid., pp. 32–33.) The same applies, *mutatis mutandis*, to ethical values. Thus, Putnam embraces Deweyan fallibilism, experimentalism and democratization of (moral) inquiry (ibid., p. 110). Sure, there is no final set of moral truths (ibid., p. 109), and moral value judgments are not true or "matters of objective fact" in a "recognition-transcendent" sense: "If something is a good solution to a problematical human situation, then part of the very notion of its being a good solution is that human beings can recognize that it is." (Ibid., pp. 108–109.) Still, such judgments do possess a kind of objectivity, objectivity "humanly speaking", *for us* – and it is unclear whether any factual judgment about the humanly categorized world (the world we conceptually structure in and through our practices) could enjoy any essentially stronger kind of objectivity. In Ilham Dilman's (2002) terms, moral value judgments refer to real elements of our "human world", the morally relevant reality we encounter in our actions and language-use. The crucial pragmatist insight here is that such a reality is inseparable from the natural, factual world we seek to describe in our (apparently) non-ethical practices. The human world is ethically structured *through and through*, and this structuring is not at all non-natural but simply part of what nature is for us, given that we are the kind of natural creatures we are.

Most importantly, the ethical is argued to be in no need of external justification: no science can teach us to make the kind of distinctions requiring "moral perception"; making such distinctions (for instance, between someone's "suffering unnecessarily" and her or his "learning to take it") requires "a skill that, in Iris Murdoch's words, is 'endlessly perfectible,' and that as she also says, is interwoven with our (also endlessly perfectible) mastery of moral vocabulary itself" (Putnam 2002a, p. 128). Evaluative properties – epistemic or ethical – can be perceived only when one has learned to understand and to "imaginatively identify with" the relevant evaluative outlook (Putnam 2004a, p. 69). Putnam, together with Murdoch, McDowell, and others,¹¹ is thus strictly opposed to the picture in which ethics is treated as something to be justified "from *outside*", be that picture evolutionary, utilitarian, or contractarian (Putnam 2002a, p. 131). All these pictures try to defend ethical values in non-ethical terms, which, for a pragmatist trying to view the demands of morality "from within" them, is a fundamental mistake.

¹¹ The influence of John McDowell's *Mind and World* (1996), especially its program of "rethinking" the concept of nature (and naturalism) in terms of the notion of "second nature", on Putnam's thinking (and neopragmatism generally) must remain a topic for another discussion. See Pihlström (1996) and (2003).

However, Putnam, despite his compelling articulation of the fact-value entanglement (and the related view that values are no less cognitively objective, no more queer, or even no less natural than facts), fails to make the *metaphysical* relation between fact and value precise enough. Every fact “realizes” some value(s), and every value is inevitably materialized in or supported by some fact(s), we may say, but what exactly does this mean? *How* are values entangled with facts, and *how* are they real for us? How exactly do our “humanly speaking” objective moral value judgments refer to, or pick up, values and/or evaluative properties?

In order to acquire sufficient resources for investigating these questions, we will examine two metaphysical concepts, pragmatically articulated: *emergence* (section 3) and *continuity* (section 4). Obviously, this choice is somewhat arbitrary, because many other candidates for an account of the metaphysical relation between fact and value – as distinguished from a merely conceptual or semantic one – could also be considered. For instance, one might suggest that if facts and values are entangled, some (general) value is always *instantiated* by a (particular) fact roughly in the sense in which universals are instantiated in particulars, according to Aristotelian realists about universals.¹² The entanglement thesis might also be expressed in terms of *truthmaking*: any truths about the world require as their truthmakers not only facts (or their constituents, e.g., particulars and universals) but also values.¹³ Alternatively, values may be claimed to be *realized* by facts, not enjoying any fact-independent existence;¹⁴ then, presumably, the entanglement thesis would also include the reverse idea that facts are realized by values. A detailed study of these (and other) metaphysical notions that might be taken to explicate the fact-value relationship is beyond the scope of this paper. However, even if the pragmatist metaphysician focuses on, say, emergence or continuity in this discussion, nothing prevents her/him from further investigating the connections between her/his preferred pragmatist metaphysics of value and notions like instantiation, realization, or truthmaking.

¹² Whether this instantiation is best understood as, say, a *sui generis* “non-relational tie” (cf. Armstrong 1978) or “partial identity” (cf. Armstrong 2004), or something else, is another matter. Below, when discussing Peircean synechism, we will encounter the idea that values are something like Peirce’s “real generals”. In any case, it seems clear that values are not like particular things, such as tables and chairs; what the ultimate ontological nature of values is must, however, remain beyond my pragmatist treatment, however metaphysical. I prefer to approach the metaphysics of values by examining their relations to facts, instead of attempting to determine what they ultimately *are*.

¹³ See, again, Armstrong (2004) for the metaphysical importance of truthmakers – the worldly items needed to “make true” the (or any) truths there are – and see Pihlström (2009) for a pragmatist discussion of this concept.

¹⁴ On the notion of realization and its role in “realization physicalism”, see Melnyk (2003).

3. Pragmatists on emergence

We will now take a look at how the notion of *emergence* might play a role – and how it has played a role – in pragmatism, in order to examine whether the fact-value entanglement could be metaphysical explicated in terms of the idea that “values emerge from facts”. Emergence, after all, is a concept favored by non-reductive naturalists of various stripes. Very roughly, the idea is to argue that something (e.g., factual reality, material nature) is required for something else (e.g., values, normativity) to arise, even though the latter cannot be metaphysically or conceptually reduced to the former. Values are real, naturally emerging structures, appearing only in (human, cultural) systems with a sufficiently high degree of complexity, just as (we may suppose) a neural system with sufficient complexity is required for mental states and processes to emerge. As the famous slogan goes, emergent “wholes” are something “more” than mere sums of their parts.¹⁵

Occasionally, pragmatists (e.g., Rosenthal 1982, 1990) loosely refer to something like emergence, usually without making the concept clear. The classical tradition of British emergentism, represented by C. Lloyd Morgan, Samuel Alexander, and C.D. Broad, among others, arrived at its culmination in the 1920-30s, i.e., somewhat later than the pragmatist tradition (cf. McLaughlin 1992, Stephan 1999). Yet, concepts close to emergence – e.g., novelty, creativity, chance – were widely used by the classical pragmatists, and there was even some mutual influence between pragmatism and emergentism, especially *via* the work of G.H. Mead (see Blitz 1992). Both emergentists and pragmatists have emphasized process metaphysics, the dynamic development of reality, instead of static, unchanging structures.

Joseph Margolis, a (neo)pragmatist emergentist, characterizes human persons and other cultural formations (such as works of art) as emergent, embodied tokens-of-types, neither identical to nor reducible to their material composition. He argues that our ontology of cultural entities – presumably including values – ought to recognize these entities as real and emergent, while being compatible with materialism and allowing cultural entities to enter into causal relations and to support causal explanations (Margolis 1984, p. 14). He thus favors a form of “downward causation”

¹⁵ Obviously, this is not a right place for a detailed analysis of the concepts of reduction and emergence. See, e.g., Stephan’s (1999) comprehensive monograph; for pragmatist views on emergence, see El-Hani and Pihlström (2002) and Pihlström (2002). In this paper, I am merely concerned with pointing out the relevance of the concept of emergence to pragmatist metaphysics of the fact-value entanglement, not with any detailed characterizations of what emergence might in the end amount to.

as a key element of his pragmatic emergentism. Instead of reviewing his discussions of the concept in detail, I just quote from one of his numerous publications:

By an **emergent** order of reality [...] I mean any array of empirical phenomena that (i) cannot be described or explained in terms of the descriptive and explanatory concepts deemed adequate for whatever more **basic level** or order of nature or reality the order or level in question is said to have emerged from, and (ii) is causally implicated and cognitively accessible in the same “world” in which the putatively more basic order or level is identified (Margolis 1995, p. 257; emphases in the original).¹⁶

In this sense, values can be said to constitute, or belong to, an “emergent order” insofar as they cannot be fully accounted for in terms of merely factual concepts (at a “more basic” level), even though they are fully natural – entangled with natural facts – in the sense of belonging to the “same world” with the latter.

Margolis’s position, while giving us an idea of what a pragmatically understood concept of emergence may look like, is by no means the first pragmatist elaboration on the idea of emergence. In his exhaustive historical and systematic overview of the emergence debate, Achim Stephan (1999, pp. 134-138) mentions both Dewey’s and F.C.S. Schiller’s critiques of emergentism, as well as Mead’s and A.N. Whitehead’s role in the development of emergentism (ibid., pp. 252-253).¹⁷ However, he does not discuss James;¹⁸ nor does he mention Margolis as a leading contemporary emergence theorist, let alone lesser figures associated with pragmatism

¹⁶ Compare: “[C]ultural or Intentional entities (possessing incarnate properties) are **emergent**, in that: (i) their existence and ‘generation’ cannot be accounted for, causally or in any other way, in terms of the existence and the causal (or other generative) powers of the (non-Intentional) entities with respect to which they are emergent; and (ii) their existence and generation *can* be accounted for, causally (or in other ways), in terms of other entities and *their* causal (or other generative) powers, if and only if they belong to the same emergent ‘level of reality’. Intentional entities are **culturally emergent**, then, in that the mode of their emergence and generation is specific to *that level of reality* at which their ‘integrity’ is and only is preserved, viz. the cultural.” (Margolis 1995, p. 219; emphases in the original.)

¹⁷ See also Stephan (1992). As a personalist idealist, Schiller did not accept the emergentist idea that inanimate matter would be ontologically primary to experience and thought. Schiller (1930, p. 243) judged the term “emergence” as “an ambiguous insinuation that the alleged novelties are not truly new but have been lurking obscurely in the dark and waiting for an opportunity to break forth into the light of day”, preferring the notion of novelty to those of emergence, evolution, or creation.

¹⁸ As James put it already in a letter in 1869, “all is Nature *and* all is reason too” (cited in Menand 2001, p. 218) – this indicates that Jamesian pragmatism was, from its inception, designed to accommodate both naturalism and human freedom, thought, reason, normativity, etc. (One might speculate that this brings James close to Spinozistic themes, although, *qua* insistent pluralist, he surely did not share Spinoza’s monism.)

who commented upon emergentist theories in the early decades of the twentieth century.¹⁹ Dewey's pragmatic evolutionary naturalism, in particular, may be interpreted as an "emergent theory of mind" (Tiles 1990 [1988], ch. 3; cf. Savery 1951 [1939]; Alexander 1992). In short, the evolutionary character of pragmatist thought is well known, and this feature of pragmatism has been noted also in connection with emergentism (see, e.g., Patrick 1922, p. 701; Goudge 1973; cf. Tully 1981). Still, little explicit scholarly work has been devoted to the pragmatists' actual conceptions of emergence or their relations to major emergence theorists such as Alexander or Broad, although, as Goudge (1973, p. 133) notes, the pragmatists were "the first group of philosophers to work out in detail a philosophy of mind based on evolutionary principles".²⁰

Some pertinent examples of pragmatist conceptualizations of emergence, potentially applicable to the emergence of values from facts, can be drawn from Dewey's and Mead's naturalistic works. Dewey (1960 [1929], pp. 214-215) writes: "The intellectual activity of man is not something brought to bear upon nature from without; it is nature realizing its own potentialities in behalf of a fuller and richer issue of events." What gradually emerges out of the originally inanimate world in Dewey's system is life, mind, freedom, and – eventually – value. For Dewey, such emergent properties are "real features of [...] complex systems which cannot be accounted for in terms that would be adequate if the same constituents were organized in a less complex way" (Tiles 1990 [1988], p. 148). In an earlier study on Dewey, William Savery (1951 [1939], p. 498) described his view by saying that "our perspectives [on nature and experience] are emergent natural events" which "have a continuous flow". Although Dewey was a naturalist, he rejected metaphysical realists' dream of representing nature as it is in itself from an absolute perspective. For him, any ontological structure of reality is a humanly established and, therefore, value-laden structure, itself emerging in the course of human experience and inquiry. In this sense his realism about emergent properties is thoroughly pragmatic. In the evolutionary flow of experience, both facts and values continuously emerge.

¹⁹ For relevant discussions in the 1920s and 1930s, see Patrick (1922), Lloyd (1927), Dewey (1960 [1929], 1932), Schiller (1930), Mead (1932), and Boodin (1934). It should not be forgotten that James's pragmatism, as well as his work in psychology, was influenced by Mill and Fechner, whom Stephan rightly regards as precursors of emergentism (Stephan 1999, chs. 6 and 7), and that the notion of novelty plays a crucial role in James's dynamical experiential conception of reality (James 1996 [1911]).

²⁰ Goudge's essay is a valuable introduction to Peirce's, Dewey's and Mead's evolutionary philosophies of mind. Goudge (1973, pp. 134-135) points out that, in the pragmatists' Darwinian picture, the mind "must have a causal capacity of its own" in order to be able to respond to goals or ends and to initiate purposive actions. He thus sees downward causation as an essential ingredient in the pragmatists' emergentism.

Dewey was not entirely happy with the term “emergence”, however. Late in his life, jointly with Arthur Bentley, he argued that the “natural man” who talks, thinks, and knows should not, “even in his latest and most complex activities”, be surveyed “as magically ‘emergent’ into something new and strange” (Dewey and Bentley 1989 [1949], p. 45). He contrasted his *transactional* view of emergence to previous views thus:

At a stage at which an inquirer wants to keep “life,” let us say, within “nature,” at the same time not “degrading” it to what he fears some other workers may think of “nature” – or perhaps similarly, if he wants to treat “mind” within organic life – he may say that life or mind “emerges,” calling it thereby “natural” in origin, yet still holding that it is all that it was held to be in its earlier “non-natural” envisionment. The transactional view of emergence, in contrast, will not expect merely to report the advent out of the womb of nature of something that still retains an old non-natural independence and isolation. It will be positively interested in fresh direct study in the new form. It will seek enriched descriptions of primary life processes in their environments and of the more complex behavioral processes in theirs. (Ibid., p. 121.)

Thus, while being careful with the word “emergence”, Dewey did not reject the idea but only what he saw as its magical overtones. He simply required scientific, experimental research on the emergence of life and mind (and presumably, by extension, of values).

Mead’s pragmatism, influenced by Dewey’s, includes a notion of emergence as essentially “social” and an analysis of sociality as a character of emergent evolution. In his prefatory remarks to the posthumous publication of Mead’s *The Philosophy of the Present*, Dewey insisted that Mead took the doctrine of emergence “much more fundamentally” than “most of those who have played with the idea” (Dewey 1932, p. xxxviii). According to Dewey, Mead “*felt* within himself both the emergence of the new and the inevitable continuity of the new with the old” (ibid., p. xxxix). This statement contains the pragmatist tension between emergence and continuity in a nutshell.

For Mead, the problem of emergence is intimately connected with the notions of the past and the present. He defines emergence as “the presence of things in two or more different systems, in such a fashion that its presence in a later system changes its character in the earlier

system or systems to which it belongs” (Mead 1932, p. 69; see also p. 66).²¹ An emergent property (or “the emergent”) cannot, by definition, follow from the past “before it appears”, but when it appears it always does this (ibid., pp. 2, 11). Emergent properties, pragmatically viewed, do not have any definite ontological status prior to our conceptualizing them in terms of past and present: the emergent, Mead says, “has no sooner appeared than we set about rationalizing it”, showing that it can be found in the past (ibid., p. 14). The emergent, then, is both a conditioning and a conditioned factor (ibid., p. 15). Mead joins those emergentists – among them major British emergence theorists like Alexander and Broad – who maintain that even exactly determined events can be scientifically conceived as emergent (ibid., p. 17). Emergence, then, must not be confused with indeterminism, which is a separate metaphysical issue. As for Dewey, the emergence of life is a particularly important theme for Mead, because it “confers upon the world characters quite as genuine as those it confers upon living beings” (ibid., p. 35). In any case, the emergent arises out of conditions that make its arising inevitable: “What we seek in the environment [of experience] is a statement of the world out of which the emergent has arisen, and consequently the conditions under which the emergent must exist, even though this emergence has made a different world through its appearances.” (Ibid., p. 42.)²²

Moving to the social aspects of emergence, Mead somewhat puzzlingly notes that the “social nature of the present” arises out of its emergence through a process of readjustment: nature “takes on new characters”, e.g., life, and this process of readjustment is what “social” refers to (ibid., p. 47). Such a social character can, he argues, “belong only to the moment at which emergence takes place, that is to a present” (ibid., p. 48). This leads to an acknowledgment of the “social character of the universe”. It is hardly far-fetched to think that the emergence of socially created moral values is a crucial – even inevitable – feature of the evolution of the universe, thus conceived.

According to Goudge’s (1973, p. 142) interpretation, Dewey and Mead employed the notion of emergence in order to resist “the classical thesis that (1) since mental phenomena now exist, they must have been implicitly or potentially present in evolution from the very start; and (2) their potential presence played an active part in their later realization, and was not merely an

²¹ In Stephan’s (1992, 1997, 1999) terms, Mead’s, like most pragmatists’, emergentism is diachronic rather than synchronic, because temporality plays a key role in his position. Because of their dynamic attitude to metaphysics in general, pragmatists were not much interested in synchronic dependence relations, which contemporary emergence and supervenience theoreticians usually talk about.

²² Here, Mead (1932, pp. 43-44) refers to Alexander’s and Lloyd Morgan’s views.

abstract possibility”. But the evolutionary emergence of mentality is not a sudden leap; it is “prolonged, successive” (ibid., p. 142) – to the extent that one finds in these pragmatists’ philosophy of mind “a conceptual tension between the category of emergence and that of continuity” (ibid., p. 144). Goudge perceptively notes that Peirce gave more priority to continuity in his metaphysics, while Mead emphasized emergence and Dewey remained somewhere in between. This is precisely the tension that pragmatist views on the fact-value entanglement also seem to produce.

Neither Mead nor Dewey carefully analyzes the notion of emergence, or argues for the reality of emergent properties and structures in any straightforwardly pragmatic manner. We cannot here determine the correct interpretation of either Dewey’s or Mead’s emergentism, but their non-reductive naturalisms are so closely related to emergentist ideas that they should be seen not merely as critics of emergentists (as Stephan considers Dewey to be) but as some of the most creative representatives of emergentism.²³ Yet, it should be admitted that no major pragmatist, perhaps excluding Margolis, has so far presented any careful conceptual treatment of emergence. Among neopragmatists, Putnam has been a leading critic of reductive naturalism, as we noticed in section 2 above; accordingly, one might regard him as an ally in developing a philosophically useful pragmatic notion of emergence. Putnam (1999, pp. 169-170) reminds us, in a much more resolutely anti-Cartesian way than most contemporary physicalists, that mind “is not a *thing*; talk of our minds is talk of *world-involving capabilities that we have and activities that we engage in*”. In order to avoid both Cartesian and materialist conceptions of the mind, he proposes not only a return to pragmatism and the later Wittgenstein, but also to Aristotle (see Putnam 1994, 2000). Now, Aristotelianism is a form of naturalism, too, though highly non-reductive and teleological as compared to the causal materialism of reductive naturalists or physicalists.²⁴ Such a mild naturalism might provide us with resources for a reasonable pragmatic realism about irreducibly emergent features of the world, including values, just as Deweyan

²³ More generally, the early pragmatist tradition is characterized by the frequent use (in addition to James, Dewey, and Mead, also by philosophers like Charles Hartshorne, Sidney Hook, and Ernest Nagel, among others) of notions such as creativity, freedom, evolution, and novelty, which quite naturally find a place in emergentism. Other authors who recognize, but do not elaborate on, the connections between pragmatism and emergentism include Blitz (1992, pp. 133-135, 200), McLaughlin (1992, p. 57), and Emmeche *et al.* (1997, p. 89).

²⁴ Putnam’s neo-Aristotelian philosophy of mind might be compared to the suggestion that downward causation should be interpreted along the lines of Aristotelian formal causality instead of efficient causality (see El-Hani 2002; El-Hani and Pihlström 2002).

naturalism might. Although Putnam is usually unwilling to describe himself as a naturalist,²⁵ his attachment to Dewey and Aristotle justifies such a label, properly qualified as Deweyan naturalistic humanism (Munitz 2001, p. 340). However, it still remains to be considered whether his naturalism could accommodate the notion of emergence (either generally or in its application to the fact-value issue).

Analogously to his suggestion to defend “objectivity without objects” in ethics, Putnam believes we can eliminate the alleged mystery of consciousness in the philosophy of mind (Putnam 1999, pp. 171-175). This mystery, he says, is typically treated as a scientific issue, arising out of the assumption that the mind is some sort of object existing in the natural world, capable of being scientifically explained, and the prospects of our being able to solve this mystery are regarded either as optimistic or pessimistic. The final goal, either to be achieved or to be avoided, is the reduction of this mystery to the world-view of fundamental physics, but this mistakenly presupposes that such a reduction makes sense. The recent analytic literature on emergence is largely committed to the same project of coming to terms with this great mystery. Pragmatically, Putnam wants to give up the talk about mystery, as well as the metaphor of emergence, which he considers a bad metaphor:

It is a bad metaphor because it suggests that all the true statements expressible in the vocabulary of the “basic” sciences of physics, chemistry, biology [...] might have been true *without* there being consciousness or intentionality. In short, it suggests that we might conceivably have all been Automatic Sweethearts,²⁶ and that it is “mysterious” that we *aren't*. (Ibid., p. 174.)

Clearly, Putnam does not encourage pragmatists to intervene in the emergence debate at all. Instead of seeking a pragmatic account of the reality of emergents, he prefers giving up the concept. This, however, does not prevent us from employing his pragmatic ideas in our treatment of metaphysical issues implicated in the emergence discourse. Rejecting the mystery of consciousness or values need not destroy the (pragmatic) reality of these emergent characteristics

²⁵ Putnam occasionally admits that he is a naturalist in a harmless anti-reductionist sense (Putnam 1994, pp. 289, 312; cf. Putnam 2004b).

²⁶ The notion of an “automatic sweetheart” is an allusion to James, who imagined a soulless, mechanically constructed girl practically (observationally) indistinguishable from a real lovely young woman.

of the world. Pragmatically defined, within a pragmatic framework of ontological commitments, emergence should be entirely acceptable to a Putnamian non-reductive thinker, whose conception of the mind and the world is mainly derived from philosophers like Aristotle, Kant, James, Dewey, and Wittgenstein. Even Putnam himself has earlier appealed to the notion of emergence, at least in arguing against naturalized semantics and epistemology that “[t]ruth, reference, justification [...] are *emergent*, non-reducible properties of terms and statements in certain contexts”, though undeniably supervenient on physical properties (Putnam 1994, p. 493; original emphasis). It is hardly necessary to avoid the notion of emergence in developing the Putnamian entanglement thesis, despite Putnam’s own reservations. In short, it is hard to see how a pragmatic pluralist like Putnam could coherently tell us that emergence is not an ontologically acceptable concept, or that the world cannot or must not be ontologically “structured” in terms of this concept.

However, we should not overlook a problem easily arising from a pragmatist construal of emergence. A pragmatic realism about emergent properties grounds the reality of such properties in human practices. More generally, pragmatic realism states that any properties, whether cultural, mental, or physical, emerge out of human practices. There is no metaphysically absolute, practice- or categorization-independent way the world is *an sich*; in particular, there is no absolute sense in the question of whether there are or are not emergent (or any) properties. This may eventually make the notion of emergence trivial: *any* property, entity, law, or what not, will turn out to be emergent in relation to the practice-embedded points of view from which we make our ontological commitment to its reality. Ontology, for a pragmatist, is human ontology. In a way this was already observed by relatively early contributors to the discussion of pragmatism and emergentism. Alfred H. Lloyd (1927, p. 309), unsatisfied with the materialist orthodoxy of emergentism, claimed that matter is also emergent: “[E]ven lifeless and, still more, unknowing and unthinking, quite hopeless and soulless matter has emerged with quite as much novelty and *éclat* as anything else [...].” Drawing upon the pre-Socratics, among others, but not unlike more recent Putnamian pragmatists who abandon the gap between the metaphysically objective real world and subjective human (valuational) perspectives, he argued that “[t]he ‘objective,’ material or natural [...] is not original, but is as much an emergent as the subjective” (ibid., p. 325). A few years later, J.E. Boodin, defending what he called functional realism (as an alternative to both “naïve” and “critical” realism), explicitly held that all properties are emergent, as there is “no

substance which has a character by itself”, because nature “reveals itself as sense-aspects in its action upon human nature” (Boodin 1934, p. 170), and perceived qualities and relations are “functions of objective nature and the percipient organism in perspective relation to one another” (ibid., p. 147). In the spirit of James, he characterized “things” as “the result of interest and conceptual interpretation” (ibid., p. 151).

Insofar as *any* property or thing is a result of interpretation based upon human interests (and hence values), or of (Deweyan) transactions between experiencing human organisms and their natural environment, *nothing* is non-emergent – not even those transactions themselves. Is this the eventual outcome of pragmatic naturalism and emergentism? If so, the prospects of maintaining even non-reductive naturalism within pragmatism may turn out to be dim. Nature itself emerges from our ways of dealing with it; it does not exist independently of us and cannot thus function as the metaphysically fundamental “emergence base” of our categorizations and valuations of it. Is this threatening anti-naturalism one of the reasons why Putnam regards emergence as an unhappy notion? Apparently, if the notion of emergence is to be useful for us, it should contrast with something. There is a pragmatic “cash value” in the theory that some entities, properties, or structures are emergent only if the theory also says that something else is not emergent.

The threat of trivialization, it seems, can be avoided only by carefully constructing, pluralistically, several different notions of emergence applicable to different philosophically interesting cases. Thus, *pragmatic pluralism* might be an answer to the trivialization threat. The sense in which all properties or all things “emerge” out of practices is, presumably, different from the sense in which, say, mental properties emerge from physical ones, or normativity from factuality. Be that as it may, emergence is certainly *a* plausible picture of the fact-value entanglement: values arise out of facts, based upon them, yet are something “new” in relation to them. Insofar as there is a role for the notion of emergence to play in pragmatism, there is no reason for the pragmatist who advocates the fact-value entanglement to deny such emergence of the “level” of values and normativity irreducible to “mere” factuality. Even though Putnam seems to be ambivalent about emergence, and even Dewey was critical of it, the pragmatist tradition offers rich resources for a substantial theory of emergent, naturally evolving “orders of reality”.

4. Continuity and synechism

We will, however, now turn from emergentism to another metaphysical idea, namely, Peircean *synechism*. The expression is derived from the Greek term, *synechismos*, derived in turn from *synecho*, “to hold or keep together, to continue, to preserve” (EP2:503n1). As is well known, the synechist position, the doctrine of *continuity*, is – along with tychism and agapasm – a central thesis of Peirce’s speculative metaphysics and evolutionary cosmology. Associated with scholastic realism, the doctrine of “real generals” (e.g., habits, dispositions, laws, etc.), and thereby with Peirce’s category of Thirdness, synechism is the view that everything is continuous with everything else; there are no atomistic elements of reality fundamentally discontinuous from each other.²⁷

According to synechism, both being as such and specific modes of being, such as mentality, spontaneity, or again (presumably) value, are matters of degree, instead of being sharply separable from their opposites. Nor is there any ontological gap between reality or being, on the one hand, and appearances or phenomena, on the other (EP2:2 [1893]). Peirce describes synechism as “the tendency to regard everything as continuous”, in a way that includes “the whole domain of experience in every element of it” (EP2:1 [1893]). He defines it as “that tendency of philosophical thought which insists upon the idea of continuity as of prime importance in philosophy and, in particular, upon the necessity of hypotheses involving true continuity” (CP 6.169 [1902]; cf. EP1:313 [1892]). Synechism is, thus, both metaphysical and methodological. However, it is not “an ultimate and absolute metaphysical doctrine” but (rather like pragmatism) a “regulative principle of logic” guiding our choice of hypotheses (CP 6.173 [1902]).²⁸

²⁷ See, e.g., Hausman (1993), pp. 15, 141, 177-178, Parker (1998), Reynolds (2002), and especially Esposito (2007). For insightful applications of Peirce’s synechism in metaphysics more broadly, see Rosenthal (1986).

²⁸ Joseph L. Esposito (2007, p. 1) offers the following, somewhat more detailed characterization in the *Digital Encyclopedia of Charles S. Peirce*: “Synechism, as a metaphysical theory, is the view that the universe exists as a continuous whole of all of its parts, with no part being fully separate, determined or determinate, and continues to increase in complexity and connectedness through semiosis and the operation of an irreducible and ubiquitous power of relational generality to mediate and unify substrates. As a research program, synechism is a scientific maxim to seek continuities where discontinuities are thought to be permanent and to seek semiotic relations where only dyadic relations are thought to exist.” Mentioning no less than ten (!) different ideas Peirce invoked in relation to synechism, Esposito especially emphasizes that synechism and pragmatism were regarded as mutually supportive by Peirce, as “synechism provides a theoretical rationale for pragmatism, while use of the pragmatic maxim to identify conceivable consequences of experimental activity enriches the content of the theory by revealing and creating relationships” (ibid.).

Peirce believed that a successful proof of pragmatism would establish the truth of synechism (CP 5.415; EP2:335 [1905]), since continuity is essentially involved in pragmatism. He thus also wanted to maintain a crucial link between synechism and scholastic realism (CP 6.172-173 [1902]; cf. Pihlström 2009, ch. 6). Like pragmatism and scholastic realism, synechism was, for Peirce, “a purely scientific philosophy”, although he noted that it may even support the reconciliation of science and religion (EP2:3 [1893]).²⁹ Peirce explains that the synechist must deny the Parmenidean distinction between being, which is, and not-being, which is nothing, arguing that being is “a matter of more or less, so as to merge insensibly into nothing” (EP2:2 [1893]). Thus, synechism rejects dualisms of all kinds, including the classical dualism of the physical and the mental (psychical) as “unrelated chunks of being”. Instead of being distinct categories, the physical and the psychical are “of one character”, although there are obviously differences in degree between things that are more mental and spontaneity-involving and things that are more material and less spontaneous. Similarly, synechism rejects sharp discontinuities between the living and the non-living, offering even grounds for a qualified defense of immortality, as well as discontinuities between oneself and the others: “your neighbors are, in a measure, yourself” (EP2:2-3 [1893]). Accordingly, synechism may be seen as a metaphysical basis of panpsychism, as well as of the ethically vital capacity for empathy.³⁰ Against this background, it is natural for a pragmatist synechist to view fact and value as continuous as well. These are “entangled” not in the sense of values arising out of facts (which could in principle be devoid of value) but in the sense of being, synechistically, inseparable from the very start. Whereas the analogy from the philosophy of mind to the emergentist version of the fact-value entanglement is the non-reductive emergent materialist view that mental states arise out of sufficiently complex material systems, the parallel analogy to the synechist version is the panpsychist position, according to which the most fundamental building blocks of nature are already (proto-)mental.

Insofar as there is a fundamental continuity between oneself and others, there is great human – valuational, ethical – relevance in the seemingly hopelessly abstract metaphysical issues of synechism and scholastic realism. Peirce’s famous rejection of nominalism, moreover, is quite

²⁹ In his 1892 article, “The Law of Mind” (EP1:312-333), Peirce argues for the “law” that ideas tend to spread continuously, affecting each other, and that they lose intensity but gain generality in this process.

³⁰ This paper, however, is not concerned with panpsychism (cf. Pihlström 2008, ch. 7); nor am I claiming that ethics could be based upon the capacity for empathy (cf. Pihlström 2005).

explicitly intended as morally significant, as it is not only formulated as a criticism of an abstract metaphysical position but also as an attack on individualist egoism and the “Gospel of Greed” (cf. EP1:357 [1893]).³¹ Moral values are, hence, implicated in Peirce’s metaphysics in a fundamental way. If I subscribe to the view that, “I am altogether myself, and not at all you”, I am in the grip of a “metaphysics of wickedness”, which the synechist must “abjure” (EP2:2 [1893]). The person, Peirce says, “is not absolutely an individual”; rather, a “man’s circle of society” is itself a “loosely compacted person” (EP2:338 [1905]). This is a crucial application of synechism. If we fail to acknowledge our continuity with others – with a potentially unlimited community of fellow humans – it will be impossible for us to distinguish between absolute truth and what we merely in fact do not doubt (cf. EP2:338 [1905]). Values are, then, crucially involved in Peirce’s thought about generality and continuity. Just as thoughts shade into things, and *vice versa*, facts shade into values, and *vice versa* – and metaphysics into ethics, and *vice versa* (see Pihlström 2009).

Let us, before concluding this section, briefly turn from Peirce to James. According to the idealist or spiritualist position James defends against materialism and atheism, in the third lecture of *Pragmatism* (James 1975 [1907], especially pp. 55-56), the universe must be *continuous* with us and our values. We *need* this kind of “eternal moral order” of the universe (cf. *ibid.*, p. 55); indeed, it is one of the truly vital needs we have, according to James. As he frequently puts it, the universe is expected to be “congruous with our spontaneous powers” (James 1979 [1897]).³² On the basis of our discussion above, we may ask whether this continuity, which is strikingly similar to what later pragmatists like Putnam call the fact-value entanglement, could be understood in terms of Peirce’s synechism (which James seldom, if ever, explicitly comments on).³³ The moral order James postulates does not just magically emerge from the merely factual order of the universe – nor from any supposed essential cosmic order that would be prior to our human valuations and needs, something that Jamesian “humanist” pragmatism could hardly

³¹ Synechism, which Peirce says has applications to the philosophy of religion (EP1:331 [1892]), even “calls for” a philosophy of evolutionary love (EP1:354; CP 6.289 [1893]).

³² The early essay, “The Sentiment of Rationality” (1879), reprinted in James (1979 [1897]), is particularly relevant here.

³³ James, as a pluralist, was critical of the idea of continuity insofar as it entails monism. However, his criticism is not dogmatic or based upon a prior metaphysical theory; rather, he applies the pragmatic method in order to explicate both continuity and discontinuity, both unity and disunity, in terms of their practical functions in our lives. See James (1975 [1907]), pp. 66-67, and (1996 [1911]), ch. 10. It would be an interesting question for historical research, not only utilizing James’s published writings but also his correspondence and other material, what exactly his relation to Peirce’s synechism was.

accommodate – but is postulated, by us, as a structural feature of the world we live in, a world which must somehow be continuous *with us* and (thus) our values. For the Jamesian pragmatist, human valuational perspectives cover and color all of reality. There are no value-independent facts, because any facts (or any other metaphysical categories) we may pragmatically postulate depend on our categorizing the world we live in in terms of our needs and interests. One way of making sense of this idea is through Peircean synechism. Yet, the tension between continuity and emergence can hardly be avoided. James is a naturalist, too; *somehow* our valuational activities and perspectives must grow out of our fully natural existence.

We have arrived at an attractive (re)construal of the fact-value entanglement in terms of synechism. There is no emergent “leap”, after all – no “gap” between facts and values to be bridged in terms of emergence – but the two are deeply, inseparably, continuous, just because we are the kind of valuing beings we are. This view can be backed up by key pragmatist writings as strongly as the emergentist one can. The problem now is how – or, indeed, whether – to choose between the two options we have distinguished.

5. Conclusion: Applying the pragmatic method

Let us briefly consider, by way of conclusion, a pragmatic view of the metaphysical distinctness of “the human” (that is, personhood, value, culture) that might be seen as either pragmatically emergentist or synechist, as recently defended by Margolis (2008). According to Margolis, human culture (including, again, values) is not “distinct” in the sense of being placed somehow over and above nature. Such a dualistic view would contradict his emergentist picture of cultural entities (cf. section 3 above). On the contrary, culture “penetrates” nature; there is no nature for us in the absence of cultural – and thereby valuational – categorization.³⁴ This is a pragmatist position: the natural world is what it is for us because of the purposive practices we engage in, depending on our needs and interests, and hence on our values and/or valuational activities. What results is a synechist picture of the deep continuity between our valuations, which themselves are natural activities within the world we valuationally categorize, and the natural world thereby

³⁴ This is a relatively liberal paraphrase of a position I take to be at least close to Margolis’s. I do not claim to faithfully interpret his views here.

categorized. The “distinctness” of “the human” lies precisely in its *not* being a distinct category of its own to be found in some particular corner of the natural world. The human, especially the valuational, is distinct in being everywhere, in penetrating nature thoroughly.³⁵

So how should we, and how can we, choose, when faced by the tension between emergentist and synechist construals of the metaphysics of the fact-value entanglement? Should we think of the fact-value entanglement in terms of emergence – with values emerging, as “new” levels of reality, from the “merely factual” level – or in terms of synechism – with values and facts “shading into” each other? This is a fundamental metaphysical question for any pragmatist defense of the fact-value entanglement. As in many other metaphysical issues, we should, as pragmatists, apply the *pragmatic method*.³⁶ We should ask what “cash value” there is, or what kind of conceivable practical differences there might be, in the metaphysical alternatives we have distinguished. But *are* there any?

I am not convinced that there are any genuine practical differences to be found here (though I am not claiming, either, that no practical differences could be found). Both the emergentist pragmatic naturalist and the synechist pragmatic naturalist live in (in Margolis’s terms) a distinctively human world in which there is no dualistic break between nature and culture, or (here) fact and value. They just understand this non-dualism somewhat differently. Both will face the challenge of making their key metaphysical concepts more precise; given the ontologically tolerant and pluralistic approach characteristic of pragmatic naturalism, both ways of categorizing (in pragmatically metaphysical terms) the fact-value entanglement may have their legitimate roles to play in certain human practices, which themselves depend upon, or arise as responses to, our valuational categorizations of reality and the natural human needs they serve. Both may contribute to the further development of pragmatic naturalism, and though their contributions may not be compatible as ultimate metaphysical theories about the structure of reality as it is “in itself”, it must not be forgotten that for pragmatists this is *not* what metaphysical theories should be like in the first place. Metaphysics, for a pragmatic naturalist, is an instrument for living forward in the natural, yet distinctively human, world we find ourselves embedded in. It is not a search for any final theory but a way of making sense of our existence,

³⁵ The pragmatic moral realist may, and should, defend the parallel view that ethics is not a special human practice but penetrates human life and culture through and through (cf. Pihlström 2005).

³⁶ For an extended discussion of the role of the pragmatic method in the service of metaphysical thought, see Pihlström (2009); cf. also Pihlström (2008), ch. 3.

fallibly and revisably. In short, beliefs – including metaphysical ones – are habits of action for pragmatists.³⁷ Therefore, our theory of the fact-value entanglement should also enable us to live forward in the factual-valuational world we inhabit. Values are already irreducibly implicated in this very concept of belief (and metaphysics). Values can, then, be regarded as Peircean real generals, guiding our purposive action as habits, thus structuring any way the world can be for us, when viewed from the agent’s perspective.

We have seen that both emergentist and synechist metaphysics of the fact-value entanglement may capture some important insights that need to be captured in our efforts of making sense. Admittedly, both may fail to make our ideas entirely clear. These views are certainly not final, completed answers to our metaphysical problems of fact and value. Yet, both, as we have seen, are intuitively acceptable perspectives for pragmatist metaphysicians, both can be supported by the pragmatist tradition, classical and recent, and both may be to some extent needed in understanding the (non-dualistic) distinctness of human values in a natural world.

There is, however, one more important problem to be taken up. A pragmatically naturalist metaphysics of the fact-value entanglement, especially if emergentistically construed, understands the entanglement as a *contingent*, broadly *empirical* thesis: the world we live in happens to be such that values emerge from facts. The Putnamian argument for the entanglement examined in section 2 is, however, not just pragmatic but also *transcendental*: values, for us, are *necessarily* connected with facts – with any facts we can postulate from within our practices – given the kind of (natural) beings we are and the kind of language- and concept-use we (naturally) engage in to structure our (natural) world. The fact-value entanglement is, therefore, not contingent or empirical – not just a factual feature of the natural world, as we might say – but necessary, albeit in a relativized and contextualized sense, like the Wittgensteinian impossibility of a private language, for instance. We might, to emphasize the analogy to Wittgenstein, even talk about the pragmatist argument for the impossibility of value-free facts. This need to understand the entanglement thesis as not just one more empirical thesis but as a more strongly metaphysical, even transcendental, account of something that is (contextually) necessary, given the kind of life we lead, might give a slight advantage to the synechist construal of the thesis. On the other hand, emergence may also be reconceptualized to meet the demands of this pragmatic

³⁷ The pragmatist notion of beliefs as habits of action goes back to Peirce’s early writings in the 1870s: see especially “The Fixation of Belief” (1877), reprinted in EP1.

transcendental naturalism. In any event, clearly, the metaphilosophical status of our metaphysical theorizing about the fact-value entanglement requires further investigation.³⁸

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³⁸ The idea of writing this paper was formed when I was asked by a lady whose name I unfortunately cannot recall, after a lecture on pragmatism I delivered at the University of Lapland, Rovaniemi (Finland), in December 2008, whether the fact-value entanglement could be understood in terms of emergence or synechism. [Other acknowledgments. ...]

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