The problem of the epistemic character of norms and values in the Putnam-Habermas' debate: A response from the theory of normativity of Clarence Irving Lewis

O problema do caráter epistêmico de normas e valores no debate Putnam-Habermas: uma resposta da teoria da normatividade de Clarence Irving Lewis

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Abstract: The question of the relationship between normativity and valuation and its embedment in rational discourse is one of the most relevant problems in contemporary philosophy and is clearly unfolded in all its complexities in the paradigmatic debate held by Hilary Putnam and Jürgen Habermas during the first decade of the 21st century. From positions that vindicate the tradition of American pragmatism, the philosophers discuss the objectivity of value and normative judgments defending, with significant differences, a cognitivist position. The present contribution will address this discussion with the purpose of presenting Clarence Irving Lewis' conceptualist pragmatism as an alternative and fruitful position with resources to engage with some of the main issues discussed by Putnam and Habermas. My aim is to show the way Lewis accounts for the cognitive character of norms and values while maintaining, at the same time, a significant demarcation between both concepts. I will argue that this distinction is pragmatic—not epistemic—, and that this allows the pragmatist to defend a cognitivism that can articulate a non-reductionist naturalism regarding values with a rationalist conception of norms; a position that could avoid some of the objections that face Putnam and Habermas.

Keywords: Clarence Irving Lewis. Habermas-Putnam's debate. Norms. Objectivity. Values.

Resumo: *A questão do relacionamento entre a normatividade e valoração e sua incorporação no discurso racional é um dos problemas mais relevantes na filosofia contemporânea e é claramente desdobrada em todas as suas complexidades no debate paradigmático mantido entre Hilary Putnam e Jürgen Habermas durante a primeira década do século XXI. A partir dessas posições que reivindicam a tradição do pragmatismo americano, os filósofos discutem a objetividade dos juízos de valor e normativos defendendo, com diferenças significativas, uma posição cognitivista. A presente contribuição aborda essa discussão com o propósito de apresentar o pragmatismo conceitualista de Clarence Irving Lewis como uma alternativa e posição profícua com os recursos para interagir com algumas das principais questões*

discutidas por Putnam e Habermas. Meu propósito é mostrar o modo como Lewis explica o caráter cognitivo das normas e valores enquanto sustenta, simultaneamente, uma demarcação significativa entre ambos os conceitos. Argumentarei que essa distinção é pragmática – não epistêmica –, e que isso permite ao pragmatista defender um cognitivismo que pode articular um naturalismo não reducionista referente aos valores com um conceito racionalista de normas, uma posição que pode evitar algumas das objeções que enfrentam Putnam e Habermas.

Palavras-chave: *Clarence Irving Lewis. Debate entre Habermas-Putnam. Normas. Objetividade. Valores.*

1 Introduction

Clarence Irving Lewis has developed a systematic, comprehensive, and fruitful philosophical proposal within the framework of classical pragmatism, one that only recently has begun to receive the appreciation it truly deserves. The philosopher is best known for his legacy in modern modal logic and, secondly, for his contributions in epistemology; however, he has not been recognized as a moral philosopher despite having developed a major piece of work concerning valuation and normativity.[1] This is quite paradoxical taking into account that Lewis' main interest from the very beginning of his career, and the reason why he found it necessary to first account for logical and epistemological issues, was value theory and ethics. Furthermore, it is also significant that his philosophy was rarely considered and analyzed as a whole, but rather, in a fragmentary way. This relative lack of attention constitutes an important debt to one of the most relevant figures of American pragmatism that, nevertheless, is being gradually repaired nowadays.[2]

In the light of this, the main purpose of the present paper is to demonstrate that his conceptualist pragmatism offers an original position with resources to

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1 Recent approaches to Lewis' philosophy cannot avoid giving some explanation why Lewis has not been properly recognized within pragmatism, in particular, and American philosophy, in general. For instance, in *The Continuum companion to pragmatism* (2011), Michael Eldridge suggests that Lewis "[…] tried to serve too many masters—Kant, Peirce, his teachers, Royce and James, his contemporary, Dewey, and the philosophical issues of his day. At the very least, Lewis, despite his brilliance, illustrates the difficulty of being a pragmatist in a hostile philosophical environment" (PIHLSTRÖM, 2011, p. 132). On her behalf, in *Pragmatism in transition* (2017) Diana Heney suggests that "Lewis has not received as much attention as his work merits for two reasons. First, Lewis has proved […] hard to classify, in a way that has impacted the reception of his views. Second, Lewis was often resolutely out of step with his peers working in both epistemology and ethical theory, to the detriment of the reception of his views […] Lewis's systematizing approach to philosophy, combined with his pragmatist methods, led to a body of work that ranges over wide vistas. Lewis has not found a home in either the pragmatist canon or the analytic tradition, but belongs in both. He is caught between two worlds in the sense that a bridge is caught between two shores, spanning the distance by being firmly anchored on both sides." (OLEN & SACHS, 2017, p. 55 ss.)

2 Cf. HENEY, 2016; MISAK, 2013; MURPHEY, 2005; OLEN & SACHS, 2017; ROSENTHAL, 2007.

engage with recent philosophical discussions on valuation and normativity, such as the one held by Hilary Putnam and Jürgen Habermas during the first decade of the 21st century. Indeed, the question of the relationship between normativity and valuation and its embedment in rational discourse is one of the most relevant problems in contemporary philosophy and is clearly unfolded in all its complexities in Putnam and Habermas' paradigmatic debate. The philosophers discuss, from positions that vindicate the tradition of American pragmatism, the objectivity of value and normative judgments defending, with significant differences, a cognitivist position. In this frame—and considering Lewis' concern with truth and objectivity, I pretend to address this discussion with the aim of presenting certain aspects of Lewis' theory as an alternative and fruitful response to some of the issues discussed by Putnam and Habermas.

In relation to this, I should first distinguish two major fields in Lewis' reflections regarding the topic: on the one hand, the field of valuation, concerned with questions about value, about what is good and bad in experience.[3] For Lewis, a theory of values and valuation constitutes the most important empirical knowledge that humans have and should perfect. On the other hand, there is the normative field which concerns questions about rightness, about what is correct and what is incorrect. It is important to take into account, nevertheless, that both fields overlap each other's and are intimately entangled. The distinction serves analytical purposes only, since in the context of experience they work vitally interconnected.

In the intersection of these fields, it is also possible to distinguish another area concerned with questions of validity, of the ground and nature of goodness and rightness, and of the relation between them. Lewis himself calls this philosophical approach *Theory of Ethics* or *Metaethics*, explaining that it deals with logical and epistemological—or even metaphysical—issues regarding the foundations and validity of Ethics and, in general, of normativity. As it should have become already clear, this paper will be centered on some aspects of Lewis' developments on this area. I agree with Diana B. Heney when she states, in her brilliant chapter "C.I. Lewis: From Conceptual Pragmatism to Contemporary Metaethics" (2017, chapter 3), that there are certain elements of Lewis' metaethics that "are actually extraordinarily promising, and perhaps the best option for establishing pragmatist methodology as a viable option within contemporary metaethics" (OLEN & SACHS, 2017, p. 45).

In this framework, then, I will begin by briefly introducing Habermas and Putnam's debate and considering their positions as well as the main criticisms that they made to each other. Secondly, I will present Lewis' most important theses, setting up the common grounds and points of departure with respect to the philosophers. In relation to this, my main purpose is to show the way Lewis accounts for the cognitive character of norms and values while maintaining, at the same time, a significant demarcation between both concepts. I will argue that the distinction is pragmatic—not epistemic—and that this allows the pragmatist to defend a cognitivism that articulates a non-reductionist naturalistic conception

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3   In "C.I. Lewis: From Conceptual Pragmatism to Contemporary Metaethics" (2017), Diana B. Heney follows Schroeder (2012) to clarify that in Lewis' philosophy "'value theory' designates the area of moral philosophy that is concerned with theoretical questions about value and goodness of all varieties—the theory of value" (SCHROEDER, 2012).

of values with a rationalist conception of norms, a position that can avoid some of the main obstacles that face Putnam and Habermas. In this line, I expect this contribution to increase the value of Lewis' philosophy in contemporary discussions and to continue revising such a relevant matter as is the relation between knowledge, valuation an ethics.

2 An approximation to Putnam and Habermas' debate

In general terms, Habermas' position stems from a sharp distinction between values and norms. Concerning values, Habermas sustains what is called a *weak cognitivism*, claiming that values are contingent social products and that the validity of value judgements is relative to the community's value standards. Concerning norms, the author defends a *strong cognitivism* maintaining that the objectivity of normative judgments is the epistemic result of an agreement reached by persons engaged in a rational discussion under ideal conditions (PUTNAM, HABERMAS, VEGA ENCABO, & GIL MARTÍN, 2008, p. 99). From this perspective, Habermas intends to conjoin a value pluralism with a discourse ethics that establishes a universal moral procedure (HABERMAS, 2000, p. 175-176, 183-192; PUTNAM et al., 2008, p. 24 ss).

Facing this characterization, Putnam rejects what he considers an unsustainable dichotomy between values and norms and argues that any kind of relativism which could affect values would also affect norms (PUTNAM et al., 2008, p. 47-49). To support this, the philosopher calls attention to thick ethical concepts (cruel, kind, pertinent, insensitive) as the key example that challenges both norm/value and fact/value dichotomies in a twofold way. First, because these concepts are not dispensable for the normative discourse: whenever we discuss ethical matters, we use thick ethical concepts. And second, because the meaning of these thick ethical concepts entangles a descriptive and a prescriptive dimension in such a way that they are not reducible to merely descriptive terms so as to establish their objectivity in the same vein as traditionally called empirical judgments (PUTNAM, 2002, p. 113-120). Thus, if values are to be considered contingent social products whose validity is relative to contextual standards, it follows that this relativism regarding values undermines the objectivity and universal validity of norms.

By contrast, Putnam understands that once the fact-value dichotomy has collapsed, it is possible to justify the objectivity of value judgments while at the same time preserving pluralism: we must follow a Deweyan model of inquiry and adhere to democratic values as a requirement towards rational objectivity. He affirms that a discussion of ethics restricted merely to norms deals with only one part of ethics and that "our imperfect but indefinitely perfectible ability to recognize the demands made upon us by various values is precisely what provides Kantian (or "discourse") ethics with content" (PUTNAM, 2002, p. 134; PUTNAM et al., 2008, p. 108).

In response, Habermas insists in his demarcation between norms and values arguing that his intention is not to deny the cognitive character of values but to distinguish different kinds of justification within practical reason (PUTNAM et al., 2008, p. 99 ss). In addition, he accuses Putnam of sustaining a moral realism with metaphysical implications and calls attention to the risks involved—if we are to defend democracy and value pluralism—, in articulating a pragmatist ethics of values with a universal moral conception (PUTNAM et al., 2008, p. 80, 102).

These last considerations regarding the possibility of complementing a Kantian formal ethics with an Aristotelian or pragmatist naturalistic ethics, outline the direction towards which both philosophers address their reflections. Putnam emphasizes the relevance of such a combination while Habermas understands that it is better to focus on procedural ethics. In my opinion, Lewis' proposal constitutes an attempt in the sense that Putnam suggests and that Habermas declines. In what follows, I will introduce Lewis' perspective stressing those theses and arguments that are more closely related to the points in tension in the Habermas-Putnam's debate, in order to highlight the pragmatist's contributions to enrich the discussion.

3 Some contributions to the debate from Lewis' conceptualist pragmatism

3.1 Value-judgments, empirical judgments: a strong cognitivist position

Lewis dedicates several lectures, papers and books to defend the following thesis: "that value-judgments represent a form of empirical knowledge, and that in general they are objective in the same sense, or senses, that other empirical apprehensions are" (LEWIS, 1970, p. 162).[4] In the same vein as Putnam (2002), Lewis also strikes the fact-value dichotomy and shows that there can be no final division between facts and values, nor between the descriptive and the prescriptive (SÁNCHEZ GARCÍA, 2015, p. 181ss.; p. 201ss.); however, he goes beyond that to notice that valuation is "the first and most essential of all learning" and the "overarching condition of any manner of success in human doing", insofar as it "sets the end for which any other kind of human learning is a means only" (LEWIS, 1969, p. 96-97, 1970, p. 182).

If we consider the main theses of Lewis' conceptualist pragmatism, we will realize that there is a strict connection between action, knowledge and valuation (LEWIS, 1946, p. 371-372). According to the pragmatist, every belief is a disposition to act, its vital function is the guidance of the conduct, and its significance involves the consequences of action. On its behalf, any disposition to act deliberately implies some beliefs as to the consequences of it. And, finally, the valuation of the consequences of an action is what gives place to the commitment to act. In this frame, the classic distinction between intention, on the one hand, and consequences of action, on the other, simply collapse insofar as "what the intention of an act comprises is simply that total body of consequences which the doer expects in taking this commitment" (LEWIS, 1955, p. 47-8). If we recall the pragmatic maxim, "Consider what effects, which *might conceivably have practical bearings*, we conceive the object of our conception to have. Then our conception of those effects is the whole of our conception of the object", we can see that it not only proposes a way to clearly understand the meaning of a concept, but it also refers to the valuations that allow us to distinguish between possible courses of action. Following this, Lewis stresses that "Pragmatism could not consistently admit that value-judgments are incapable of an objective test unless it should be prepared to admit that truth in general is subjective" (LEWIS, 1970, p. 281). And that, Lewis maintains, is something that we should never admit:

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4   Cf. also LEWIS, C. I., 1946, 1955, 1957, 1969.

> It has been held that value-apprehensions are subjective or relative in a sense which is incompatible with their genuinely cognitive significance. Or it has been maintained that value-predications are not matter of fact statements at all, being merely expressions of emotion and hence neither true nor false. But this is one of the strangest aberrations ever to visit the mind of man. The denial to value-apprehensions in general of the character of truth or falsity and of knowledge, would imply both moral and practical cynicism. (LEWIS, 1946, p. 366).

Indeed, as I will show later, unlike Habermas but in the same line as Putnam, Lewis understands that what gives content to normativity are judgments of values and that any anti-skeptical strategy must first begin by returning the conditions of validity to valuation (LEWIS, 1969, p. 30). Following this, he affirms that "It is only by pointing out the extended parallel between valuation and the more commonly considered types of empirical knowledge" that there can be any hope of persuading transcendentalists, relativists and skeptics (LEWIS, 1946, p. viii).

As the author suggests, value is a character, quality, potentiality or dimension-like mode resident in objects, situations or states of affairs which produces—or is capable of producing—certain effects and which impinges upon the quality of human living. It is learned by observation and experiment and is formulated as an inductive generalization susceptible of verification and justification (LEWIS, 1946, p. 401; 1970, p. 152). In this line, there is no significant epistemic difference between value-judgments and other empirical judgments: neither relativism nor subjectivism affect them more than they could affect any other kind of empirical knowledge (LEWIS, 1970, p. 187). The only difference is, in Lewis' words, "merely verbal"—and I would say *pragmatic*: "we merely use physics-words customarily in a more objectivistic sense, value-words with a more subjectivistic connotation. And that fact of verbal usage could be remedied if it were important or desirable to change it" (LEWIS, [1941] 1970, p. 173).

The chief point is that, according to the pragmatist, we are not generally interested in establishing common criteria and standards concerning values as we are with physical properties like, for example, weight. On the contrary, it is—or should be—more important for us to recognize and respect pluralism regarding values because values are more closely concerned with our conception of a good life (LEWIS, [1941] 1970, p. 173).[5] The distinction, therefore, is pragmatic and concerns the interests with respect to the use of knowledge; it is not an epistemic demarcation that concerns the validity of judgments and that could, therefore, affect its objectivity.

It is worth adding that Lewis' cognitivism not only argues for the cognitive

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5   In a "A Peircean Account of Moral Judgments" (1994, p. 39-48) Cheryl Misak runs a similar argument when she maintains that "it is his broad notion of experience which allows Peirce to avoid the fact/value distinction (p. 44), and that, in this frame, experience constrains moral inquiry as well as empirical inquiry, thought there is a lack of consensus on moral matters because moral beliefs are based on inner experience and inner experience does not impinge upon us in quite the same way as the empirical experience (p. 45).

content expressed in value judgements and for the possibility of their justification and objectivity, but it also includes elements traditionally considered non-cognitive as, for example, affective ones. This leads Diana Heney to stress that Lewis' view defuses much of the debate between cognitivism and non-cognitivism in contemporary metaethics, giving "a compelling account that respects the insights on both sides" insofar as "Lewis's pragmatist involvement of lived experience helps us to see that we care about getting things right or wrong, and that our judgments of value are connected with our experiences of value" (OLEN & SACHS, 2017, p. 48).

3.2 Knowledge as justified belief: the objectivity of judgments

Lewis distinguishes two meanings of *objectivity*: as "community of judgment" (intersubjectivity) and as "verifiability". He states that "though community is important as a test of knowledge […] the final test of judgment is prediction and verification" and remarks that it is in this last sense that "value judgments are either correct or incorrect, and as objective as any that we make" (LEWIS, 1970, p. 173-174). This conception of objectivity applies also for normative judgments: it is not enough for the rightness of an action that the agent (or the community) believes it right (what Lewis calls *subjective rightness*), it also needs to be *objectively right*, that is, to have a "ground on which to determine what results ought to be aimed at and what avoided" (LEWIS, [1952] 1970, p. 199). Now then, on which ground we determine the objectivity of judgments? Doubtless, that ground points to experience in its broad pragmatist sense (LEWIS, 1946, p. 478) and its determination remits to the process of justification.

Lewis understands human inquiry as fallible and corrigible. He affirms that the most we can attain concerning knowledge is justified belief: "the answer which is best warranted by consideration of consistency and cogency applied to such relevant evidence as is available to us" (LEWIS, [1952] 1970, p. 201). Thus, Lewis would have agreed with Putnam when he states that ethical judgments are "forms of reflection that are fully governed by norms of truth and validity as any other form of cognitive activity" and are subject to the same "standards of fallibilistic inquiry" (PUTNAM, 2004, p. 72). However, it is worth emphasizing that Lewis stresses justification—not truth nor verification—with respect to the validity of empirical knowledge.[6]

In this line, and similarly to Habermas, for Lewis the validity of norms depends on their rational acceptability, that is to say, on being justified beliefs epistemically determined. However, unlike Habermas, this kind of validity is not exclusive of normative judgments and is not different from that of empirical judgments and, therefore, of value judgments. In other words, there are not different kinds of validity

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6   According to Lewis, the validation of empirical beliefs has two dimensions: verification and justification. While verification concerns the truth of the judgment and refers to future instances, justification concerns the grounds of the belief, its rational credibility, which lies in present and past cases and, in this sense, includes past verifications (LEWIS, 1946, p. 254). Furthermore, truth is understood as a semantic notion meaning *ideal verification* and portraying a valuable end that guides investigation. As we can see on some of Lewis' work, this distinction constitutes a point of departure from James and Dewey (Cf. LEWIS, 1946 and 1969).

conditions for different kinds of judgments in Lewis' framework.[7] Knowledge is justified belief and includes—though it is not reduced to—verification. That means that knowledge has ontological reference though not in terms of a Platonic *descriptivism:* objectivity cannot mean *description* of a transcendent reality in Lewis' framework.

In relation to this and resembling the Putnamian metaphor of the God's eye, Lewis prevents us from a representationalist understanding of a transcendent independent reality, arguing that "the criterion of being correct in our knowledge or being in error which this representationalist conception offers is one that nobody could ever make use of" because "we can't find that out by comparing the appearance or idea in the mind with an object that never can be inside the mind". Quite on the contrary, "We can only compare one idea or presentation with others" so that a theory of knowledge "should tell us just how we do that" (LEWIS, [1941] 1970, p. 170). And Lewis' theory of knowledge tells us about an entanglement between conceptual interpretative frameworks and reality, which accounts for an internal realism in the same fashion as Putnam's and Habermas'. For these philosophers, the validity conditions of objective experience and of the "access to the world" no longer remit to a transcendental subject, but rather are embedded in language and action, in indispensable epistemic frameworks that function normatively (PUTNAM et al., 2008, p. 18ss). In Lewis' terms, these epistemic frameworks are the pragmatic *a priori* element of knowledge, the key notion that articulates his epistemology (LEWIS, 1923; LEWIS, 1929, Chapter VIII; PUTNAM et al., 2008, p. 18, 82).[8]

As regards this, in Lewis' conceptualist pragmatism an object must be considered relative in a twofold way: to the world itself (the given element in knowledge) and to the subject's conceptual frameworks (the *a priori* element). These conceptual frameworks represent the element of order, classification, and definition which the human mind brings to experience; they are social products which function *a priori,* and which are chosen regarding pragmatic criteria. Therefore, from this perspective it is not accurate to consider moral or value properties in terms of natural—or non-natural—entities that our judgments must correctly represent, describe, and copy. On the contrary, once we reject representationalism and the spectator theory of knowledge, on the one hand; and collapse the fact-value dichotomy, on the other; it is misleading to assign moral realism neither to Lewis nor to Putnam—as Habermas does. In summary, the objectivity of value and norms is epistemically determined by the process of justification, by reaching a probability-conclusion correctly drawn from the evidence available in our experience of a world always conceptually interpreted (LEWIS, 1955, p. 56).

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7   There are, however, three types or "levels" of empirical statements in general: expressive utterances, terminating judgments, and non-terminating judgments or objective beliefs. This taxonomy is not directly related to the issue in question, but it serves to understand more precisely the relation between verification and justification in Lewis' theory of knowledge. (Cf. Lewis, 1946; ROSENTHAL, 2007)

8   The pragmatic *apriorism* is perhaps Lewis' most original contribution to pragmatism and doubtlessly the core of his conceptualist pragmatism. It constitutes the key to a correct understanding of the conceptual dimension of Lewis´ theory of knowledge and of the pragmatism that turns such theory into a methodological tool that functions transversely in experience, inextricably related to action and valuation.

3.3 The good and the right: A pragmatic distinction

Taking distance from John Dewey and William James (LEWIS, [1956] 1969, p. 103-125), Lewis thinks it is necessary to recognize that values and norms, the good and the right, are distinct and answer to diverse criteria, although they stand closely related (LEWIS, 1969 [1952], p. 100).[9] But, unlike Habermas, Lewis does not found the distinction on the cognitive status of the notions involved but on pragmatic grounds: while judgments of value constitute beliefs about the good and valuable which are susceptible of justification, and the *good* is that which *gratifies* and so forth *solicits* action (reason why they are not imperatives); the right, on its behalf, is that which is *imperative* to think, to believe, to do or to take as end, insofar as we are not naturally inclined to forsake it in itself but rather we are *justified*—have good reasons—in believing that it will lead to the best results in experience, taking in consideration a life found good as a whole (LEWIS, 1969 [1959], p. 34-5). While the assessment of values implies a determination of empirical facts and comprehends the field of empirical knowledge, the assessment of norms constitutes the so-called normative field, which extends to all that reflects the possible and corrigible self-government of agents and is inherently related to justification and responsibility (LEWIS, 1955, p. 17, 20).

In the light of this distinction, norms derive from values (LEWIS, 1946, p. 552; 1969, p. 24): they arise as empirical generalizations from past experience and are pragmatically instituted as legislative principles which prescribe future modes of action.[10] In other words, they are instituted by a local, intersubjective and epistemically founded decision to convert a valued-value into an imperative. In this vein, Lewis affirms that: "The morally right is what is best in that manner of value assessment which is to be accepted as taking precedence, in the case in hand, over any other mode of assessing values which are involved." And by *what is best* he means something "[…] to be determined by reference to criticized values, or values determined consonantly with some manner of critique" (Lewis, 1969 [1952], p. 102).

4 Some conclusions: valued-values as the criterion underlying norms. Towards a pragmatist conception of rationality

As I intended to show, for Lewis it is valuation that gives normativity its content and criterion. Therefore, his anti-skeptical strategy begins by affirming judgments of value as a kind of empirical knowledge and as the basis upon which normativity *pragmatically* emerges. I also argued that, though the fact-value dichotomy is overruled as in Putnam's conception, nonetheless Lewis establishes a distinction

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9   For instance, the question "Is the hydrogen bomb a good thing or a bad thing?" asks for a value judgment which concerns empirical factualities however difficult to determine it may be; whereas "is Mr. Blank, who is urging our production of hydrogen bombs, acting morally in so doing? asks for a moral judgment concerning the rightness and rationality of the action involved. (Cf. LEWIS, 1970, p. 177).

10   This pragmatic articulation between both terms resembles the relation implied in other distinctions within Lewis' theory such as that between empirical generalizations and laws, between the synthetic and the analytic or between the *a posteriori* and the *a priori*. In all these cases, the relation between the terms is, according to my interpretation, pragmatic.

between norms and values that is based on pragmatic grounds—not on epistemic ones—so Putnam's main critique about Habermas' non-cognitivist understanding of values can be eluded.

Now, the most interesting point of conceiving this distinction as based on pragmatic grounds is that it allows us to ask ourselves *which value criteria are implied in our normative frameworks* and to inquire *why* and *how* they have become normative. This, on the other hand, faces us with the question of rationality. In Lewis' terms we are rational insofar as we *know*—we are justified in believing- what is the *best counsel* for action and we effectively decide to determine our conduct according to it. But he takes his statement further: this epistemic evaluation of valuations must be done considering a *summum bonum*: a life found good as a whole; or, in Aristotelian terms, *happiness* (LEWIS, [1959] 1970, p. 179).[11] Nonetheless, he remarks that there is no general answer to this topic, no recipe, ingredients, nor proportions; the only proof of a good life is to be found in living, it must be learned and can be learned only from experience, and its evaluation is also a matter of inquiry and judgment (LEWIS, [1959] 1970, p. 180).

In relation to this, and in conclusion, it is significant to notice that, in the same line as Putnam, Lewis criticizes empty formalism for ethics (LEWIS, [1950] 1970, p. 176) and pursues a complementation with a naturalistic and pragmatist theory of value. As has been noted before, Habermas warns Putnam that a pragmatist ethics of values with Aristotelian characteristics is not easily reconcilable with a universal moral conception (PUTNAM et al., 2008, p. 80, 102). I believe this point in Lewis' proposal together with his conception of rationality has not been sufficiently explored yet and could offer an interesting perspective to revise Habermas' warning.

As Lewis himself recognizes: "The best brief characterization of my ethical position which I remember seen […] is that I am a naturalist with respect to the good but a rationalist with respect to the right" (SCHILPP, 1968, p. 672). Indeed, he is a naturalist with respect to the good because he locates value in experience and valuation as a "natural bent of the natural man" that "stands in no need of correction in order to be validly the touchstone of intrinsic value" (LEWIS, 1946, p. 398). And he is a rationalist with respect to the right because, for him, to be a rational human being is to be subject to imperatives, to recognize norms, and to act according to them. To do otherwise would be "to dissolve away all seriousness of action and intent, leaving only an undirected floating down the stream of time; and as a consequence to dissolve all significance of thought and discourse into universal blah" (Lewis, 1946, p. 481).

As it becomes clear, in Lewis' proposal valuation and normativity constitute conditions of possibility of the experience of the rational human being. But these conditions are not the result of a transcendental deduction. Rather, they are pragmatically deduced from "a datum of human nature" (Lewis, 1946, p. 482). In order to clarify this and to further conclude, I prefer to quote at large Lewis' own words:

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11   Taking this golden value as a forecast, on the one hand, and experience as a point of departure, on the other, Lewis pragmatically deduces four imperatives which he believes it is rational to obey if we are to accomplish a good life: consistency, cogency, prudence and justice. He stresses that whoever does not regulate her/his conduct according to these is a foul or perverse, i.e., is irrational.

> It is, thus, my conviction that there can be no answer to the skeptic which is final, except the pragmatic answer—whether it be skepticism of the possibility of knowledge and of knowable reality which is in question, or the skepticism which denies validity to practical and moral imperatives […] This point is that, as Hume acknowledged, you can't act on skepticism. Repudiation of the basic validities makes nonsense of deliberate action, and also of deliberate and criticized thinking: it reduces every manner of significance to foolishness […] Any argument in support of rightness and imperatives of any kind must be *petitio principii*, except only for the fact that whoever *refuses* acknowledgement of these validities must then discover himself in a pragmatic contradiction: his denial depends for its significance upon that very manner of validity which he denies. (1969, p. 131-2).

Finally, I agree with Heney when she states that, though much of Lewis' latest work on Ethics was left uncomplete, "its beginnings mark an important moment in the history of pragmatist ethics: the attempt at a systematic approach to logic, epistemology, and metaethics culminating in a contentful, naturalistic normative ethics" (OLEN & SACHS, 2017, p. 54). In this same line, it is the main purpose of this paper to highlight Lewis' philosophy as an interesting and fruitful proposal containing promising resources to address contemporary philosophical discussions on knowledge and valuation.

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