



# 1. Knowing our ways about in the world

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**Abstract** In this chapter I develop a framework for a comprehensive account of knowledge from the perspective of people engaged in practices in the world. This form of knowledge, with the key notion of *knowing one's ways about*, can be seen as a form of knowing how. It is in particular designed to accommodate tacit and practical forms of knowing, but at the same time acknowledges that it, like other kinds of human knowing, is also dependent, directly or indirectly, on language use. The framework is inspired by pragmatist and enactivist perspectives.

**Keywords** knowing how | practices | routines | Gilbert Ryle | Alva Noë

## 1. STARTING POINTS

I will define and defend an inclusive notion of (human) knowledge, with an emphasis on *knowing as a process*. It is, I will argue, wide enough to cover “theoretical” knowledge, usually associated with thinking and linguistically articulated knowledge, as well as “practical” knowledge, usually associated with human actions and practices. Most importantly, it does *not* assume a dichotomy between thinking and action. The rejection of this dichotomy is also one main feature of the pragmatist<sup>1</sup> tradition, which is part of my frame of reference. My focus is on participation in activities, *practices*, rather than the performance of particular actions. According to pragmatism, knowledge in the widest possible sense is shown and tested in how it *guides* or *leads* us – human beings – in the

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1 I use the form “pragmatism,” with a small “p,” throughout my text. This marks a wider perspective than the classical American “Pragmatism,” with a big “P,” which indicates a fairly homogeneous movement. My pragmatist perspective has roots in Pragmatism but is not bound by it. Cf. footnote 2 below.

world. For example, knowledge in the form of beliefs and theories is tested by how well it is guiding us *in use*.<sup>2</sup>

Think now about a few common situations: you are on a hiking tour in a mountain area; if you have accurate ideas about the (relevant parts) of the landscape, have checked the weather forecast and decided where you want to go, and quite generally “know what you are doing,” you will *get along well enough* during the tour. Or you are in job situation; if you are familiar with the equipment, are sufficiently experienced, know the relevant facts, and are clear about your responsibilities and what a good or acceptable performance (result) is, you will *get along well enough*. These sketchy examples illustrate that knowledge is very much about *coping* (as used by Hubert Dreyfus, whose views will be discussed later) or *managing* well enough with a focus on *knowing how to proceed*. Coping in this sense also covers the knowing of facts, which is above all a matter of understanding *in use*, what facts “tell us” about how we can, or cannot, proceed. This is what I mean by the expression *knowing our ways about in the world*.<sup>3</sup> It is experience-near knowledge and, I hope, resistant to being used as a metaphysical foundation. The elucidation of the notion of knowing our ways about in the world will continue throughout the chapter – in particular in the form of comments to examples.

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2 In his classical “How to Make Our Ideas Clear,” Charles Sanders Peirce says that “belief is a rule for action.” From *The Essential Peirce: Selected Philosophical Writings. Volume 1*, edited by N. Houser and C. Kloesel (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992), 129. In a retrospective text about early Pragmatist discussions (1907), he quotes “Bain’s definition of belief” as “that upon which a man is prepared to act” and adds: “From this definition, pragmatism is scarce more than a corollary.” From “Pragmatism,” in *The Essential Peirce: Selected Philosophical Writings. Volume 2*, edited by the Peirce Editions Project (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998), 399. However, I rather follow William James in his emphasis on what *leads* or *guides* us. In *Pragmatism* he writes, with “her” referring to pragmatism: “Her only test of probable truth is what works best in the way of leading us, what fits every part of life best and combines with the collectivity of experience’s demands, nothing being omitted.” From *Pragmatism* in *Pragmatism* and *The Meaning of Truth* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1978), 44.

3 I have not consciously borrowed it from other authors, but the original inspiration can be G. E. M. Anscombe, *Intention*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Blackwell, 1976), 89. Some later inspiration came from Wittgenstein, in particular, *On Certainty/Über Gewissheit*, ed. G. E. M. Anscombe and G. H. von Wright, trans. Denis Paul and G. E. Anscombe (Oxford: Blackwell 1974), §§ 355, 434, where it is used as translation of “sich auskennen.” He also uses it several times in *Philosophical Investigations*, ed. P. M. S. Hacker and Joachim Schulte trans. G. E. M. Anscombe, P. M. S. Hacker, and Joachim Schulte, 4th ed. (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), §§ 123, 203, 664 and §180 in “Philosophy of Psychology – A Fragment.” I have later seen it used by, among others, Michael Polanyi, Hubert Dreyfus, Alva Noë, and Charles Taylor, though none of them uses it as a key notion.

To begin with, I will argue that the kinds of knowledge referred to in standard epistemology are not very helpful here.<sup>4</sup>

“Knowledge” – about the world – is usually presented as being of two main types: knowledge in the form of beliefs in (true) statements about something (“knowing that”) and knowing how to do things. The first kind is called propositional or theoretical knowledge – or knowing that – in the form of representations in language (and other formalisms) which actually correspond to how things are in the world. Here the (human) intellect, typically referred to as mind, reason, or some such, works as the main bridge between our sense experiences and our beliefs. The second kind is also called practical or ability knowledge, but most often (following Gilbert Ryle<sup>5</sup>) is only referred to as *knowing how*. It exists in more down-to-earth forms like manual work and sport skills, considered to be quite independent of the intellectual or “higher” forms of knowledge. It also exists in such “higher” forms, then supposed to be mediated by representations of human activities in the form of plans or instructions.

In addition to these two standard types of knowledge, other kinds are sometimes mentioned, like knowing (recognizing) other people, “knowing what” (to do), and “knowing why.” Actually, there is no limit to the number of types and subtypes that could be introduced, at least in theory. How types are sorted is also highly dependent on the language used (as exemplified by Lars Hertzberg and Jonathan Knowles in their contributions to this volume) as well on stylistic choices: I used “knowing how to proceed” above but considered “knowing in which direction to go” as an alternative.

Now, it is important to see that “knowing one’s ways about” covers the two standards types but that they do not exist as distinguishable parts or components of the skilful and insightful going on that makes up knowing one’s ways about. By implication, knowing one’s ways about cannot be reduced to or completely analysed in terms of these types. Adding further types as possible parts will not help. We go back to my two introductory examples:

The skills with which hikers walk (and sometimes climb) in a mountain area depend normally on verbal and other symbolic inputs, in the form of maps, books, and (good) advice, as well as on their personal experiences (*and* hopes, misunderstandings, etc.). It is tempting to say (and believe) that such skills also *exist as*

4 I think of standard introductions to epistemology, like for example, Duncan Pritchard, *What is this thing called knowledge?* 4th ed. (Abingdon: Routledge, 2018).

5 Ryle’s two classical texts are: (1) “Knowing How and Knowing That: The Presidential Address,” *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, New Series, 46 (1945–46): 1–16. (2) “Knowing How and Knowing That,” *The Concept of Mind* (London: Hutchinson’s, 1949), 25–61. I will mainly follow the last one and refer to it as “Knowing How.”

a mixture of the two standard types of knowledge. Certainly, the hikers have real bodily skills (“knowing how”) and they believe or know lots of things (“knowing that”) that they realize (apply, implement) or *put to work* in their ongoing activity. They can often talk well and in detail about many of their activities and ways of going on, others can only be communicated to people with similar experiences, and some may be inherently tacit and resist linguistic articulation. The knowing they *use* is a *whole* of beliefs, tested (and non-tested) habits, and whatever additional components that can be worth mentioning. There seems to be no way of connecting *particular* beliefs with *particular* actions. Thus, there is no good reason to accept the (common) analytical picture of a hidden epistemological reality *divided* into the two standard types. I therefore *start* with a comprehensive kind of *knowing* – the active form is better than the nominal “knowledge”<sup>6</sup> – and explore human knowledge-in-the-world, knowledge as knowledge-in-use, that way. Like in the case of the hikers, such knowing is also at the same time a *connectedness* with the landscape, and with a broad interpretation of the notion of landscape, broad enough to cover the “landscape” of tasks in most job situations; it works fine as a key notion (or key metaphor) for understanding knowing more generally.

The way forward is not to introduce other or further types of knowledge but rather to situate knowledge in the right place in the world. Knowledge is not a view from outside the world, not from a God’s-eye point of view. Knowledge is going on in the world – where people build houses, sing songs, and make chemistry experiments, or whatever – it is where people are: *we are in the world*. A good expression for what this means is what Ruth Anna Putnam says about taking pragmatism seriously:

... to take pragmatism seriously is to take oneself to be living in a world that one shares with others, others with whom one cooperates in inquiry, others with whom one may compete for scarce resources or with whom one may cooperate in seeking to achieve common goals. It is to see oneself not as a spectator of but as an agent in the world. And that means that one often confronts the question “What is to be done?”<sup>7</sup>

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6 Michael Polanyi favours that both in *Personal Knowledge: Towards a Post-Critical Philosophy* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1978) and in *The Tacit Dimension* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2009). He also uses the expression “the art of knowing,” for example, in *Personal Knowledge*, 55.

7 Ruth Anna Putnam, “Taking Pragmatism Seriously,” in Hilary Putnam and Ruth Anna Putnam, *Pragmatism as a Way of Life. The Lasting Legacy of William James and John Dewey*, ed. David Macarthur (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2017), 17. She also says (on p. 15) that “[t]o take your problems—where you stand as a representative of humanity—seriously, I must

I will talk about this as the *this-worldliness* of pragmatism. One can also call it naïve realism. It is in important ways similar to the position of Dreyfus and Taylor (to which we will return) in *Retrieving Realism*, that we are in “direct touch with the things with which we are dealing,” as part of an “unproblematic realism.”<sup>8</sup>

This-worldliness is as important in pragmatism as the emphasis on the agent perspective. Part of the this-worldliness is the (existential) precondition that human beings are what they are as social beings, who recognize other vulnerable human beings and are being recognized by them. This has, as we shall see, consequences for whether “bodily commerce,” a term used by Dreyfus and Taylor, can exist without being, so to speak, conceptually infected.

Another, but related, starting point is that there is nothing that is (absolutely) basic or “primordial” for us as human beings trying to find our ways about in the world. We are animals who move and react as animals. At the same time, we are animals with language, who try to make sense of the world and (thereby) find our ways about in it. For example, coping in the form of “bodily commerce” is no more basic than talking with people, planning and doing “theory” in the sense of imagining, thinking, and talking about what is possible but not the case, about alternative futures or something similar (this will be fleshed out and further discussed in Sections 4 and 5).

This starting point is perhaps both a preconception and a choice of strategy. Moreover, it can be seen as an aspect of (anti-metaphysical) this-worldliness. That nothing is (absolutely) basic or primordial is not to deny that some things *stand fast* in the sense that Wittgenstein discusses in *On Certainty*: there are some things that we in fact *do not* doubt or that it doesn’t make sense to doubt.<sup>9</sup>

## 2. KNOWING HOW TO GO ON – BEING IN TIME

In this section I will indicate the place of knowing, with an emphasis on *knowing how*, in human life, and its critical dependence on the dimension of time. Here I use the notion of knowing how in a wide sense, understood roughly the way it is

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take it for granted that the toe I would step on, were I not to take care, is the toe in which you would feel pain.”

8 Hubert Dreyfus and Charles Taylor, *Retrieving Realism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2015), 47. Cf. Charles Taylor, “Merleau-Ponty and the Epistemological Picture,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Merleau-Ponty*, ed. Carman Taylor and Mark. B. N. Hansen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

9 This theme is running through Ludwig Wittgenstein, *On Certainty*. For the use of “stand fast,” cf. for example §§ 144, 152.

elaborated by Gilbert Ryle but without building on a contrast with “knowing that.” In this sense, knowing how is more or less equivalent to knowing one’s ways about.

I formulate here two central *landmarks* as part of the process to clarify my notion of knowing our ways about – the first two of seven. The first landmark is this:

- (1) Knowledge exists primarily only in the form of skilled and insightful human beings, persons.

It is possible to use words other than *skilled* and *insightful*.<sup>10</sup> In my first language, Swedish, I can use one word, *kunnig*. To indicate unity it might be tempting to use a hyphenated expression like skilled-and-insightful, but unity is not created by hyphens. Whether we use one or two – or more – words is not crucial for my approach. The word(s) shall *point in the right direction* when we turn our attention and interests to the *people* that are actually proceeding with skill and insight. (This is a methodological comment on the way I construct my account.)

The message of the landmark is rather that the *form* of knowledge, or the *place* of knowledge, is human beings active in the world in all kinds of ways. Knowledge is not located *in* any object like a book or a computer program, nor for that matter *in* human beings understood as objects, nor in any “part” of human beings, like the mind or brain.

The plural form is important; knowledge can only exist in the form of human beings being together. Knowledge is, in many ways, dependent on intercourse with others: recognition, correction, negotiation – as well as knowing together. In some cases the knowledge exists only collectively, *between* persons.<sup>11</sup>

The second landmark is:

- (2) Knowing how is to be understood as knowing how to go on.

Epistemological textbooks typically explain knowing how with reference to cycling or swimming – and perhaps playing chess and driving a car. The focus is on the momentaneous, snapshot views of the world, for example, that of cycling as keeping balance, moving forward, and keeping a direction, which often is explained (or explained away) in physical terms.

Knowing how to *go on* is, however, not only a matter of adding up a sequence of snapshot views – keeping balance, moving forward, and keeping a direction understood in physical or mechanical terms. It is rather to cycle as a meaningful

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10 There is a number of further examples in Ryle’s “Knowing How.”

11 Cf. the chapters of Bjørn Alterhaug and Mattias Solli & Thomas Netland in this volume.

human activity (practice) over time. Knowing demands some understanding. To understand cycling means – normally and roughly – to understand it as a means for transportation and pleasure, according to local standards, and being able to talk about it in everyday terms.<sup>12</sup> Knowing how (to go on) is then not to know a (timeless) *way* of doing something. In a sense the knowing is “in the doing,” but the knowing how to go on is more comprehensive than so. With a formulation that I used in the first paragraph, knowledge is very much about managing (or coping) well enough, mastering a practice well enough – including knowing what to do next, in normal cases at least. Knowing how in this sense covers knowing what, knowing when, and much else. In some cases, like in improvised jazz, “knowing what to do next” is created jointly and on the spot *in going on*.<sup>13</sup>

Knowledge crucially depends on time, exists in time. Understood in this way, learning (from experience and from others) is a part of knowing, and the verb form catches that better than the noun form. This doesn’t mean that progress is always possible. Nor that it is necessary. In adverse circumstances, keeping a practice alive may be enough. Knowing how to go on may also cover cases when you “don’t know what to do” – which here means: *don’t know beforehand* – if you have strategies or intuitions or whatever that can, possibly via detours, lead forward. Moreover, it is often essential to know what not to do, knowing when to stop or use the emergency escapes.

There are almost always ways of going on. To sum up the message of landmarks 1 and 2: *Knowledge exists primarily in the form of knowing persons in activities (practices) going on over time.*

A move that can make the dimension of time invisible is to turn (too quickly or too much) to abilities or dispositions, as something underlying and outside the human dimension of time. Sometimes, Ryle is doing that move in his discussions about knowing how. However, most of his examples do speak another language. The simple move to avoid talking about abilities and dispositions is simply to stop at *responding and (at best) learning persons* and not “try to go further back.”<sup>14</sup>

Here is one of Ryle’s good examples, his marksman case. It is a rather long quotation here, but it is good to have all of it for later references.

Our inquiry is not into causes (and *a fortiori* not into occult causes), but into capacities, skills, habits, liabilities and bents. We observe, for example, a soldier scoring a bull’s eye. Was it luck or was it skill? If he has the skill, then he can

12 Assuming people who master a natural language reasonably well.

13 Cf. the emphasis on being prepared in Bjørn Alterhaug’s text in this volume.

14 Cf. Wittgenstein, *On Certainty*, §471: “It is so difficult to find the *beginning*. Or, better: it is difficult to begin at the beginning. And not try to go further back.”



get on or near the bull's eye again, even if the wind strengthens, the range alters and the target moves. Or if his second shot is an outer, his third, fourth and fifth shots will probably creep nearer and nearer to the bull's eye. He generally checks his breathing before pulling the trigger, as he did on this occasion; he is ready to advise his neighbour what allowances to make for refraction, wind, etc. Marksmanship is a complex of skills, and the question whether he hit the bull's eye by luck or from good marksmanship is the question whether or not he has the skills, and, if he has, whether he used them by making his shot with care, self-control, attention to the conditions and thought of his instructions.

To decide whether his bull's eye was a fluke or a good shot, we need and he himself might need to take into account more than this one success. Namely, we should take into account his subsequent shots, his past record, his explanations or excuses, the advice he gave to his neighbour and a host of other clues of various sorts.<sup>15</sup>

Here we see some of the interrelated components of the art of marksmanship, making up the continued work to maintain and improve knowing how to go on in and with the practice.<sup>16</sup> After the quotation above, Ryle concludes by saying that “[t]here is no one signal of a man's knowing how to shoot.”<sup>17</sup> In my reading, the example shows not only signals but how knowledge exists – how it is constituted. We often talk about “having” knowledge and “having” (for example) capacities, skills, habits, liabilities, and bents. This can be misleading, because the capacities, skills, etc. are not given “foundations” for the practices we engage. The participants, together with other people and things, make and remake the practices and thereby their capacities and skills – and the other way around.

The exposition of my key notion “knowing our ways about” – in the singular “knowing one's ways about” – is so far made in terms of knowing how (to go on). Part of the reason was to give due recognition to the importance of Ryle's discussion of knowing how. Unfortunately, knowing how is often understood as essentially contrasted to knowing that. Knowing our ways about is a better expression because no such contrast is indicated by it.<sup>18</sup> In addition, it brings to the fore the moment of knowing how to get about in *a comprehensive whole*:

15 Ryle, “Knowing How,” 45–46.

16 Ryle calls it a “complex of skills.” I would prefer to call it *a comprehensive skill*, but the knowing how story can be told in both ways.

17 Ryle, “Knowing How,” 46.

18 “Knowing our (one's) ways about” is also a better notion because it can easily be used both without any specification – situating skills and insights in a wider life and culture context – and



Using the same cycling example as above: knowing one's ways about with a bicycle demands an understanding of it as an intentional action – which in turn demands an understanding of why and when it can be worthwhile to cycle. Of course, you must know how to actually physically cycle and find your way about in (at least) the local landscape. *Orientation* in the (natural and cultural) landscape can be used as a key word to make explicit what cannot be understood as only a physical skill. This includes an understanding of cultural codes for (good) cycling and for talk about cycling: orientation in the (local) world and a lifeworld. I am not talking about expert cycling; children pick up most of what I have referred to pretty fast.

My second landmarks can now be reformulated to:

- (2\*) Knowing how is to be understood as knowing how to go on, that is, *knowing our ways about*.

### 3. THE IMPORTANCE OF HABITS AND ROUTINES

Routines anchor us in the world, a world of changes, some recurrent and some not. Routines, for example in working life, work excellently when they are restricted to the right level of regularities. Whether anything is absolutely exactly regular does not really make (this-worldly) sense. Practices are very much defined by the scope of their routines as solutions to recurrent tasks and issues. This-worldliness is, we can say, constituted by habits and routines.<sup>19</sup> This is one reason why Peirce emphasizes beliefs as habits – habits that works – in his foundational pragmatist papers.<sup>20</sup> Routines are worth a song of praise, because they provide trust in our knowing our ways about and, at the same time, allow us to focus our attention on what is unusual and unique. However, we focus first on how (not) to talk about habits and routines.

Here is my third landmark, first formulated in a quite categorical way and with a touch of metaphysics:

- (3) There are no merely habitual practices or mindless routines.

Put less metaphysically: common ways of talking about routines and the “merely habitual” are misleading and cloud how important (and interesting) the notion

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with a wide variety of specifications: a landscape (whether metaphorically or not), a subject matter, a practice, a situation.

19 Cf. Lars Hertzberg's nuanced discussion about the notion of habits, in this volume.

20 Cf. Charles S. Peirce, “How to Make Our Ideas Clear,” 129–31.

of routines is. This is also valid for people writing well about practical skills and knowing how, like Gilbert Ryle and Julia Annas. The first example is from Ryle:

It is of the essence of merely habitual practices that one performance is a replica of its predecessors. It is of the essence of intelligent practices that one performance is modified by its predecessors. The agent is still learning.<sup>21</sup>

The last sentence in the quotation is quite right, whereas the second is too categorical with a literal reading; let us now focus on the first. The attitude expressed here is similar to what Julia Annas expresses in her in other ways insightful discussion about skill and knowing how in *Intelligent Virtue*.<sup>22</sup> The expert pianist, she says, “plays in a way not dependent on conscious input, but the result is not *mindless routine*...”<sup>23</sup> Annas never quite explains what mindless routine is, but it sounds mechanical and machine-like, and it is certainly not a word of praise. A key word for her understanding of skill that is not mindless is *aspiration*. She says, for example: “Where the aspiration to improve fails, we lapse into simple repetition and routine.”<sup>24</sup> We will shortly return to that.

What then could Ryle’s and Annas’s, and our, image of the “merely” habitual and “simple” or “mindless” routines be? Ryle uses the notion of replica and Annas uses repetition. The idea seems to be that of doing (exactly) the same a number of times. What the same means in the context of human activities (practices) is not self-explanatory, but let us suppose that it makes sense:

It is *difficult* to make an exact replica, in the sense of repeating *exactly* the same performance, at least if the standards of being the same or indistinguishable are high. In which sense is the way you write your signature exactly the same on different occasions? And in which sense does an actor or musician perform in exactly the same way several times? Certainly, it makes sense in certain situations to copy as exactly as possible your own earlier (successful) performance or that of another person – for example in the context of training or showing the *skill of copying* in the practice in question.<sup>25</sup> Moreover, if we think of a practice in terms of rule following, the rules for being a good performer are not the same as for copying (as exactly as possible) a good performer.<sup>26</sup>

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21 Ryle, “Knowing How,” 42.

22 Julia Annas, *Intelligent Virtue* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

23 Annas, *Intelligent Virtue*, 13.

24 Annas, *Intelligent Virtue*, 18.

25 Cf. the cello master class example in my *The Practice of Knowing and Knowing in Practices* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2015), 14–16.

26 The same point can be made in terms of a *good performance*.

Now, what is relevant here are the notions of performing or practicing in the same way or in a different way *according to the standards of the practice*; and standards are strongly connected to routines. Understanding and recognizing the relevant notion of same/different ways are part of learning to master a practice (a trade). A good (qualified, skilled) practitioner is one who masters the routines that make her or him carry out most of the recurring tasks of the practice successfully, which of course also involves the skill of being aware of the limits of one's skill and insight as well as the limits of one's trade (profession). Routines (habits) in this sense allow – indeed demand – adjustments dependent on the circumstances.

Having reached this point, we can stop worrying about “simple” repetition and routine and the “merely” habitual,” not to mention “mindless” routines. However, there is more to say about the use and importance of habits and routines in human life. We turn again to Ryle. Immediately before the quoted words about habitual practices above, he says:

After the toddling-age we walk on pavements without minding our steps. But a mountaineer walking over ice-covered rocks in a high wind in the dark does not move his limbs by blind habit; he thinks what he is doing, he is ready for emergencies, he economises in effort, he makes tests and experiments; in short he walks with some degree of skill and judgment. If he makes a mistake, he is inclined not to repeat it, and if he finds a new trick effective he is inclined to continue to use it and to improve on it. He is concomitantly walking and teaching himself how to walk in conditions of this sort.<sup>27</sup>

All this he does as a matter of routine or as good habits. Moreover, toddlers (children who have only recently learnt to walk) certainly don't walk by blind habit. Children do few if any things by blind habit. And, again, we should be careful with the use of “knowing how.” The toddlers are learning *to walk*, not how to walk – and people walk, and learn to do (routinely) other things, with some “degree of skill and judgment.” This includes educated responses, intelligent reactions, adjusting the natural wisdom of our bodies, *and much more* that does not fit the dichotomy between the intelligent activity and (simple) routine performances.

To sum up so far: good routines, or good working habits, are at the core of this-worldliness and the knowing their ways about of professional (good) practitioners. Good routines are to be contrasted with (for example) sloppy, careless, or inattentive ways of going on, not with “simple” routine; and it is best to avoid

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27 Ryle, “Knowing How,” 42.

“mind”-talk. Above all, routines are both the basis for and demand continued adjustments, that is, continued *learning*.

Ryle’s example of the mountaineer catches in few words the importance of learning. What one can learn from can vary; it could be from mistakes, from good advice, or from finding an improvement by good luck. Learning here includes learning to become better prepared for future situations – both like the ones that one has met *and* the ones that one has not met. Learning to adjust, or negotiate, certainly does not mean learning fixed rules for adjusting. Good practitioners are like the toddler; they learn *in going on*. I think this is worth summing up as a fourth landmark:

- (4) Knowing how to go on, that is, knowing one’s way about, is a matter of *continued learning*.<sup>28</sup>

Continued learning means to be and to become attentive to possible *corrections, adjustments, and adaptations* and to make them part of how one goes on. Such adjustments can be within a routine or break with it, establishing a new routine, or an exception to learn more from.

Now, back to aspiration. We “lapse into simple repetition and routine” where *the aspiration to improve* fails, Annas says. The notion of aspiration is essential to her view of (expert) *practical skills*: “. . . we can recognize at least some skills as having these two important features of the need to learn and the drive to aspire: to aspire, that is, to understanding, to self-direction, and to improvement.”<sup>29</sup>

There are certainly people, experts, and others who have such drives. In the case of an expert pianist, it is easy to think in terms of conscious aspiration to keep up and to improve their skill. However, Annas is presumably not thinking about so-called manual labour, like logging, and the word aspiration does not capture very well the learning that goes on in people’s daily life and work. Not to speak of the toddlers. A wider perspective is called for to catch the relevant learning processes.

To widen the perspective, we turn to the Norwegian logger and poet Hans Børli. In an essay called “Logging,” he says: “I have worked in the forests in more than forty years and still I am far from fully qualified. All the time I spot small secrets of the work.”<sup>30</sup> The small secrets can be about how to (slightly) adjust a tool or

28 I prefer the open expression “is a matter of.” There is no strict logical or genetical priority between knowing and learning, as long as we stick reasonably much to common language.

29 Annas, *Intelligent Virtue*, 20.

30 Hans Børli, “Tømmerhugger,” in *Med øks og lyre* (Oslo: Aschehoug, 1993), 109. (My translation)

how to stand more securely in certain kinds of forest floor. Here it may seem natural to use expressions like those that Dreyfus and Taylor use with reference to Merleau-Ponty. They talk about “an unmediated body-based intentionality”<sup>31</sup> and say that this intentionality “is directly sensitive to *conditions of improvement* in the world.”<sup>32</sup> We will get back to the perspective of Dreyfus and Taylor and what is (not) direct or unmediated in the next section. Here we only keep the idea of a (natural) *sensitivity* to conditions of improvement, which is in line with my fourth landmark.

The logger, like the toddler, knows their ways about in a world with sense where there is no borderline between acting in the world and talking (and thinking) about it. Moreover, people can “read” what others do and often show as much by the acting as by talking about it.

At this point we have to avoid the tempting dichotomy between the more materially infected practice – the “body-based”, like logging – and the more mind infected, associated with, for example, aspiration, understanding, and self-direction. The logger and the expert pianist are not far away from each other.

Learning and improvement presuppose, in many cases, *something like* aspiration, interest, engagement, a will to learn, or attentiveness, or with Dewey’s expressions, which we will touch upon later: “suffering and passion”, “affection.” What one aspires to or wants to learn is sometimes open for choice. In other cases, learning seems to be something simply *natural* and *normal* for human beings. In such cases, there is some drive or engagement that need not (and perhaps cannot) be *chosen*. It is basically natural, at least in the sense of not being in need of any justification, but it can be disciplined and normatively anchored as well, for example in rules for good professional conduct; and it can be obstructed or prevented. In a similar way, it is natural for people to be always *on the way*, looking or attending ahead, finding better ways of *going on*.

#### 4. PRACTICES ARE THE MEDIUM OF KNOWLEDGE

We now turn to my fifth landmark, which is already with us in the background:

- (5) Practices are the medium of knowledge.

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31 The common use of “body-based” or “embodied” is confusing for us that do not think there is something above or beside the body as a wonderful natural organism.

32 Dreyfus and Taylor, *Retrieving Realism*, 48–49. The most relevant pages about improvement are 47–51.

The notion of practice is used here as a fairly open concept, but I am primarily thinking of professional and vocational practices, but also about domestic practices (like cooking, cleaning, child care) and some sports and games. Practices are social institutions, which can be organized in many different ways.<sup>33</sup> For example, shooting as (peaceful) practice is organized in rifle associations, shooting clubs, and a variety of competitions. The scope of a practice as a “complex of skills” can be seen in Ryle’s marksman example quoted in Section 2 above.

The marksman’s knowing his ways about exists *in the form of* shooting activities (over time), which bind together the marksman with the social-physical environment (over time), guns and bullets, and a lot of other things included, not least other human beings. It can, however, be misleading to say that the activities bind together the marksman with his environment. Rather, by referring to the human-social whole as a practice, a complex of activities, it is *brought to light* that all the (human and non-human) bits and pieces *are* bound together. The social practice is constitutive for the knowing. Talk (language use, conversations) – before the “physical” shooting, during breaks, and afterwards – is part of what binds the activities together. To introduce the adjective bodily on some, or all, of the performances doesn’t help us on the way.

All practices involve – are constituted by – the use of language (or symbols) as part of the practice. However, understanding is as much carried by or constituted by other activities than uses of language.<sup>34</sup> This indicates a kind of (open) hermeneutic circle structure in all practices. To understand a part you must understand the whole – and carry on. Here we are really talking about a hermeneutics of learning and improvement – no practice is perfect – and I can refer back to my fourth landmark again.

A practice in the sense used here is structured. It must contain at least a core (repertoire) of performances that can be judged as correct or incorrect – or as *developing in the right direction* – from the perspective of qualified participants and judges. Indeed, Harald Grimen has once suggested that to call something a practice the performances must be mutually criticizable and correctible by the participants.<sup>35</sup>

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33 The notion of practice can be further developed in a number of ways. What I say is, for the most part, compatible with Annemarie Mol’s view that reality is “performed in a variety of practices,” with the consequence that “reality itself is multiple,” as she says in her “Ontological Politics. A Word and Some Questions,” *Sociological Review* 47 (1999): 47. Her view can be challenging to use together with my notion of this-worldliness. However, my main inspiration for how to talk about practices come from Wittgenstein’s *Philosophical Investigations* and *On Certainty*.

34 Here it is natural to use Wittgenstein’s notion of language-game, and his emphasis that “the *speaking* of a language is part of an activity, or a form of life,” in *Philosophical Investigations*, §23.

35 Harald Grimen, “Praksis, handling og sikkerhet. Ein analyse av tre tema frå Ludwig Wittgenstein’s *Über Gevissheit*” (Master’s thesis, University of Bergen, 1982), 24.

Practices are organized. Alva Noë argues – as part of an enactivist perspective – that all kinds of perception are organized activities, by the environment and by ourselves (individually and collectively). Seeing, he says “is a temporally extended, dynamic exchange with the world around us, one that is guided by principles of timing, thoughtfulness, movement, spontaneity, function, and pleasure, like those we see in operation when we drive or walk or breast-feed, but that is also governed by all manner of learned understandings and expectations and engagements with this or that task (watch repair, typing, driving home, etc.).”<sup>36</sup> Here he catches also, I would say, in a wonderful way *practices* as organized wholes, though I prefer to see ways of perceiving as (constitutive) parts of practices. Noë says that all kinds of perception “is the *organized activity* of achieving access to the world around us.”<sup>37</sup> Access here is not a way of getting out of a Cartesian mind, but rather of achieving access to parts and aspects of the world in the world, access from a this-worldliness perspective. Here the notion of *medium* can be put to good use: practices are the medium *through which* knowledge (skill, insight, ...) is expressed, realized, or enacted (and perhaps even performed). *Perhaps* we can also say that perception is realized and enacted that way (we return to this in Section 5).

A dictionary explanation of “medium” catches quite well my use of the term: “the material or the form that an artist, a writer, or a musician uses,”<sup>38</sup> if we read it with emphasis on *form* and covering the way skilful people, not only artists, express themselves – their skills, insights, and shortcomings – in their various practices. However, this doesn’t take us very far. To get a better understanding of “medium” and what is (not) mediated, we turn to a discussion with reference to Dreyfus and Taylor’s *Retrieving Realism*. Here they distinguish between *mediational* (or representational) and *contact* theories of knowledge:

Where a mediation theory seeks knowledge as arising through some mediational element, so that we have contact with the real in knowledge only through some intermediary, depiction, or category, contact theories give an account of knowledge as our attaining unmediated contact with the reality known.<sup>39</sup>

Descartes is a typical mediational thinker, along with the classical empiricists, while on the other side (the heroes) Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty (and Wittgenstein)

36 Alva Noë, *Strange Tools. Art and Human Nature* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2015), 9.

37 Noë, *Strange Tools*, 10.

38 A. S. Hornby, *Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary*, 7th ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), s.v. “medium” (entry 3).

39 Dreyfus and Taylor, *Retrieving Realism*, 17.



are contact thinkers. Their idea of (absorbed) *coping*, as elaborated primarily by Dreyfus, is a (body-based) basis for a contact theory.

In an earlier article (more or less repeated in *Retrieving Realism*), Charles Taylor includes quite a lot in the category of media. He gives an account of “the sense of my world” which, he says, rules out “a representational or mediational picture of our grasp of the world” and gives the following examples of media: *formulated thoughts, things never raised as a question but taken as a framework in which our formulated thoughts have the sense they do, my knowing Weber’s theory of capitalism, my being able to ride a bicycle.*<sup>40</sup> In this context he also says that “the boundaries between media are fuzzy, and many of the most important understandings are multimedia events.”<sup>41</sup> In his list of examples he also includes *the understanding implicit in various abilities to cope*. However, to express and show understanding in action and through action may well, and even better, be called *explicit*.

With reference to an “unreflective football player,” which refers to an example used by Merleau-Ponty,<sup>42</sup> Dreyfus and Taylor say: “He too is straining every faculty to get an accurate take on the ever-changing lines of force in the field. But the medium here is not moral reflection or theoretical representation, but the behavioral affordances of attack and defence.”<sup>43</sup> The idea is, I think, that media is all right *as contact* as long as the medium in question cannot be understood as or conceptually made into an (independent) object that we have to know in order to know (or grasp) the world. Practices are not such objects, nor is our *use of language in the world* in carrying out practices; in typical mediational theories, representations in the mind or in the brain are.

Dreyfus and Taylor say, with a notion that comes from Heidegger, that coping in the form of body-based intentionality – that is, our “animal existence” – is *primordial* and what all coping basically builds on. As stated at the end of the introduction, this perspective seems to me to lead nowhere. However, they also talk about our animal existence as “unavoidable,”<sup>44</sup> which is difficult to deny. Any *general* ordering of what is more or less basic seems superfluous.

There are many ways of talking (philosophically) about “where” knowledge is and “what” connects us to the world. Alva Noë talks (as quoted above) about our “dynamic exchange” with the world around us. In connection with the example

40 Taylor, “Merleau-Ponty and the Epistemological Picture,” 32. The same – or almost the same – is also revived in *Retrieving Realism*, 45–46.

41 Taylor, “Merleau-Ponty and the Epistemological Picture,” 32.

42 Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The Structure of Behavior*, trans. Alden L. Fisher (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 2011), 168–69.

43 Dreyfus and Taylor, *Retrieving Realism*, 76.

44 In, for example, Dreyfus and Taylor, *Retrieving Realism*, 132.

of walking and climbing a path, Charles Taylor says that his understanding and know-how resides in his “negotiating the path. The understanding is in the interaction ....”<sup>45</sup> Dewey uses both interaction and transaction. Referring to practices as medium, however, catches better the dynamics of wholes over time. Using an example makes it even easier to say what it is all about; think about Ryle’s mountaineer: *the knowing is in – exists in the form of – the walking and climbing.*

Practices are *social*. The world we share with others is a world that we, at least partly, share with other people in the medium of language(s). Or in other words, language use is an intrinsic (constitutive) aspect of all practices. It also connects various practices and forms of (human) life.<sup>46</sup> This goes against the perspective of Dreyfus (and Taylor) according to which there is at the bottom of all knowing our ways about forms of “body-based” coping – constituted by our animal existence. This form of coping is, they say, preconceptual, which must imply that it is (radically) independent of human language or anything similar to such. This is not a viable position. I will indicate why, again in terms of Ryle’s marksman case:

Shooting, in the example and more generally, means coping socially, that is, coping with (and coping together with) other people in the shooting/marksman culture and with people who are connected to this culture in various ways (reporting, selling equipment, arranging competitions, etc.).<sup>47</sup> Anything they do – or are – as part of this practice is *socially and conceptually marked*. This can also be said about Merleau-Ponty’s football player who follows lines of force. The so-called lines of force are inserted (constituted) by football as a social and cultural practice, including a multitude of language games. Even if an activity is “in itself” not social, like Taylor’s climbing a path or Ryle’s mountaineer’s walking, it is dependent on other people’s recognition and exists in a linguistic-historical setting (as shown for example by the possibility of discussing these cases). Questions about what is done and how can be asked, and sometimes answered, by the persons involved – even if, from the point of view of an outsider, it is generally better to ask questions before or after critical moments in an activity. The conceptual and social are there as parts of what constitutes the relevant wholes, practice wholes. This is actually worthy of being called a landmark:

6. Practices, and thereby knowing our ways about, are conceptually marked in criss-cross ways.

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45 Taylor, “Merleau-Ponty and the Epistemological Picture,” 38. Almost the same formulation is also in Dreyfus and Taylor, *Retrieving Realism*, 72.

46 Wittgenstein uses “forms of life” in *Philosophical Investigations*, for example in §23.

47 Here, of course, I use “cope” in a more inclusive sense than Dreyfus (and Taylor).

## 5. HOW WE MEET THE WORLD – AND OURSELVES – IN THE WORLD

Knowing is a process in the world (stretching also outside the person who knows) as well as a way of approaching it. Sometimes this is described as *extended* knowing or cognition.<sup>48</sup> Such a description makes sense only in comparison with a perspective that locates knowledge (literally) in the subject (the human organism), a perspective that is perhaps more Cartesian than Descartes's own position. Of course, knowledge is in the world, with us and not in us – this is an aspect of this-worldliness.

In this section I will take up some ideas from John Dewey's pragmatism and Alva Noë's enactivism, which are both, in Dreyfus and Taylor's words, contact theories. Dewey talks more about experience and intelligence than about knowledge. Noë's enactivism is above all a perspective on perception, which, however, widens into experience more generally.<sup>49</sup> Ryle talks about intelligent practice. This is all, in my words, about *knowing* our ways about. I will in particular argue that perception – or rather perceiving – is organized *in the form of* practices, and thus find its natural place in knowing our ways about in the medium of practices.

The expression “knowing our ways about” may seem to put too much emphasis on the knowers/agents and too little on the world. We meet the world and it meets us, without any absolute or categorical borderline between us and (the rest of) the world. However, there is no full symmetry; (in knowing) *we* explore the world from the point of view of being agents (and patients).

Dewey emphasizes (the mutual) encounter between us and the world by using the notion of transaction. “Whatever else organic life is or is not,” he says in *Logic: The Theory of Inquiry*, it “is a transaction extending beyond the spatial limits of the organism. An organism does not live *in* an environment; it lives by means of an environment. ... The processes of living are enacted by the environment as truly as by the organism; for they *are* the integration.”<sup>50</sup> Knowledge, for Dewey as well as for Noë, exists in the form of human beings, a form of organic life in (fragile) contact with the world.

In his classical “The Need for a Recovery of Philosophy,” Dewey emphasizes both the receptor and the agent side of experience (knowing). Experience, he says,

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48 The expression is new, but not the fact that “the place” of knowledge is not in us, but also outside us. Cf. Ryle, “Knowing How,” 51, even if he here talks in terms of the “place” of mind.

49 Cf. Alva Noë, “The Enactive Approach: A Briefer Statement, with Some Remarks on ‘Radical Enactivism,’” *Phenomenology and the Cognitive Sciences* 20 (2021): 957–70.

50 Dewey, John. *Logic: The Theory of Inquiry*. In *Later Works, 1925–1953*, Vol. 12: 1938. Ed. by Jo Ann Boydston (Carbondale: Southern Illinois Press, 2008), 32.

“is primarily a process of undergoing: a process of standing something; of suffering and passion, of affection, in the literal sense of these words.”<sup>51</sup> On the other side, “the most patient patient” is also an agent, “a reactor, one trying experiments, one concerned with undergoing in a way which may influence what is still to happen.”<sup>52</sup>

*Experience* is here a species of knowing our ways about. The key notions are (in my words) this-worldliness and passive-active openness to what is happening, with a future directed perspective. Alva Noë talks about conscious experience in terms very similar to Dewey: “Now, conscious experience, I believe, ... is active; it consists in the circular process of doing and undergoing and keeping track – the very expression of intelligence – of the effects of the ways what one does affords opportunities for new doing and new undergoing.”<sup>53</sup>

Dewey and Noë share the view that knowledge (intelligence, experience) is not situated in any part of the human beings (organisms), in particular, not in the brain or in the neurological system, which is in agreement with my first landmark. In Dewey’s words, experience “is the entire organic agent-patient in all its interaction with the environment, natural and social.”<sup>54</sup> Alva Noë, talking about perception, says that it “is not a process in the brain, but a kind of skillful activity on the part of the animal as a whole.”<sup>55</sup> This is a cornerstone of Noë’s enactivism.

This is so far a brief description of the perspectives of Dewey and Noë. We now turn to a critical discussion of how Dewey treats the way that we meet the world and ourselves. I will point out a certain one-sidedness in how he talks about our doing-undergoing, our “suffering and passion.” After that I will show how Noë avoids this one-sidedness and how this leads to an important aspect of practices as the medium of knowing our ways about.

With his repeated emphasis on consequences, Dewey’s time perspective is a one-way affair: the organism “has to endure, undergo, the consequences of his own actions” and learn from these consequences and from experiments “what is still to happen.”<sup>56</sup> What should experience be, he asks, “but a future implicated in

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51 Dewey, John. “The Need for a Recovery of Philosophy,” in *Creative Intelligence: Essays in the Pragmatic Attitude*, ed. John Dewey (New York: Holt, 1917), 10. (Quoted after “the Web Mead Project”, [https://brocku.ca/MeadProject/Dewey/Dewey\\_1917b.html](https://brocku.ca/MeadProject/Dewey/Dewey_1917b.html) (read November 8, 2017).)

52 Dewey, “The Need for a Recovery of Philosophy,” 11.

53 Alva Noë, “The Writerly Attitude,” in *Symbolic Articulation: Image, Word, and Body Between Action and Schema*, ed. Sabine Marienberg (Berlin/Boston: De Gruyter, 2017), 76.

54 Dewey, “The Need for a Recovery of Philosophy,” 36.

55 Alva Noë, *Action in Perception* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2004), 2.

56 Dewey, “The Need for a Recovery in Philosophy,” 11.

the present!”<sup>57</sup> His perspective here seems to be that we act forward in time, on the basis of what we have experienced so far. This means we have some *end-in-view*, and if we do not reach or move in that direction, we change our end-in-view or the way we proceed, or both. This is a form of empiricism which he calls experimental:

[Experimental empiricism] recognizes that experience, the actual experience of men, is one of doing acts, performing operations, cutting, marking off, dividing up, extending, piecing together, joining, assembling and mixing, hoarding and dealing out; in general, selecting and adjusting things for reaching consequences.<sup>58</sup>

This is beautifully expressed, but one question is missing: *who* is doing (and understanding) this? And moreover: *who* is telling the story? This is to ask for a (here) invisible, reflected, and reflective agent. It is not to ask for a ready-made knowing subject or a subject of experience behind and independent of the process of experience, which Dewey argues strongly against. He stresses that “the self or subject of experience is part and parcel of the course of events, it follows that the self *becomes* a knower,”<sup>59</sup> and even says that “[p]rivate consciousness is an incidental outcome of experience of a vital objective sort.”<sup>60</sup>

Learning to know the persons acting and reacting – ourselves – and our identity and authenticity as agents-patients is also part of knowing our ways about, indeed is part of experience. This is critical in social life, in social and communicative experiences *with* other persons. We live with and through our own histories – and those told by others. Life is a matter of what could be called histories-in-view and identities-in-view, not only ends-in-view.

We leave Dewey and turn our attention to the works of Alva Noë, who in more ways than I can cover here shows promising ways of going on. His enactivist position grows out from a perspective on perception – as a kind of skilful activity on the part of the animal as a whole – and becomes also a perspective on experience. Although his position is similar to Dewey’s as shown by his emphasis on “the circular process of doing and undergoing and keeping track” (as quoted above), he has in addition worked out a wider reflective perspective on the process of experiencing – and thereby on knowing our ways about.

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57 Dewey, “The Need for a Recovery in Philosophy,” 12.

58 John Dewey, *The Quest for Certainty*, 125.

59 Dewey, “The Need for a Recovery in Philosophy,” 59; cf. also, for example, *Logic: The Theory of Inquiry*, 518.

60 Dewey, “The Need for a Recovery in Philosophy,” 11.

What he says about perception as an organized activity (as quoted in the preceding section) indicates where we shall focus our attention: on activities, practices of all sorts. Activities also organize us:

The first-order activities that organize us—walking, talking, singing, thinking, making and deploying pictures for this task or that—structure the landscape in which we find ourselves. But we may lack a sense of the lay of the land; we may be lost....<sup>61</sup>

Noë refers to art and philosophy as “organizational or reorganizational practices, practices for making sense of the ways we are organized.”<sup>62</sup> I would prefer a wider scope of reorganizational activities: all kinds of critical, experimental and reflective activities that are (re)organizing us in various practices of life; but perhaps these could be included as forms of art and philosophy *in* our daily lives. This would nicely match a remark Noë makes after the quotation above: that a reorganizational practice “is not a view of that activity from on high; it is an attempt *from within the activity* to make sense of where we find ourselves.”<sup>63</sup> He has elaborated on this in connection with *writing* as a way to (re)organize a practice in “The Writerly Attitude” and more generally in terms of fragility and entanglement in his contribution to this volume:

The use of language to adjudicate and regulate and indeed to reflect on language is one of language’s fundamental *first-order* modes. To worry about language, to reflect on it, to take up the writerly attitude to language, is *not* to interrupt language, but to enact it. Language contains its own meta-theory; or better, language contains, always, and from the start, the problem of *how to go on?* as well as that of *what’s going on?* Reflection on and argument about language, second order though they may be, are already contained within language as a first-order phenomenon.<sup>64</sup>

The best way of regarding language, for the purpose of understanding knowledge, is to see it primarily as an open and changeable set of language games, in – or connected to – various practices. In addition, there are certainly also more comprehensive language games connected to national cultures and other inter-communicative

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61 Noë, *Strange Tools*, 30.

62 Noë, *Strange Tools*, 30.

63 Noë, *Strange Tools*, 31.

64 Noë, “The Writerly Attitude,” 84.

cultures. However, language as a whole set aside, Noë's remarks are easily transformed to practices and language games as parts of practices. A formulation of this will be my seventh and last landmark:

7. First-order modes of carrying on practices also contain second-order (reorganizational) modes.

This also supports (or explains) my third thesis, that there are no *merely* habitual practices. Moreover, to reflect on practices and argue about them is of course as fallible as other attempts to improve our knowing our ways around in the world – or in Ryle's terms, can be carried out intelligently or unintelligently.<sup>65</sup>

Now we turn to the last topic in this section, which is also the concluding part of this chapter. I want to make visible the connection between perceptual skills – perceiving our ways about – and (a wider) knowing our ways about in a this-worldly perspective. This perspective implies a focus on practices that can be mastered and improved by (real) human beings. It is important here not to refer to philosophical theories *without* showing how they can fit into this world in, as it were, first-order mode.

In a rather early formulation of the enactive approach, Noë says that “the perceiver's ability to perceive is constituted (in part) by sensorimotor knowledge (i.e., by practical grasp of the way sensory stimulation varies as the perceiver moves).”<sup>66</sup> How does this practical (sensorimotor) grasp exist in the world?

My answer goes like this: we sense (perceive) and move *in* doing other things in life, in walking, shooting, looking for things, etc. Nobody learns plainly “to move” and “to see” and their (“sensorimotor”) interconnections – although these *words* of course can be used in a variety of practices. Think about a skilled cello player; they move their fingers with extreme precision, in ways that are only (realistically) possible to learn by playing the cello.

The sensorimotor terminology can unfortunately also be read as pointing to something absolutely basic, or primordial, or part of our animal existence, with other layers – concepts, culture – built on top of it, even if this certainly is not Noë's perspective (cf. his contributions to this volume).

What *is* (this-worldly) basic is that we have *learnt* to walk, speak, make coffee, carry out cognitive (psychological) experiments and a multitude of other things – and as part of that we have learnt *conditions of improvement* (cf. Section 3 above).

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65 Cf. my discussion in “Have I Kept Inquiry Moving? On the Epistemology of Reflection,” *Phenomenology & Practice* 2, no. 1 (2008): 4–23.

66 Noë, *Action in Perception*, 12.



All practices may *become* basic, so to speak.<sup>67</sup> Adding the proviso that all judgements about something being (or made) basic shall be understood as relational, more or less basic than something else.

Seeing, when understood this way, cannot be separated from the other senses, nor from the activities in which we use our senses (or tools) to *attend* to the world – which is better than “access” because from a this-worldliness perspective we are always in (fallible and fragile) contact with the world. This can also be put in the following way: our sensory experiences, as (part of) practices, mediate this contact. As language does – we still talk about animals with language. This implies, as argued before, that no perception or practice, nor parts of practices, is beyond conceptual form. I earlier also used the expressions conceptually “marked” or “infected.” Or put otherwise: our second nature is or becomes part of our first nature. This can be seen as a reformulation of the seventh landmark.

The idea is really very simple: the finger movements of the cello player as well as what they feel in their fingers, what they hear, and (perhaps) what they see are conceptually marked as part of cello playing, music performance (and so on).

*Knowing* our ways around is a normatively anchored notion. Carrying out practices can be done in correct, good, or intelligent ways – contrasted with incorrect, bad, or unintelligent ways – but the key notions are learning and improvement, as summed up in the fourth landmark. Or even more compressed: knowing and learning are becoming one concept. In a this-worldly perspective this refers to actual (developing) practices which are possible to judge, evaluate, and correct (in second-order mode) with a reasonable degree of (developing) agreement.

From my discussion so far, where I approach knowledge in terms of the *learning* and *improvements* of skills, including, of course, the (re)organization of skills, and thinking along the lines of Noë, a conclusion about how to improve our “sensory” and “sensorimotor” skills follows:

The most basic and simple idea, when thinking about perception, is perhaps this: you can only learn to see better, to hear better, etc., by engaging in practices where differences of what is seen, heard, etc., matters. The practices may be domestic (housework), caring, artistic, or of any other kind. This means a kind of human engagement which is dependent on what is *worth* seeing and listening to. That is, what is worth *doing* in a quite general sense. Here we must stick to normal human life.<sup>68</sup>

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67 One aspect of this is the transformation of *objects* to *tools* when we learn to use them in practices, such as they form “parts of ourselves,” as discussed by Polanyi, in particular in *Personal Knowledge*, Ch. 4 (“Skills”), and in *The Tacit Dimension*, 12–13, 16. However, Polanyi works within a too individualistic perspective.

68 I am grateful for comments and criticism from Bjørn Alterhaug, my co-editors, and the two anonymous reviewers for the Scandinavian University Press.

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