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Perspective”

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Habit, Action, and Knowledge from the Pragmatist Perspective

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The word habit may seem twisted somewhat from its customary use when employed as we have been using it.

John Dewey, 1922, 40

The highest quality of mind involves a great readiness to take habits and a great readiness to lose them. [...] No room being left for the formation of new habits, intellectual life would come to a speedy end. C. S. Peirce, CP 6.613; 1892

1. Introduction: It's habit all the way down

"As a rule, all habits are objectionable," declared Immanuel Kant, while trying to make his social and moral philosophy more accessible, in the late-period work, *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View* (1798/1974, 29). Habits are objectionable, he went on, because in them "the animal in man projects out of him too far [...] here he is led *instinctively* by the rule of habituation, like another (non-human) nature, and so risks falling into the same class as cattle" (Ibid, 28; Kant's emphasis). G.W.F. Hegel did not refer to cattle (as far as I know), but agreed that habit is an "ignoble" aspect in human action (as cited by Funke 1958, 9). The reason why 'habit' has had so bad press, throughout the history of philosophy (Funke, 1958; Camic, 1986), is apparently the following. David Hume may have put the prevailing idea best in words, by saying that "habit¹ operates before we have time for reflection." The reason why it operates so quickly is that it

¹ Or "custom"—Hume used these terms interchangeably. See, e.g., (Hume, 1985, 134).

“proceeds from past repetition without any new reasoning or conclusion” (Hume 1739–40/1985, 153, 152). Thus, according to this still prevailing understanding, in habitual action our mind is not in charge, we are not in the driver’s seat—to use modern idiom. Instead, we follow slavishly the repetitive routine pattern of action. And this is worrisome, because our intentionality, rationality and moral responsibility, the most valuable aspects in our action, are then not able to play their proper role.

The first thing to be noted is that this is *not* the Pragmatist view on the matter. Classical Pragmatism² completely discarded the above understanding about ‘habit’ and its role in human action. It redefined this term, so that it hardly is an exaggeration to call it the basic concept in classical Pragmatism. Needless to say, the meaning of the term then undergoes a radical transformation. In its Pragmatist usage, it does *not* refer to the routine character, but instead to *the process character* of human action. For Pragmatism, action is an already ongoing process, not a series of instantaneous, discrete actions. Human intentionality, rationality and moral responsibility are not forgotten, but Pragmatism situates them *inside* the habitual process of action, not outside, as is the traditional understanding. In this paper I explain how this Pragmatist understanding of ‘habit’ can be defended, and suggest that philosophy and the human sciences would only gain by paying more attention to it. Pragmatism has not merely put forward a new philosophical view, but even changed the *empirical* perspective on action. This interpretation can thus be evaluated by scientific criteria. It stands such a test surprisingly well,—this is my second major point.

It is perhaps worthwhile to note that individual action(s) do remain at our disposal, even if we take the position of Pragmatism. We are free analytically, by means of abstraction, to separate some individual action(s) from the wider, already ongoing process (habit). In the title of this paper, I strive to capture this peculiar order of events. Habit, the *process* of action, logically precedes singular instantaneous actions, which need to be analysed in terms of it. Questions about knowledge, in turn, which traditionally have taken pride of place in philosophy, can only be discussed and answered in terms of both (general) habits and (singular) actions.

This order of themes is not only different, but diametrically opposite to the traditional order in philosophy. Both analytic philosophy and phe-

² I use capital P about the original, classical version of Pragmatism, and lower case about those contemporary discussions that do not distinguish between the original and the neo-pragmatist variants.

nomenology, for example, tend to treat knowledge first, and the question of action as a derivative. (Details about what is most pertinent to knowledge differ between major approaches). As for habit, non-pragmatist philosophies either shun its treatment altogether, or treat it as a residual category in the analysis of action. Analytic philosophy and phenomenology might again disagree about details, but not about basic priorities. In contrast, Pragmatism is the first philosophy to take “human beings [as] creatures of habit,” and even so forcefully that “only a being with habits could have a mind like ours,” as Alva Noë, a philosopher of cognitive science, expresses the idea today (2009, 97–98; for comments, see Kilpinen, 2012).

At first sight, this seems to confirm many philosophers’ worst suspicions about pragmatism. Language theorist Jerry Fodor, for instance, takes pragmatism as “Cartesianism read from right to left; the genius of pragmatism is to get all explanatory priorities backward” (Fodor, 2008, 12). Accordingly, there can be no doubt that “Descartes was right” and pragmatism was, and still is, wrong. “Why, after all these years, does one still have to say these things?” concludes Fodor (2008, 14) his sermon. Someone more sympathetic to pragmatism might judge this verdict to be a bit hasty, but if s/he then learns that Pragmatism views human beings as “creatures of habit,” and that this concerns even our most cherished part—our mind—s/he, too, may take pragmatism to be a lost cause. The general view of habit does not seem to have changed very much from the views of Kant and others.³

Philosophy, however, should have changed its views here already at the time of classic Pragmatism, and it should do so today, at last, if it is to pay any attention to what modern cognitive science and the philosophy of mind that follows are telling us now. The idea that our unique kind of mind stems from the monitoring of our habits is no longer just a philosophical opinion but a finding of empirical research. Classic Pragmatism aspired to be and also managed to be an “empirically responsible philosophy,” as I have elsewhere called it (Kilpinen, 2013b; the saying is originally Lakoff’s and Johnson’s, 1999). Today, what is known as embod-

³ The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines habit “a thing a person does often and almost without thinking, especially something that is hard to stop doing.” *The Random House Dictionary* explains further that habit is “an acquired behaviour pattern regularly followed until it has become almost involuntary.” In recent empirical psychology, Neal, Wood and Quinn (2006) call habit “a repeat performance”. Ouellette and Wood (1998) assign habit and intention alternating roles, when “past behaviour explains future behaviour.” Bargh and Chartrand (1999) refer to habit poetically as “the unbearable automaticity of being.”

ied cognitive science, and the philosophy of mind building on it, represent, in my opinion, the same aspiration of empirical responsibility in the treatment of 'action' (on embodied cognitive science see Chemero, 2009). From a cognitive-cum-pragmatist viewpoint, to call human beings "creatures of habit" *does not at all* suggest a *slave of mindless repetitive routines*. Such a slave could certainly not have a mind like ours. The position of Pragmatism is rather the complete opposite. It does not by 'habit' refer to repetitive routines, but to "vehicles of cognition."⁴

But it is still a puzzle how habits can have anything to do with cognition, let alone serve as its "vehicles"? To get any clarity on the question, two traditional presuppositions need to be discarded. As already repeatedly said, classic Pragmatism does not relate habit to repetitive action, as other philosophies are prone to do. Secondly, and in a sense following from the former point, Pragmatists assume that the acting subject's mind *is* involved in the on-going action process, the phenomenon referred to (in Pragmatism) by the term 'habit'. Not only is mind present, but it is in charge of the whole affair. "Habits deprived of thought and thought which is futile are two sides of the same fact," was John Dewey's emphatic opinion (1922/2002, 67). He went on to specify the mutually constituting role of habit and thought as follows: "To laud habit as conservative while praising thought as the main spring of progress is to take the surest course to making thought abstruse and irrelevant and progress a matter of accident and catastrophe" (Ibid.). In brief, the Pragmatist position is that *intentionality without habituality is empty, habituality without intentionality is blind*. But if so, then we are entitled to repeat Fodor's (2008) above question, but now with different priorities and sympathies: Why, after all these years, does one still have to repeat these things when they actually jump out of the page if one reads the classics of Pragmatism at some length? The reason is probably that the Pragmatist understanding of 'habit' is so unusual and radical that most philosophers let the term pass as a mere colloquial expression, without imagining that serious philosophical issues might be involved here. I suggest, once more, that understanding 'habit' and the underlying idea correctly gives the key to understanding what Pragmatism is all about. Actually, even many thinkers known today as neo-pragmatists seem to have failed to grasp this radical pragmatic point.

⁴ A happy coinage by my compatriot, colleague, and friend Pentti Määttänen (2010).

2. Habit and action undergo a Copernican Revolution in Pragmatism

Classical Pragmatists drew two important conclusions from Darwin's revolution in the life sciences. One concerned action, the other concerned the world where the action is taking place. In the first place, (i) the question of how action originates ceased to be the central question while the *success* of action, or lack of success, began to assume importance. In other words, Pragmatists paid attention to the inherent *fallibility* of human action, so that the possibility of failure and error could be included in its treatment right from the beginning. In 20th century philosophy, Karl Popper became famous for emphasising the fallibility of knowledge. Pragmatists went even further by highlighting the *inherent fallibility of action*.⁵ They hinted at the position of the psychologist W. Ross Ashby in the 1940s, according to which "The whole function of the brain [or of the mind, if you like—E. K.] is summed up in: error correction" (as cited by Clark, 2013, 181). From this position, Popper's principle actually follows as a corollary. However, though action for Pragmatism is inherently fallible, from this premise stems also the fact that it is capable of self-correction, to a degree, in which it is also able to advance. Were this not true, we wouldn't be here. This fallibilist interpretation of action was included in Pragmatism from its genesis, in what is known as Charles Peirce's doubt/belief model of inquiry.⁶

Secondly (ii), after the Darwinian revolution some people began to see the world as undergoing continuous but irregular change. When Peirce, for example, said that "Darwin's view is near to mine" (EP 1, 222; 1884), he did not have biology in mind. He rather referred to the ontological conclusion that if living creatures are mutable, but yet adapting to their environment, as Darwin's theory proved, this suggests the further conclusion that the environment is mutable as well. It has undergone changes and all possible changes may not have yet appeared. In other words, Peirce's (and other Pragmatists') conclusion was that the *world (or reality, if you like) is a process*, though not necessarily linear, but more often

⁵ Popper of course did make the unintended consequences of intentional action a central theme in philosophy, but did not include them as necessary constituents of a complete action definition, they remained contingent phenomena. In this sense, Dewey's idea of reconstruction, for example, which is based on *continuous monitoring of the fallible action-process*, and takes both intended and unintended consequences into account, is a more advanced notion than Popper's.

⁶ 1877–78; see EP 1, chap. 7–8; for a detailed action-theoretic interpretation of Peirce's principle, see (Kilpinen 2010).

than not with hitches and jumps. They advanced a *process ontology* based upon their acceptance of the theory of evolution (see further Kilpinen, 2009, 166f.; see also Rescher, 1996; 2000). Combine these two principles, (i) action taken as fallible, and (ii) the process character of the world (or reality), and you can conclude that *for Pragmatism, human action is a process as well, it is not a string of individual actions that take place one at a time.* However, though action is a continuous process, it is not linear but one that at irregular intervals ends up in crises.

One shouldn't need to argue for this conclusion; it ought to be part and parcel of all competent discussions about Pragmatism. However, I will assume the burden of proof here and try to offer textual evidence in its support. Whilst doing that, I also use the occasion to prove another of my previous points, namely, that habit, which refers to the *process-character* of action in Pragmatism, is, on the explanatory level, prior to action.

Hume, we recall, maintained that habit or custom "proceeds from past repetition without any new reasoning or conclusion" (1985, 152). Without mentioning Hume by name, but of course well aware of the emerging contradiction, Peirce instead insisted that "Habits are not for the most part formed by the mere slothful repetition of what has been done, but by the logical development of the potential germinal nature of the man, generally by an effort, the accident of having done this or that merely having an adjuvant effect" (NEM 4, 143, ca. 1898).

The reason why Hume defined 'habit' in terms of repetition was his conviction that "a habit can never be acquir'd by merely one instance" (1985, 154). According to Peirce, one instance may well suffice, or rather, no instance of repetition is needed at all, as he once says that he would "not hesitate to say [that] a common match has a *habit* of taking fire if its head is rubbed, although it never has done so yet and never will but once" (Peirce MS(s) 104, 13, n.d.; Peirce's emphasis). Thus, a radical transformation in the meaning of 'habit' has occurred while it has travelled from Hume to Peirce. The term 'habit' is indeed "twisted" in Pragmatism, as Dewey said (1922, 40). As is apparent at a first glance, by 'habit' Peirce means in the last passage the *disposition* of the doer, or of the thing in question, (a match is an instrument rather than doer). This is an essential part of his intended meaning as he discusses 'habit' elsewhere.

Peirce states the matter explicitly in one of his central articles, "Prolegomena to an Apology for Pragmaticism" (originally published in *The Monist*, 1906), where he gives one of his most detailed definitions of his three basic types of signs: icon, index and symbol. He writes about the

last type that a sign can be interpreted to refer to its object, "by more or less approximate certainty that it will be interpreted as denoting the object, in consequence of a habit (which term I use as including a natural disposition), when I call the sign a *Symbol*" (CP 4.531; 1906; Peirce's emphasis).⁷

Regarding disposition, however, we must not take it in an exclusively bodily sense, as Peirce also speaks about habits as constituents of our *intellectual* life (CP 6.613). Peirce's and other Pragmatists' aversion to the mind/body dualism is well known in the literature, and I believe that the double meaning that they give to habit (it is both mental and corporeal) is a case of their efforts to overcome it. However, as Peirce, Dewey and other classics consistently stick to the term 'habit', whilst aware that they have "twisted" its meaning, the conclusion also arises that they wish to express something special with this traditional, almost colloquial term, which they now have twisted. My conclusion thus is that they are referring to the *sui generis process character of action* with their newly-interpreted term 'habit'.

This conclusion is, of course, no news to those who have so much as opened Dewey's *Human Nature and Conduct* (1922). However, today, that book does not seem to be very well known, and my point is that the process interpretation of 'action', to which 'habit' refers, characterises the entire classical tradition of Pragmatism. I lack the space to go through the writings of all members of the classic quartet, Peirce, Dewey, William James and G.H. Mead.⁸ For Pragmatism, habit is prior to an individual action. I also submitted that Pragmatists by 'habit' mean an action-process, and about processes we know that "for processes, to be is to be exemplified," as Nicholas Rescher, the leading process philosopher today, says (2000, 25). Accordingly, in the study of action, the order goes *from* larger totalities (habits) *onto* their briefer exemplifications, individual actions. Peirce proves my point, as he once states (CP 5.510; 1905) that "I need not repeat that I do not say that it is the single deeds that constitute the habit. It is the single ways, which are conditional propositions,

⁷ It is to be noted that Peirce consistently defines a Symbol by referring to a habit (in a sign's interpretation), both in the cited article (1906) and in his even more extensive discussion in the 1907 'Pragmatism' (EP 2, 398–433). He does not use philosophers' pet term 'rule' or social scientists' pet term 'convention'. Relating Peirce's 'symbol' to these latter notions is thus an intrusion by later scholars, not always to a happy effect. As habit is simultaneously a corporeal and mental mode of action, it can be *articulated* in the form of a rule or convention, but habit is the natural mode of symbol-mediated and symbol-mediating action, according to Peirce's doctrine.

⁸ About Mead see Kilpinen, 2013b and some other new interpretations that appear in the same collective volume, edited by Burke & Skowronski (2013).

each general—that constitute the habit.” In classical philosophy, and in the mainstream of contemporary philosophy, it *is* the single deeds that by continuous repetition constitute the habit. In overcoming this view (whose roots lie in mind/body dualism), and changing the entire perspective on the theme, Pragmatism has performed its “Copernican Revolution” (Kilpinen, 2009).

Above, Peirce said that it is the “ways” of doing, each general, that constitute the habit. There remains a slight ambiguity here, so that a critical reader might still remain unconvinced whether he gives primacy to habit over and above individual actions or not. The former is the correct answer. Peirce does understand habit as the primary category and (an) action as secondary, as an exemplification of the former. In his unfinished long draft of 1907, entitled “Pragmatism”, Peirce (EP 2, 402) goes to great pains to argue that intellectual concepts (symbolic signs, if you like) refer beyond mere existential facts, “namely [to] the ‘*would-acts*’ of habitual behaviour; and no agglomeration of actual happenings [read: individual actions] can ever completely fill up the meaning of a ‘*would be*.’” Our interpretation of habit as disposition (corporeal as well as mental and intellectual) thus receives support from Peirce’s original words. Yet another item to the same effect is forthcoming from the formulation with which Peirce concludes his cited account: “Now after an examination of all variants of mental phenomena, the only ones I have been able to find that possess the requisite generality to interpret concepts and which fulfill the other conditions [of definition] are habits” (EP 2, 431; 1907).

How can I assert that this interpretation of habit as disposition characterises the entire Pragmatic movement (in its classical period)? I do not have enough space to consult all relevant individuals, but we can let Peirce pass the verdict. It is true that he did not unreservedly agree with all of the ideas held by his fellow-Pragmatists (as some non-pragmatist commentators like to point out), and sometimes he brought out his disagreements poignantly. However, the conclusion that Peirce, with his doctrine of pragmatism, wanted to dissociate himself from the entire Pragmatic movement, is only a positivist pipe-dream. In truth, Peirce defined pragmatism as a *sub-division* of Pragmatism. He did stick to the latter wider doctrine, throughout his life, and his way to characterise it pertains to the treatment of our subject. At the end of the penultimate article of his publishing career, “A Neglected Argument for the Reality of God” (1908), Peirce enumerates strengths and weaknesses of other Pragmatists, and brings out his dissatisfaction with their “angry hatred of strict logic,”

but finds also important points of agreement, such that in my opinion outweigh the disagreements. As he says:

Among such truths,—all of them old, of course, yet acknowledged by a few,—I reckon their [other Pragmatists’] denial of necessitarianism; their rejection of any “consciousness” different from a visceral or other external sensation; their acknowledgment that there are, in a Pragmaticist sense, Real habits (which really *would* produce effects), under circumstances that may not happen to get actualized, and are thus Real generals); and their insistence upon interpreting all hypostatic abstractions in terms of what they *would* or *might* (not actually *will*) come to in the concrete EP 2, 450; Peirce’s emphases

This passage is loaded by characteristically Pragmatist expressions, all the way from a denial of mind/body dualism (consciousness is based on sensation, visceral or external), via a notion of realist process ontology (all possible circumstances need not become actual), to the interpretation of habit as the basic mode of action, to be analysed in conditional terms. To sum up and draw a conclusion: for Pragmatism, action is a *relation* between the subject and his/her/its world, in which both sides have a say. To say that it is a relation is tantamount to saying that it cannot be reduced to either of its constituents, to the acting subject or to the world. Both kinds of reduction have been attempted. Let us treat the outside world first. The movement known as behaviourism in psychology did try to reduce action to the outside world, by putting its emphasis exclusively on stimuli. However, as a general approach to psychology, let alone philosophy, this project was soon found to lead to a dead end.

Everyone agrees that behaviourist psychology is reductive, even its leading champions, J. B. Watson and B. F. Skinner, never denied this.⁹ How many people have realized that the other option that highlights the role of intention can be just as reductive? It is reductive in the sense that it seeks for determinants of action exclusively inside the subject, in his or her preferences, values, or—you name your favourite intentional term. If we concentrate exclusively on these, we lose contact with the outside world, and forget that all action takes place in some particular situation, whose conditions are more or less—but only rarely completely—objective. The classical understanding of action in philosophy ever since Aristotle,

⁹ For a just critique of Watson, see Mead (1934); for a just critique of Skinner, see Dennett (1978/1997). They are “just” in admitting that the behaviourists have got *one* point right, in emphasizing the inalienable role of the outside world, which other approaches too often neglect completely.

relying on mind first-explanations of action, reduces action to the subject of action. The lesson to be taken is that we cannot fight behaviourism by means of naïve intentionalism (to indulge in some sarcasm), nor can we do the opposite trick and reduce action to mere stimuli from the outside. Adopting the Pragmatist position allows us to have our cake and eat it too, to see some valuable aspects both in intentionalism and in behaviourism, without accepting either of them as the entire truth.

3. A Word about Empirical Relevance

I suggested above that the classic Pragmatist notion of action is not a mere philosophical hypothesis but one with empirical relevance. It thrives well in the light of more recent scientific knowledge, and now I will strive to prove my point.

In some previous publications (Kilpinen, 2012; 2013a; 2013b), I have shown how the original Pragmatist hypothesis (explicit in Mead, implicit in Peirce and Dewey) about the intersubjective constitution of the human mind receives ample support, not to say verification, from recent empirical findings. This corroborating evidence is due to the discovery of so-called "mirror neurons" in the human brain, the perhaps most thorough discussion of which is to be found in Rizzolatti's and Sinigaglia's monograph (2008). However, I just used a phrase that appears in the popular media but actually is misleading. In point of fact, brain scientists have not discovered any new neuron-types in the human brain. What they have found is a new *function* in and for such already known neurons that govern human visual and motor activities. This "mirroring function" gives credibility to the idea that G. H. Mead already developed a long way, namely that our mind is intersubjectively constituted, and that our individual subjectivity is based on this intersubjective foundation. We can read our own mind insofar as we can read other people's minds (Mead, 1925/1964, 292; cf. Franks, 2010; Kilpinen, 2013b).

However, this conclusion about the constitution of our mind, important though it is, does not yet exhaust what this brain-scientific finding has to teach us. Recall that we are dealing with neurons that guide our physical action, and the above psychological finding is accordingly founded on a presupposition concerning our action: It is an already ongoing action process that provides the foundation for those mental operations. Rizzolatti and Sinigaglia (2008, xi) find explicit faults with prevailing action-theoretic "explanations which tend to separate our intentional

acts from the pure physical movement required to execute them.” The lesson to be taken is that the separation of intention and execution can be made only as an analytic distinction. As an empirical description of our doings it is faulty for the reason that the execution is not a mere mechanical movement, but is precisely guided and monitored by the agent’s intention (see Rizzolatti & Sinigaglia, 2008, 35–36; Kilpinen, 2013b, 13–14). As the cited authors take this foundational action process as already ongoing, we are entitled to conclude that by this they mean, at least approximately, what classic Pragmatists already meant by the term ‘habit’. We are now in a position to see the point in Alva Noë’s (2009, 118) seemingly blatant assertion that “a habit-free existence would be robotic existence.”

A naïve reader might answer that the truth is just the opposite, a slave of habits rather behaves like a robot. The point, however, is precisely that we are not slaves of our habits, we are their masters! With this observation we also realize something about the role of intentionality and rationality. Contrary to what might come to mind, they are not neglected; their job description is considerably *enhanced*, if we follow Pragmatist premises. They now have to see the entire performance through, not only to send the acting subject on his way, as was the idea in the traditional understanding that separated intention and execution as two occurrences.

4. How Can We Know with Our Habits?

A theme still remains untreated, namely the Pragmatist conception of knowledge, which I promised to take up. In the article “Prolegomena to an Apology of Pragmaticism” (1906), already cited, Peirce makes also an interesting aside about knowledge. As he writes:

[...] since symbols rest exclusively on habits already definitely formed but not furnishing any observation even of themselves, and since knowledge is habit, they do not enable us to add to our knowledge even so much as a necessary consequent, unless by means of a definite preformed habit

CP 4.531

Two points are involved in this brief passage. In the first place, Peirce says laconically—but for this very reason also enigmatically—that “knowledge is habit.” In addition he speaks about us adding to our knowledge, rather than, say, possessing some. These points are involved with each other, and they both highlight the Pragmatist position about epistemic questions. (1) Peirce’s laconic expression “knowledge is habit” lets us understand that he means by knowing a form of doing, rather than being

in a mental state. (Pragmatism assumes no ontological division between mental and material doing, we remember. In both of them, continuous habit is the basic mode.) (II) Peirce's phrase about adding to our knowledge gives a first hint about the Pragmatist principle that in matters epistemic, the basic question concerns knowledge-acquisition (in Pragmatist terms: *inquiry*), rather than the possession of knowledge. Let us take a closer look.

I have to be brief about Peirce's point that "knowledge is habit." Suffice it to note that it receives apt elucidation from Dewey (2002, 182–3), who argues that "The scientific man and the philosopher like the carpenter, the physician and politician know with their 'habits', not with their 'consciousness'. The latter is not a source [of the knowledge]." To some people it appears that Dewey here tries to reduce the principle "knowing that" to another, "knowing how," to use Gilbert Ryle's (1949/1970) terminology—this criticism has been presented many times against Ryle, Dewey, and other pragmatists. The criticism loses most of its thrust, if we keep consistently in mind that (I) Pragmatism allows no mind/body dualism, which is implicitly assumed, when "knowing how" and "knowing that" are *contrasted*. For another thing (II), we should remember Pragmatism's other principle that knowledge-acquisition (inquiry) is to be taken on a par with, or even as overriding the notion of knowledge-possession.

Classical Pragmatism understands 'inquiry' as an *epistemic* concept, a point too often neglected. This idea reflects the basic assumption in this philosophy that action is the way in which we exist in the world, in other words, it is not a contingent phenomenon. (The above phrase is originally by Hans Joas). The above ontological position of Pragmatism, process ontology, also pertains to this question. In a process world, *epistemic hunger* (to borrow Dennett's 1991 phrase) is the basic knowledge interest. From this principle—universal action in a process world—follows that *we are all inquirers*, though only a small minority of us are intellectual, scientific or philosophical inquirers.

Quite recently this principle has received new support from an unexpected angle. Although Jaakko Hintikka is a bona fide analytic philosopher by his background, he has occasionally expressed sympathy towards classical Pragmatism as well, and in his logical work he has reached conclusions that give some support to this tradition. As Hintikka says (2007a, 13), "The basic insight [for a new approach to epistemology] is that there is a link between the concept of knowledge and human action." That link is in the realization that we need knowledge to guide us in ac-

tion, and we obtain knowledge by conducting inquiries. A further reason and the reason why inquiry indeed should be taken as the basic notion in epistemic matters is given by Hintikka:

Surely the first order of business of any genuine theory of knowledge—the most important task both theoretically and practically—is how new [information is] acquired, not merely how previously obtained information can be evaluated. A theory of information (knowledge) acquisition is both philosophically and humanly much more important than a theory of whether or not already achieved information amounts to knowledge. Discovery is more important than the defence of what you already know
Hintikka, 2007a, 17–18

The upshot of this formulation might be taken as “Peirce and Dewey updated” in the sense that Hintikka’s conception of inquiry (the Interrogative model, as he calls it), is founded on a more advanced logical foundation, but has just the same knowledge-interest as that of the classical Pragmatists (cf. Hintikka, 2007b). Hintikka’s conception pertains also to the question about the correct meaning of the Pragmatist habit-term, as he observes that his predecessor Peirce used this term almost as a down-right logical concept. Its closest equivalent in modern logic is the concept of ‘strategy’ that more recent logicians have borrowed from the theory of games. What is interesting from the viewpoint of the present paper, is that Hintikka draws an analogous conclusion concerning the position of individual action(s) in their surrounding totalities, that we drew above. He interprets Peirce’s theory of ampliative inference to indicate

a need of some notion such as strategy in his requirement that the aim of scientific abduction is to “recommend a course of action.” For such a recommendation can scarcely mean a preference for one particular action in one particular kind of situation, but presumably means a policy recommendation.
Hintikka, 2007b, 47

The use of human reason in inquiry, in logical terms, in ampliative inference (of which abduction is one case), suggests as its result a *course* of action (policy), but not individual actions one by one. Above I concluded that in Pragmatism ongoing action-processes (habits) have priority over and above their briefer exemplifications (singular actions), and Hintikka’s interpretation (and further development) of Peirce’s logic gives support to this idea. The only thing to be added is that the above principle does not concern merely scientific abductions but as much those that are performed in everyday life. In both spheres, the basic interest is the advancement of knowledge rather than its justification. (Justification is important,

but its turn comes *after* the advancing step.) Let Hintikka formulate this knowledge interest one more time: "The criteria of knowledge concern the conditions on which the results of epistemological inquiry can be relied as a basis of action" (2007a, 30). This is classical Pragmatism vindicated, to speak solemnly.

However, it is not the same thing as to vindicate what today is known as neo-pragmatism.¹⁰ I shall not go into the issues involved, concerning the assumed universality of language and its character as a window into the human mind. Nor shall I raise here the question whether,—and if yes, in what sense,—neo-pragmatism (an expression in fact used by Charles W. Morris already in 1928) goes in the footsteps of the original variant. Instead I wish to remind, by way of conclusion, about the untapped resources that still remain in the original tradition. In 1906, Peirce wrote that he had recently received "a shower of communications" thanking and congratulating him for the invention of pragmatism. This, he went on, "causes me to share the expectations that I find so many good judges are entertaining, that pragmatism is going to be the dominant philosophical opinion of the twentieth century" (CP 6.501). As everyone knows, the history of philosophy in the twentieth century did not turn out like that. But it may well be that Peirce was only excessively optimistic but not so wrong about what is pertinent to philosophy. My own opinion is that the last word about the classical tradition of Pragmatism has not yet been said. When it is said, keeping all the time in mind this philosophy's sense of "empirical responsibility" (i.e. sensitivity to research advances outside philosophy in the strict sense), it may well turn out that this tradition survives as a major tradition in the twenty-first century. I am among those who find such a development not only possible but desirable.¹¹

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¹⁰ Hintikka has intimated this elsewhere, asserting that "there is no trace of actual pragmatists" in the ideas championed by neo-pragmatists (Hintikka 1997, xx).

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