

BETH A. BARKER

Department of Philosophy
Northwestern University
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RESEARCH

Areas of specialization Philosophy of mind, action, epistemology

Areas of competence Cognitive science, applied ethics (animal ethics, bioethics), logic

EDUCATION

PhD, in progress, Philosophy, Northwestern University expected defense: May 2025
Dissertation: *A Practical Guide to Know-How*
Committee: Sandy Goldberg (chair), Jennifer Lackey, Baron Reed, Will Small (external,
University of Illinois at Chicago)

MA, Philosophy, University of Missouri 2018

BA, Philosophy, Spanish, Summa Cum Laude, Evangel University 2015

DISSERTATION SUMMARY

I establish a novel view of the debate about knowledge-how and confront its core assumption: that knowing how to ϕ , for any activity ϕ , is or requires a distinctively practical kind of knowledge. I argue that there's no such thing as 'knowledge-how', or a distinctively practical kind of knowledge, and the reason is that ordinary propositional knowledge is already practical in all the ways we wanted knowledge-how to be. I call the resulting view 'Practical Intellectualism'. In a slogan: *all knowledge is practical knowledge*.

PUBLICATIONS

'Knowing how and being able' 2024
Synthese 204, no. 76: pp. 1–20. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11229-024-04707-8>

'Epistemic Injustice and Performing Know-How' 2021
Social Epistemology 35, no. 6: pp. 608–20. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02691728.2021.1882608>

WORKS IN PROGRESS

'The Knowledge Objection to Know-How' (under revision for 'revise and resubmit')

‘How to Over-Intellectualize Know-How’ (under review)

‘There’s No Such Thing as Knowledge-How’

‘What is Knowledge-How?’

‘Ryle’s View of Intelligence’

PRESENTATIONS

(peer reviewed)

- | | |
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| ‘How Knowledge-How Is Practical: Two Theses’
Submitted Symposium, American Philosophical Association (APA) Central Division Meeting,
New Orleans | 2024 |
| ‘What Should an Account of Knowledge-How Be an Account Of?’
Submitted Symposium, APA Eastern Division Meeting, New York | 2024 |
| ‘Propositions in Action: The Problem of Over-Intellectualizing Know-How’
Rule-Following: Between Nature and Culture, University of Hradec Králové | 2023 |
| ‘Propositions in Action: The Problem of Over-Intellectualizing Know-How’
Concepts in Action: Representation, Language, and Applications, Concordia University | 2023 |
| ‘Ryle’s Regress from Category Mistake’
Normative Guidance Workshop, Australian National University | 2022 |
| ‘Epistemic Injustice and Intellectualist Know-How’
Submitted Symposium, APA Central Division Meeting, Denver | 2019 |

INVITED COMMENTARIES

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| Kyoungmin Cho, ‘Against Subjectivism about Final Ends: The Fickleness Argument’
Northwestern Society for the Theory of Ethics and Politics (NUSTEP), Northwestern University | 2023 |
| Ian Dunkle, ‘Can an Action be Difficult beyond Compare?’
APA Central Division Meeting, Denver | 2023 |
| Keshav Singh, ‘The Paradox of Consequentialism’
NUSTEP, Northwestern University | 2022 |
| Ben Henke, ‘Degree Encroachment’
12th Annual NU/ND Graduate Epistemology Conference, University of Notre Dame | 2021 |
| Ofra Magidor, ‘Meaning Transfer Revisited’ | 2018 |

Kline Workshop on Semantics and Logic, University of Missouri

Bob Fischer, 'Veganism, Vegetarianism, and the Duty to Signal' 2018
Kline Workshop on Animal Ethics, University of Missouri

AWARDS

American Association of Philosophy Teachers (AAPT) Teaching and Learning Seminar 2024
(\$300 to participate in the seminar and concurrent AAPT conference)

Graduate Writing Center Fellowship 2023-2024
Northwestern University

Normative Guidance Workshop, travel funding 2022
Australian National University

Scott T. Davey Memorial Prize for Excellence in M.A. Research 2018
Awarded for 'Epistemic Injustice and Intellectualist Know-How', University of Missouri

TEACHING

(* = upcoming)

Primary Instructor

School of the Art Institute of Chicago

Critical Thinking 2024

*Theory of Knowledge 2025

Loyola University Chicago

Philosophy and Persons 2022, 2023

Judgment and Decision-Making (intermediate) 2021

University of Missouri

Introduction to Ethics 2018, 2019

Introduction to Bioethics 2019

Introduction to Philosophy 2018

Teaching Assistant

Northwestern University

Modern Philosophy (intermediate) 2021, 2023

Introduction to Philosophy 2023

Theory of Knowledge (intermediate) 2023

*Elementary Logic I 2024

*Elementary Logic II (intermediate) 2022, 2025

Bioethics 2021

University of Missouri

Medical Ethics 2018

Logic and Reasoning 2017

Introduction to Philosophy 2017

Introduction to Ethics 2016

Fellow

Northwestern University

Graduate Writing Center 2023-2024

(advised graduate student and faculty writing, led writing workshops)

GRADUATE COURSEWORK

(NU = Northwestern University; MU = University of Missouri)

Language, Epistemology, Mind

Reasoning and representation (audited; L. Rips, NU Department of Psychology); Higher-order evidence (S. Goldberg, NU); Philosophy of inquiry (S. Goldberg, NU); Legal epistemology (J. Lackey, NU); Seminar in language and mind (M. Glanzberg, NU); The modal future (F. Cariani, NU); Epistemic modality (P. Weirich, MU); Self-knowledge (M. McGrath, MU); Knowledge-how (P. Markie, MU); Formal Semantics (A. Radulescu, MU); Semantics (A. Radulescu, MU); Pragmatics (C. Horisk, MU)

History

Belief and doubt in early modern philosophy (B. Reed, NU); Creaturely life before—and against—Descartes (L. Shannon, NU Department of English); Knowledge, persuasion, and power in ancient philosophy (P. Marechal, NU); Understanding and reason in Kant (R. Zuckert, NU); Russell and Wittgenstein (D. Sievert, MU); Locke's metaphysics (M. Folescu, MU); Aristotle's ethics (N. Baima, MU)

Social and Political, Ethics, Value

Group-based morality (S. White, NU); Derrida/Agamben (A. Ricciardi & I. Alfandary, NU); Topics in aesthetics: Sublimity, ugliness, and horror (R. Zuckert, NU); Critical phenomenology of race, gender, sexuality (J. Medina, NU); Ideal and non-ideal theory (K. Ebels-Duggan, NU); Habermas's theory of communicative rationality (C. Lafont, NU); Political authority and anarchy (P. Vallentyne, MU)

Logic and Metaphysics

The classical limitative results (S. Ebels-Duggan, NU); Seminar in logic (P. Weirich, MU)

SERVICE

Co-organizer , Graduate Works in Progress (graduate students present and discuss work in early stages of development) Northwestern University, Department of Philosophy	since 2022
Co-organizer , Northwestern/Notre Dame Graduate Epistemology Conference	since 2022
President , Philosophy Graduate Student Association (PGSA) Northwestern University	2022-2023
Climate Committee Member Northwestern University, Department of Philosophy	2021-2022
Graduate Leadership and Advocacy Council Representative , PGSA Northwestern University	2021-2022
Tea-Time Coordinator , PGSA Northwestern University, Department of Philosophy	2021
President , Philosophy Department Graduate Student Organization (GSO) University of Missouri	2018-2019
Philosophy Department Representative , Graduate Professional Council University of Missouri	2017-2018
Treasurer , Philosophy Department GSO University of Missouri	2017-2018

LANGUAGES

English - native
French - intermediate/advanced
Spanish - intermediate/advanced
ASL - beginning

REFERENCES

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Baron Reed, Professor
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Will Small, Associate Professor
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CV updated November 2024

DISSERTATION ABSTRACT

A Practical Guide to Know-How

Parties to the debate about know-how tend to agree that knowing how to φ , for any activity φ , is a matter of having a distinctively practical kind of knowledge regarding φ . They just disagree about how to characterize this knowledge. Intellectualists argue that know-how is practical *propositional* knowledge. And anti-intellectualists argue that it's an intelligent ability or disposition that amounts to a practical kind of *non-propositional* knowledge.

In four stand-alone papers, I establish a novel view of the debate and argue that it gives us no reason to think there must be a *distinctively* practical kind of propositional knowledge. In a slogan, the view I develop and defend, *Practical Intellectualism*, is that all knowledge is practical knowledge.

In 'What is "Knowledge-How"?', I show that the debate about know-how contains two explanatory projects. One is to characterize the state of S that makes claims like 'S knows how to φ ' apt. I call this the 'Practical Knowledge Project' (PKP). The other is to characterize the interaction between S's state (their 'know-how') and their performance—to answer the questions, *When S φ s, how does S's know-how inform their φ -ing? What makes their φ -ing intelligent, when it is?* I call this the 'Intelligent Action Project' (IAP). Broadly speaking, intellectualists take up PKP, and anti-intellectualists take up IAP. The upshot is that insofar as parties to the 'debate' take up distinct explanatory aims, they're not at odds about the nature of knowing how to φ , but about what 'knowledge-how' picks out: a state or its application.

Establishing this view of the debate allows me to address two prominent patterns of objection and response. In 'The Knowledge Objection to Know-How', I confront a persistent objection to anti-intellectualism, which I call 'the Knowledge Objection', or KO. According to KO, anti-intellectualism is an inadequate view of 'knowledge-how' because it equates knowing how to φ with being able to φ and thereby fails to amount to a view of a kind of *knowledge*, properly speaking. I develop and defend a novel response to KO: KO *doesn't apply* because contemporary anti-intellectualism isn't a view about 'knowledge-how'. Anti-intellectualism is better understood as a view of what's involved in our exercises of intelligence.

The most persistent complaint against intellectualism, on the other hand, is that it over-intellectualizes know-how. In 'How to Over-Intellectualize Know-How', I find that the worry behind this complaint is misplaced. The intellectualist runs no risk of over-intellectualizing 'knowledge-how', since the risk arises at a point outside of the intellectualist's purview: what it is to *apply* knowledge to action (IAP). Insofar as the intellectualist is invested in PKP, the concern that they 'over-intellectualize knowledge-how' doesn't apply.

The final paper, 'There's No Such Thing as Knowledge-How', dispenses with the myth that knowing how to φ is, or requires, a distinctively practical kind of knowledge. In place of an account of distinctively practical knowledge, I develop and defend a novel view of what makes 'S knows how to φ ' apt. This is the view I call 'practical intellectualism': 'S knows how to φ ' is apt when S has the ordinary propositional knowledge they need in order to φ . Ordinary propositional knowledge is already practical in all the ways we wanted 'knowledge-how' to be. It turns out that there's no such thing as 'knowledge-how'.