

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 Chicago)

MA, Philosophy, University of Missouri 2018

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

DISSERTATION SUMMARY

Ascribing know-how is a way of explaining or predicting success. Why is the espresso from Metric Coffee so good? The roasters know how to roast and the baristas know how to pull espresso. Why does the coach call on *that* batter? That batter knows how to hit. It's natural to think that roasters, baristas, and batters have a distinctively practical kind of knowledge that makes them good at what they do. However, I show that there's no such thing as a distinctively practical kind of knowledge. I develop and defend a deflationary intellectualist view of know-how, according to which, when we say 'S knows how to ϕ ', we ascribe S ordinary propositional knowledge, knowledge of facts relevant to ϕ -ing. The idea is that we don't need to characterize anything *distinctively* practical to explain how roasters, baristas, and batters are good at what they do. Ordinary propositional knowledge is already practical.

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’ (under revision for ‘revise and resubmit’)

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

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

PRESENTATIONS

(peer reviewed)

‘How Knowledge-How Is Practical: Two Theses’ 2024
Submitted Symposium, American Philosophical Association (APA) Central Division Meeting, New Orleans

‘What Should an Account of Knowledge-How Be an Account Of?’ 2024
Submitted Symposium, APA Eastern Division Meeting, New York

‘Propositions in Action: The Problem of Over-Intellectualizing Know-How’ 2023
Rule-Following: Between Nature and Culture, University of Hradec Králové

‘Propositions in Action: The Problem of Over-Intellectualizing Know-How’ 2023
Concepts in Action: Representation, Language, and Applications, Concordia University

‘Ryle’s Regress from Category Mistake’ 2022
Normative Guidance Workshop, Australian National University

‘Epistemic Injustice and Intellectualist Know-How’ 2019
Submitted Symposium, APA Central Division Meeting, Denver

INVITED COMMENTARIES

Kyoungmin Cho, ‘Against Subjectivism about Final Ends: The Fickleness Argument’ 2023
Northwestern Society for the Theory of Ethics and Politics (NUSTEP), Northwestern University

Ian Dunkle, ‘Can an Action be Difficult beyond Compare?’ 2023
APA Central Division Meeting, Denver

Keshav Singh, ‘The Paradox of Consequentialism’ 2022
NUSTEP, Northwestern University

Ben Henke, ‘Degree Encroachment’ 2021
12th Annual NU/ND Graduate Epistemology Conference, University of Notre Dame

Ofra Magidor, ‘Meaning Transfer Revisited’ 2018
Kline Workshop on Semantics and Logic, University of Missouri

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

American Association of Philosophy Teachers (AAPT) Teaching and Learning Seminar (\$300 to participate in the seminar and concurrent AAPT conference)	2024
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Graduate Writing Center Fellowship Northwestern University	2023-2024
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Normative Guidance Workshop, travel funding Australian National University	2022
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Scott T. Davey Memorial Prize for Excellence in M.A. Research Awarded for 'Epistemic Injustice and Intellectualist Know-How', University of Missouri	2018
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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 (advanced)	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 (advised graduate student and faculty writing, led writing workshops)	2023-2024
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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 (forum for graduate students to discuss their own work, at any stage 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

French (intermediate, advanced reading proficiency)
Spanish (intermediate, advanced reading proficiency)
ASL (basic)

CV updated August 2024

DISSERTATION ABSTRACT

A Practical Guide to Know-How

Parties to the debate about know-how tend to take it for granted 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 distinctively practical kind of knowledge. Intellectualists tend to argue that know-how is a practical kind of *propositional* knowledge. And anti-intellectualists tend to argue that it's an intelligent ability or disposition that amounts to a practical kind of *non-propositional* knowledge.

In four chapters, I reveal and diagnose a series of significant misfires in this debate. The conclusion I reach is that trying to characterize a distinctively practical kind of knowledge is a false errand. There's no such thing as 'knowledge-how'. I deliver a positive view of what we mean by claims like 'S knows how to φ ', which I call 'deflationary intellectualism'. The idea is that what we ascribe when we ascribe 'know-how' is ordinary propositional knowledge. S knows whatever they need to know in order to φ .

In chapter 1, I show that parties to the debate about know-how work from one of two starting assumptions about the way know-how must be practical. Intellectualists take it for granted that know-how is practical because it explains what makes S likely enough to succeed at *phi*-ing. Applied: my knowing that w is a way to make coffee makes it probable that I'll succeed at making coffee when I try. If I didn't know this, I'd be less likely to succeed (or, my success would be lucky!). Anti-intellectualists take it for granted that know-how is practical because it explains the very possibility of φ -ing intentionally. On this view, I make coffee when I intend to because I have the ability to make coffee. The significant upshot is that parties to the debate about know-how don't share an explanatory project. And insofar as they don't share an explanatory project, they're not at odds regarding the nature of know-how.

In chapter 2, I draw out a consequence of this upshot for anti-intellectualism. There's a persistent objection to anti-intellectualism, which I call 'the Knowledge Objection', or KO. According to KO, anti-intellectualism is inadequate as a view about what it is to know how to φ because it equates know-how with ability and thereby fails to amount to a view of a kind of *knowledge*, properly speaking. I develop and defend a novel response to KO on the anti-intellectualist's behalf: KO *doesn't apply* because contemporary anti-intellectualism isn't a view about what it is to know how to φ . Anti-intellectualism is better understood as a range of views about what's involved in our exercises of agency.

The view of the debate that emerges from chapters 1 and 2 is this: intellectualism turns out to be the only available view of what it is to know how to φ . The most persistent complaint against intellectualism is that it over-intellectualizes know-how. In chapter 3, I survey the ways of substantiating this complaint and find that the worry behind it is misplaced. The intellectualist runs no risk of over-intellectualizing what it is to know how to φ , since the risk arises at a point outside of the intellectualist's purview: what it is to *apply* knowledge to action. I argue that this isn't a proper part of an account of know-how as such.

The final chapter dispenses with the myth that know-how is a distinctively *practical* kind of knowledge. I survey what reasons there are in the literature for thinking know-how is distinctively practical and show that none is compelling. So, in place of an account of distinctively practical knowledge, I develop and defend a novel view of what we ascribe when we ascribe 'know-how'. This is the view I call 'deflationary intellectualism': knowing how to *phi* is a matter of knowing facts relevant to *phi*-ing, where 'knowing' is knowing in the ordinary propositional-knowledge sense. The idea is that 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'.