

Brian Killackey

Curriculum Vitae

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Education

PhD Candidate: Philosophy

2020 –

The Catholic University of America

Dissertation: “Knowing and Thinking We Know: Awareness of Ἐπιστήμη in Aristotle”

Committee: Jonathan Buttaci (Director); Thomas Marré; Robert Sokolowski

MA: Philosophy

2017 – 2020

The Catholic University of America

Thesis: “Hunting for Causes: Aristotle on Pursuing, Professing, and Possessing Scientific Knowledge”

Directed by Jonathan Buttaci

BA: Classics and Philosophy (*summa cum laude*)

2008 – 2012

Christendom College

Thesis in Classics: “God’s Gift of Love: A Study of the Holy Spirit in Augustine and Hilary”

Directed by Mark Clark

Thesis in Philosophy: “Beauty, Ugliness, and the Upward Journey”

Directed by Douglas Flippen

Research Interests

AOS: Ancient Philosophy, Epistemology

AOC: Medieval Philosophy, Logic, Philosophy of Human Nature

Dissertation Abstract

“Knowing and Thinking We Know: Awareness of Ἐπιστήμη in Aristotle”

Aristotle’s treatment of scientific knowledge (*epistēmē*) and scientific inquiry has long provoked scholarly attention. While most scholars have asked when a knowing subject *possesses* scientific knowledge, I seek to give a comprehensive answer to a related question, “When does a knowing subject *thinks* he possesses it, rightly or wrongly?” Aristotle shows consistent and insistent concern for the place of the deluded knower and holds that scientific knowledge is a “luminous” state (i.e. one which I cannot possess without being aware that I possess it). I examine this theme under two headings. First, Aristotle is concerned, most obviously, with those who *mistakenly* claim to have scientific knowledge. Though scientific knowledge describes a state that always grasps the truth, we are often mistaken in our individual claims to have it. I show how the application of inappropriate principles and methods of scientific inquiry can lead to such mistaken self-ascriptions, and I show how this awareness qualifies as a false *doxa* to which typical normative considerations would apply. Second, I turn to an examination of Aristotle’s positive, and puzzling, claim that those who have scientific knowledge also think that they have it. I

show how Aristotle’s more general theory of cognitive awareness allows him to make this claim without committing himself to an infinite regress of higher-order cognitive attitudes. Though Aristotle does not adhere to a “KK Principle” for knowledge (i.e. if I know, then I know that I know), he is committed to the essential unity of knowing and being aware that I know, in ways that are analogous to, but distinct from, perceptual awareness. I conclude by applying these lessons to the topic of scientific inquiry, whose *telos* is knowledge, not the false claim to knowledge.

Conference Presentations

“Knowing God Through His Effects: The Role of Nominal Definition in *Quia* Demonstration”

- 59th International Congress on Medieval Studies, Western Michigan University (May 2024) (accepted)

“Failing to Know Ourselves: Aristotle on *Doxa* and Self-Deception”

- “Self-deception in Ancient Philosophy,” National and Kapodistrian University of Athens (June 2023)
- Student-Faculty Colloquium, The Catholic University of America (April 2023)

“A Neglected Feature of Aristotle’s Definition of ἐπιστήμη in *Posterior Analytics* A.2”

- Fall 2022 Annual Meeting, Society for Ancient Greek Philosophy (October 2022)

Awards

Knights of Columbus Graduate Fellowship , The Catholic University of America	2017 – Present
Jude Dougherty Fellowship , The Catholic University of America	2020 – 2021
Pass with Distinction , PhD Reading List I (Ancient and Medieval)	October 2020
Pass with Distinction , MA Oral Exam	April 2020
Palestrina Scholarship , Christendom College	2010 – 2012
Presidential Scholarship , Christendom College	2008 – 2012
Perfect Score , National Greek Exam: Homeric Greek, American Classical League	2010
Perfect Score , National Greek Exam: Intermediate Greek, American Classical League	2009

Teaching Experience

Undergraduate Instructor, PHIL 202: The Modern Mind Spring 2021; Spring 2022; Spring 2023

The Catholic University of America

- Full teaching responsibilities
- Introductory philosophy course surveying Descartes, Locke, Rousseau, Nietzsche, and other thinkers

Undergraduate Instructor, PHIL 201: The Classical Mind Fall 2020; Fall 2021; Fall 2022

The Catholic University of America

- Full teaching responsibilities
- Introductory philosophy course surveying Plato, Aristotle, Boethius, and Aquinas

Substitute Lecturer, PHIL 201: The Classical Mind Fall 2019

The Catholic University of America

- Conducted two sections on Aquinas’s *Summa Theologiae* I, q. 2, aa. 2-3

Substitute Lecturer, PHIL 212: The Modern Mind (honors) Spring 2019
The Catholic University of America
• Conducted two sections on Locke’s *Two Treatises of Government*

Substitute Lecturer, PHIL 211: The Classical Mind (honors) Fall 2018
The Catholic University of America
• Conducted two sections on Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics II*

Academic Service and Activities

Organizing Committee, Annual Philosophy Graduate Conference, Catholic University Spring 2019
Abstract Referee, Annual Philosophy Graduate Conference, Catholic University Spring 2019
Secretary, Greek Reading Group, Catholic University Spring 2022 – Present
Member, Greek Reading Group, Catholic University Fall 2017 – Present

- Aristotle, *Generation of Animals II* (Fall 2023)
- Plato, *Republic VI and VII* (Spring 2023)
- Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics VI* (Fall 2022)
- Proclus, *Elements of Theology* (Spring 2022)
- Plato, *Lysis* (Spring 2021)
- Aristotle, *Topics I* (Summer/Fall 2020)
- Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics V* (Spring 2020)
- Plato, *Alcibiades I* (Fall 2019)
- Plotinus, *Ennead I.1* (Spring 2019)
- Plato, *Crito* (Fall 2018)
- Plato, *Critias* (Spring 2018)
- Aristotle, *Poetics* (Fall 2017)

Conference and Workshop Attendance

(* = application required)

- * “The Soul: Competing Perspectives on Its Existence and Nature,” Thomistic Circles Student Forum, Thomistic Institute, Dominican House of Studies (February 2023)
- * “The Normativity of Nature,” Thomistic Seminar, Witherspoon Institute, Princeton University (August 2022)
- * “The Thought of John Henry Newman,” Lumen Christi Institute, Oxford University (July 2022)
- * “On Justice,” Thomistic Seminar, Witherspoon Institute, Princeton University (August 2021)
- “Shared Inquiry Seminar,” Great Books Foundation (May 2021)
- * “Metaphysics and Mindedness,” Thomistic Seminar, Witherspoon Institute, Princeton University (August 2020)
- * “Metaphysics and the Soul in Thomas Aquinas,” Lumen Christi Institute, University of Chicago (June/July 2019)

“The Legacy of Anscombe and Her Oxbridge Contemporaries,” Annual Philosophy Graduate Conference, The Catholic University of America (February 2019)

“Aquinas on Divine Attributes,” 8th Annual Thomas Aquinas Philosophy Workshop, Mount Saint Mary College (June 2018)

“Cognition,” Annual Philosophy Graduate Conference, The Catholic University of America (April 2018)

Aristotle Workshop on *Nicomachean Ethics* V, The Catholic University of America (October 2017)

“Aquinas on Metaphysics,” 7th Annual Thomas Aquinas Philosophy Workshop, Mount Saint Mary College (June/July 2017)

Graduate Coursework

Ancient

- Aristotle on Intellect and Intellectual Virtue J. Buttaci
- Plato’s Theory of Recollection C. Ionescu
- Evil in Neoplatonic Philosophy M. Vorwerk
- Aristotle’s *Posterior Analytics* J. Buttaci
- Aristotle’s *Politics* R. Sokolowski

Medieval

- Bonaventure and His Sources T. Noone
- Metaphysical Themes in Thomas Aquinas J. Wippel
- Medieval Epistemology: Thirteenth Century T. Noone
- Thomas Aquinas Speaks of God J. Wippel
- Avicenna, Averroes, and Aquinas on Intellect S. Ogden

Modern

- Hegel and His Critics A. Barba-Kay
- Descartes’s *Meditations* J. McCarthy
- Kant’s *Critique of Pure Reason* M. Rohlf

Contemporary

- Metaphysics As Science M. Gorman
- Intention M. Gorman

Other

- Common Good V.B. Lewis
- The Issue of Truth in Phenomenology and Metaphysics R. Sokolowski
- Before Printing: Philosophical Texts T-A. Druart
- Wholes, Parts, and Principles of Motion R. Hassing

Non-Academic Experience

DevOps Engineer
Confluence Technologies

Part-time: 2019 – 2023

Client Support Specialist
Compliance Solutions Strategies

Part-time: 2017 – 2019

Full-time: 2015 – 2017

Missionary Volunteer in Cusco, Perú

2012 – 2013

Language Competencies

Ancient Greek (reading)

French (speaking and reading)

German (reading)

Italian (reading)

Latin (reading)

Spanish (speaking and reading)

References

Jonathan Buttaci, PhD (director)
Assistant Professor, School of Philosophy
The Catholic University of America
buttaci@cua.edu

Thomas Marré, PhD (first reader)
Assistant Professor, School of Philosophy
The Catholic University of America
marre@cua.edu

Msgr. Robert Sokolowski (second reader)
Ordinary Professor, School of Philosophy
The Catholic University of America
sokolowski@cua.edu

Herbert Hartmann, PhD (teaching reference)
Collegiate Assistant Professor, School of Philosophy
Director of First-Year Experience
The Catholic University of America
hartmann@cua.edu