

Nathaniel B. Taylor

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Degrees

Fall 2015 – Fall 2022 Doctor of Philosophy Marquette University

May 2015 Bachelor of Arts
Magna cum laude University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire

AREAS OF SPECIALIZATION

Medieval Arabic and Latin Philosophy, especially Aquinas and Avicenna; Ancient Greek Philosophy, especially the Neoplatonic commentators; Metaphysics, Philosophical Theology, History and Philosophy of Logic and Language.

AREAS OF COMPETENCE

Theory of Ethics, Human Nature, Logic.

LANGUAGES

Reading Competency: Ancient Greek, Latin, Arabic, Italian

Reading and Speaking Competency: French

DISSERTATION

“The Categories Argument for the Real Distinction between Being and Essence: Avicenna, Aquinas, and their Greek Sources.” Directed by Dr. David Twetten. There is a distinctively Avicennian way of understanding the categories to be found in the works of Thomas Aquinas that vindicates Aquinas’s early argument for the distinction between being and essence. Two of the most important and influential Aquinas scholars in the twentieth century recognized the roots of this Avicennian way in Aquinas, but both Etienne Gilson and Cornelio Fabro in different ways did not make good on their insights. In this dissertation, I trace this Avicennian way through its sources in the Greek commentators and demonstrate how it provides the necessary insight into the structure and nature of the categories that render Aquinas’s Genus Argument intelligible. When one studies the history of the phrase “being per se” as a (quasi) definition of substance, one encounters a tradition of reading the categories after Aristotle that regards them as categorizing essences to which “being per se” or “being not in a subject” is like a property of substance. Avicenna recognizes the need to clarify in what sense of “being” the phrase “being not in a subject” can—and, more importantly, cannot—designate a property of substance. Thanks to Avicenna, Aquinas resumes this tradition. For Aquinas, the ten genera categorize composite essences that are distinguished according to their diverse modes of being—modes that are, in one sense, proper to them and, in another sense, owed to them as something external. In short, the dissertation shows Avicenna, and Aquinas in his wake, to be an inheritor of and participant in the late antique Greek commentary tradition. Only when we understand this background, can we understand Thomas’s “Genus Argument,” not as a mere logical argument, subject to a fallacious inference from logical to ontological considerations. Just as we must ascribe to Avicenna an argument from the (quasi) definable essence of the categories to an extramental distinction

between essence and “being in act” (wujūd bi-fi‘l), so Aquinas’ Genus Argument is a form of Avicennian “Categories Argument” from the structure of the ten genera or categories of reality.

PUBLICATIONS

“Do Accidents Contain Inhering in a Substance in Their Definition? Siger vs. Aquinas and the Background in Avicenna,” *The Metaphysics and Theology of the Eucharist*, ed. Gyula Klima, forthcoming (Co-author with David Twetten). Forthcoming.

“Substances in Subjects: Instantiation and Existence in Avicenna.” *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 96 no. 3 (2022). Winner of the American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly’s annual “Rising Scholar” essay competition.

PRESENTATIONS

[2022]

“If ‘Being Not in a Subject’ Is Not the Definition of Substance, Then What Is It? Avicenna and some Late Antique Commentators.” Notre Dame Conference on Medieval Philosophy and Theology. Notre Dame, IN. May 2022.

[2021]

“Categories, Essence, and Modi Essendi: Avicenna at the Heart of Aquinas's Metaphysics.” Aquinas and the Arabic Tradition. American Catholic Philosophical Association 95th Annual Meeting. St. Louis, MO. November 2021.

“Categories, Essence, and Modi Essendi: Avicenna at the Heart of Aquinas's Metaphysics.” Midwest Seminar in Ancient and Medieval Philosophy. Marquette University. Milwaukee, WI. October 2021.

“Thomas Aquinas and the “Is It?” Question: A Meeting of Two Arabic Philosophical Traditions.” Classical Philosophy in the Lands of Islam. 56th International Congress for Medieval Studies. Western Michigan University. Kalamazoo, MI. May 2021.

[2019]

“The Place of “Being” in the Definition of Substance: a Notable Development in a Neoplatonic Debate concerning Matter.” Matters Entangled: an Early-Career Symposium. Institut für Philosophie, Humboldt Universität zu Berlin. July 12th, 2019. Essay available at <https://marquette.academia.edu/NathanielTaylor>

“Is a Substance a Being through Itself? Aristotle’s Silence, Simplicius’s Affirmation, and Avicenna’s Rejection.” Philosophy in the Abrahamic Traditions Workshop: Neoplatonism & Aristotelianism in Early Arabic Philosophy. Presented by the Departments of Philosophy at the University of Denver and Marquette University along with the University of Denver’s Center for Judaic Studies. Hosted in Milwaukee, WI. June 19th-21st, 2019. Essay available at <https://marquette.academia.edu/NathanielTaylor>

“The Problem of a ‘*Per Se Existent*’ and Aquinas’s Avicennian Metaphysics.” Aquinas and the Arabs International Working Group Spring/Summer International Meeting, Centro Congressi le Benedettine Università di Pisa. Pisa, Italy. Philosophy in the Abrahamic Traditions: Intellect, Experience, and More. May 22nd-25th, 2019.

The 'Is It?' and the 'What Is It?' that the Metaphysician Determines.” Society for Medieval and Renaissance Philosophy. 54th International Congress for Medieval Studies, Western Michigan University. Kalamazoo, MI. May 9th-12th, 2019. Essay available at <https://marquette.academia.edu/NathanielTaylor>

[2018]

“The “Is” of Truth and the “Is It?” Question: Critical Notes on Dewan.” Sixth Annual Aquinas and the Arabs Graduate Student Workshop, Marquette University. Milwaukee, WI. March 23rd, 2018.

[2017]

“How the Intellect Knows Natures: Essentialism and Scientific Necessity in Thomas Aquinas.” Aquinas and the Arabs International Working Group’s Fall North American Workshop, Notre Dame University. South Bend, IN. August 25th, 2017.

“How the Intellect Knows Natures: Essentialism and Scientific Necessity in Thomas Aquinas.” Twelfth Annual Marquette Summer Seminar on Aristotle and the Aristotelian tradition. The Midwest Seminar in Ancient and Medieval Philosophy, Marquette University. Milwaukee, WI. June 27th, 2017.

“Divine Names and Divine Predication: Some Muslim, Jewish, and Christian Perspectives.” Christian-Muslim Relations in America Today: an Interdisciplinary Symposium, Marquette University. Milwaukee WI. March 2017.

“Scientia contra Inscitiam: Thomas Aquinas, Essentialism, and Scientific Necessity.” Fifth Annual Aquinas and the Arabs Graduate Student Workshop, Marquette University. Milwaukee, WI. February 10th, 2017.

TEACHING & ACADEMIC EXPERIENCE

Marquette University, Graduate Instructor (Instructor on record), Present.
Marquette University, Lecturer, 2019- 2020.
Marquette University, Graduate Instructor (Instructor on record), 2017-19.
Marquette University, Research Assistant – Philosophy Department, 2015-2017.
University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire, Research Assistant – Ronald E. McNair Postbaccalaureate Achievement Program, 2013-2015.
University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire, Academic Writing Assistant, 2012-2015.
University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire, Writing Fellow, 2014.
Memorial High School (Eau Claire, WI), Teaching Assistant, 2014.

GRANTS, AWARDS & DISTINCTIONS

2021-2022 Rev. John P. Raynor, S.J. Fellowship. \$23,000.
2021 American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly's 2021 Rising Scholar competition. \$3000.
2018-2020 Philosophy Graduate Student Association Director
2019 Travel Grant. Marquette University Graduate School. \$750.
2019 Thomas C. Anderson Teaching Award

PROFESSIONAL SOCIETIES

Aquinas and The Arabs International Working Group – Graduate Student Officer and Communications Director
American Catholic Philosophical Association
The International Society for the History of Arabic and Islamic Science and Philosophy
Society for Medieval and Renaissance Philosophy

UNIVERSITY SERVICE

2021 Aquinas and ‘the Arabs’ International Working Group Graduate Workshop. Organizer (invited speakers, coordinated distribution of papers, master of ceremonies for conference proceedings).
2020 – Present Aquinas and ‘the Arabs’ International Working Group. Communications & Graduate Student Officer.
2020 Marquette University Graduate Student Conference. Organizer (determined topic, invited speakers, arranged for venue, arranged for panels and commentators).
2019 Marquette University Graduate Student Conference. Organizer (determined topic, invited speakers, arranged for venue, arranged for panels and commentators).
2018-2020 Philosophy Graduate Student Association Director
2017 Marquette University Interdisciplinary Symposium: Christian-Muslim Relations in America Today. Participant and assistant.