

INQUIRY IN EPISTEMOLOGY: DOXASTIC ATTITUDES AS ZETETIC ATTITUDES*

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1 WHITHER INQUIRY?

What is inquiry? While I can't provide a complete philosophical account or theory, I can point it out. We all know it well. Imagine this typical morning. You wake up and look at the clock: 8 am. You check your phone and your messages, look at your emails. Your department chair has emailed asking for your availability for meetings this semester, so you look at your calendar and fill in the poll. You go to make some tea but you don't seem to have any left so you check the other pantry. You think about whether you should get some exercise this morning — is there time for a run? You check the weather, look at the clock again, and think about which layers to wear. Maybe you should eat something first so you go to the fridge to see what you have and figure out what you're in the mood for. Are there enough eggs left? You think about whether you have time to get groceries today after work. While you're making breakfast you notice something weird-looking hiding behind a jar on the counter so you take a closer look — ah, that's where that pencil went!

I could keep going describing this utterly mundane string of events. There is nothing remarkable or unusual about this morning, just a run-of-the-mill start to the day. This is part of what makes it interesting for us though. Although in one sense bland, from the perspective of someone interested in understanding inquiry, it's a rich specimen, teeming with *zetetic* life.¹ What's been described in this imaginary but ordinary day is a series of inquiries: What time is it? Who messaged me? Which Mondays am I free this semester? Is there any more tea in the pantry? Should I run today? What's the weather like out there? What's in the fridge? What's that in the corner? And so on.

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¹'Zetetic' here means 'having to do with inquiry'. (tk. cross cite?)

The morning is ordinary and that's the point. Inquiry is ordinary. It's a central part of daily human (and other animal) life. As we move through our world each day there is information we need and want to acquire, things we need and want to know, and we often inquire in order to get there. This isn't to say that inquiry is reserved for merely mundane information collection. We investigate deeper, bigger, and more consequential matters too — our philosophical projects, scientific and humanistic pursuits, interpersonal relationships, and more. We also inquire in decidedly less pointed ways than those described, as when we're curious about (say) outer space or rattlesnakes.² Altogether our lives are filled with inquiries big and small.

Someone new to epistemology might have expected to find the study of this commonplace epistemic activity at the centre of contemporary epistemic theorizing. So why hasn't it been there? This is of course hard to say. There are all sorts of reasons why a field takes the direction it does. But some of the ways that contemporary epistemology has progressed in the last few decades have made it somewhat inhospitable to a proper study of inquiry. In brief, for many epistemologists, a subject is epistemically rational just in case they have their doxastic life in order, where this is largely a matter of believing things in some circumstances and withholding belief in others. Crucially, on a picture like this, epistemic norms are doxastic norms — norms on belief (and other doxastic attitudes) alone.³ If that's right though then epistemology can only tell us so much about how inquiry should proceed. In your mundane morning inquiries just described you may have been trying to form some beliefs, but the activity you were engaged in was not a believing nor the formation of beliefs, instead it involved a range of mental and bodily action. In the next section I'll flesh out a picture of epistemic rationality like the one alluded to here and try to get clearer on what it will say about rational inquiry.

A reader might wonder: Why should the reach of epistemic rationality be so short or shallow, touching only the rationality of our doxastic attitudes? What principle is at work that leaves it so restricted? I don't have an answer for this wondering reader, and it is not my aim to offer one in this piece. Rather, my aim is to amplify the suspicion driving this wonder. My plan is to argue for an account of the doxastic attitudes that positions them as central zetetic attitudes. If forming and having doxastic attitudes is in part a matter of making zetetic moves and taking up zetetic positions, then, my thought is, epistemology already has much to say about how we should

²See Dover (2024) on these more capacious inquiries.

³In this piece I am using 'doxastic attitudes' to pick out just the 'traditional', coarse-grained doxastic attitudes (belief, disbelief, and suspension of judgment).

conduct our inquiries. If that's right, then what principled reason do we have to ignore the rest of it? This is a kind of 'sideways-on' case for an expansive epistemology. If questions about whether we should believe p are already questions about how to conduct our inquiries, then our epistemic assessments are already zetetic assessments and there's perhaps no epistemic theorizing that happens independently of zetetic theorizing. Questions about which doxastic attitudes we should have and when are already questions about how we should inquire.⁴

2 DOXASTICISM AND ZETETIC ENTANGLEMENT

In this section I want to better draw out the sort of position that makes it difficult for theories of inquiry to make epistemology their home. Like many domains of discourse or theorizing, epistemology has had much to say about its borders. What counts as within the purview of epistemology? One source of insight is discussions of epistemic normativity. Epistemology, like other largely normative areas, describes its normativity in a diversity of ways: via reasons, duties, justification, prohibitions, blameworthiness, and so on. But, in theorizing about this normative array in epistemology, we typically don't want to theorize about reasons or justification in general, nor about specifically (say) moral reasons or justifications. Instead we are trying to flesh out distinctively epistemic elements of the normative array: distinctively epistemic norms, a distinctively epistemic kind of rationality, distinctively epistemic reasons and justifications, requirements, permissions, warrant, blameworthiness, vice, and so on.

In virtue of what is some reason (or duty or warrant...) epistemic? This is a matter of debate, but here is a statement from Thomas Kelly that captures what I take to be fairly commonplace thinking,

Suppose that I hear a strange and unexpected sound behind me, and, seeking to find out the source of this noise, I turn around. Here, the reason that I have to turn around is an instrumental reason—I have the (cognitive) goal of finding out what is responsible for the relevant noise, and given this goal, it is instrumentally rational for me to change my epistemic position in a certain way. Suppose further that, upon turning around, I discover the

⁴This picture of the doxastic attitudes might be thought of as an 'inquiry-first' picture, according to which questions about what to believe are to be answered by way of questions about how to inquire. See Kelp (2021) for a more general sort of inquiry-first view. See also Dover (2024) for a different, but perhaps related sort of inquiry-first treatment of the relation between inquiry and knowledge.

source of the noise: a cat has entered the otherwise-empty room. Finding myself face-to-face with the cat, it is now epistemically rational for me to believe that a cat was responsible for the noise. (Kelly (2003): 634)

There are a few things going on in this passage, but what I want to draw our attention to for now is the sort of division of labour that is at its centre. This passage describes a subject (call him Tom) inquiring. Tom has a question he wants to answer, ‘What’s making that noise?’. This motivates him to perform some actions that he thinks will help him to get that answer. And those actions do just that: they put him face-to-face with a meowing cat. This gives him information about the source of the noise, and he updates his beliefs based on that new information. He comes to believe (and even know) the answer to his question, viz. ‘This cat was making that noise’.

While Kelly claims that all of the things done by Tom in this vignette are rational, he wants to say that they are rational in crucially different ways. Tom is instrumentally rational when he turns towards the direction of the sound he heard but epistemically rational when he believes that the cat he then sees was responsible for that sound. For Kelly these two kinds of rationality are distinct.⁵ In other words, while Tom’s looking around for the source of the noise is rational, it’s not epistemically rational. This isn’t to say that Kelly thinks it’s epistemically irrational, rather the thought is that Tom’s investigation is simply not epistemically evaluable; epistemic normativity is not sufficiently pervasive to render a verdict about those actions of Tom’s.

What epistemic rationality is not silent about though is Tom’s belief. Once Tom spots the meowing cat, it is epistemically rational for him to believe that the cat was making the noise he heard. So there are two claims about the scope of epistemic rationality in this case: it does extend to Tom’s belief, and it does not extend to Tom’s looking around. These claims are just about Tom, but Kelly quickly generalizes,

The reasons which one has to engage in practices of evidence-gathering and experimentation are instrumental reasons; once the experiments have been performed, however, what it is ratio-

⁵The question of whether they are distinct — more specifically, of whether epistemic rationality is a species of instrumental rationality — is the main question Kelly is trying to answer in his paper. He argues that epistemic rationality is not a species of instrumental rationality. But it’s important to make clear here that the mere fact that some reason or demand (etc.) is instrumental does not on its own tell us whether it is epistemic or not. For a recent, in-depth treatment of epistemic instrumentalism, see Sharadin (2022).

nal to believe is no longer a matter of instrumental (but rather epistemic) rationality. (635)

A view that naturally emerges from this discussion is one about the ‘scope’ of epistemic normativity: the only sorts of acts and states that are epistemically evaluable are doxastic acts and states. Let’s call this view *doxasticism*. Kelly doesn’t explicitly endorse doxasticism in his paper, although I think it’s a position he would be happy to endorse. And he’s not alone. Doxasticism is surely the default position in epistemology as to the pervasiveness of epistemic normativity. For instance, positions like evidentialism and reliabilism are positions explicitly and entirely about the justification (etc.) of doxastic attitudes. A lot of epistemologists fall into these (and closely related) camps.⁶

The impact of doxasticism for theories of inquiry is immediately felt. Kelly is explicit about some of this when he tells us that on his view reasons to engage in evidence-gathering and experimentation are not epistemic reasons. But evidence-gathering and experimentation are central zetetic acts. For the doxasticist, reasons to engage in these parts of inquiry are not going to be epistemic reasons. In general, while it may well be that we should sometimes collect evidence, do experiments, ask more questions, and so on, for the doxasticist that ‘should’ is non-epistemic. How should we conduct our inquiries? According to the doxasticist, it’s not for the epistemologist to say.

There are many ways to push back against doxasticism. Why think theirs is the right way to think about the scope of epistemic normativity? I have done some of this pushing back in other work, trying to make a case for thinking of epistemology as more pervasive than the doxasticist would have it, reaching further into our inquiries.⁷ Rather than rehash these arguments here, I want to sketch out a different line of response. I want to argue for a sort of ‘zetetic entanglement thesis’ according to which the doxastic attitudes are themselves understood, at least in part, in reference to their roles in inquiry. Part of what it is to believe p or suspend judgment about Q is to take up particular kinds of zetetic stances or positions towards p and Q . In effect, the doxastic attitudes are themselves zetetic attitudes (at least in part).

The arguments to come draw on things I’ve said over a series of papers,

⁶Of course a lot is not all. Prominent defectors are those who have argued that there can indeed be epistemic reasons (and the like) for (non-doxastic) action. For example: Booth (2006), Singer and Aronowitz (2022) (who explicitly argue against doxasticism, or what they call $E \leftrightarrow B$), and Flores and Woodard (2023).

⁷In e.g. Friedman (2020) and Friedman (forthcoming).

but rely most heavily on the arguments in my 2017 paper, ‘Why Suspend Judging?’ and my 2019 paper, ‘Inquiry and Belief’. In the next section I’ll try to merge some of the arguments from those papers to bring out a picture of the doxastic attitudes — belief and suspension of judgment — according to which they are zetetic attitudes. This is to say, part of what it is to have these attitudes is to take up particular kinds of zetetic stances or orientations.

This won’t on its own show that epistemic normativity extends any further than the doxasticist would have it. But, if one has the feeling — as I do — that keeping epistemic evaluation tied to just the evaluation of doxastic attitudes is somewhat unprincipled or insufficiently motivated, I hope this argument will amplify that feeling. If believing and suspending judgment are themselves zetetic moves and zetetic states, and we think those should be epistemically evaluated, then why not the rest of our zetetic moves and states? If doxastic attitudes are zetetic attitudes, then doxasticism begins to look even more unprincipled, like an arbitrary restriction imposed on epistemic normativity. Why should the rest of inquiry be invisible to epistemic evaluation?⁸

3 INSPECTOR MORSE, INTERROGATIVE ATTITUDES, AND DOXASTIC INCOHERENCE

The ‘tripartite’ picture of the doxastic attitudes divides the doxastic attitudes into three types: belief, disbelief, and suspension of judgment. This picture might be better conceived of as a ‘bipartite’ picture given that for many epistemologists, disbelief is simply a type of belief — a belief that something is not the case.⁹ This leaves two main types of doxastic attitudes: belief and suspension of judgment. My entanglement thesis applies to both. That is, both are zetetic attitudes.

I am going to try to defend my entanglement thesis by starting with a set of cases from Friedman (2017). These are three similar cases all starring the famous fictional British detective, Inspector Morse. I quote the cases here in full.

⁸This isn’t to say that answers to questions like this are never given. For instance, Thorstad (2022) argues that there are no epistemic norms of inquiry based on some general thinking about epistemic rationality. More general discussions of the domain of ‘the epistemic’ — e.g. Cohen (2016), McGrath (2016) — also propose some answers. Also, see Kauppinen (2018) for some interesting discussion tying epistemic norms to ‘epistemic accountability’. These accounts leave various amounts of space for epistemic norms of inquiry.

⁹Not everyone thinks this way about disbelief. For some dissent see Smart (2020) and Sturgeon (2020).

The first Morse case is the normal or typical one. Morse is woken up by his telephone ringing in the early hours of the morning — a doctor in Oxford has been shot through her window while having dinner last night. Morse pulls himself together and heads to the scene of the crime. This is a normal case for Morse and he engages in a perfectly normal inquiry into who killed the doctor. He searches the scene, talks to potential witnesses, and so on. Then he discovers that the doctor was having an affair with the master of Lonsdale College, so he takes his investigation over to the college. And things go as expected there as well: he talks to more people, does more looking around, draws a few inferences, stops at the pub and eventually solves the crime.

[...]

The second Morse case is slightly different. Here again, the phone rings in the early hours of the morning, but this time it doesn't wake Morse up since he's been up all night. He's been up washing the blood out of his (beloved) car, scrubbing his flat, washing his clothes and burning or otherwise disposing of any evidence he can since last night he shot the doctor through her window while she was having dinner. Not wanting to be discovered, Morse must carry on as normal. He heads to the scene of the crime. What happens once he's there? Well, he tries to appear as normal as can be and so effectively does the things that he would do in the normal case: he goes from place to place, asks questions, writes things down, heads to the college and so on.

[...]

In this [third and] last [Morse] case, the phone rings in the early hours of the morning, again waking Morse up. As he wakes up he thinks with horror, "oh no, what have I done...", as thoughts of his killing the doctor last night flood his mind. But let's say that these thoughts aren't true memories at all, but only pseudo memories implanted in his mind by a crafty old nemesis who wants to frame him. Morse's flat has been set up to confirm his "memories", with evidence that he did it in plain view. He's convinced that he killed the doctor, even though in fact his nemesis did. (300-1)

I think there are a number of insights to be gleaned from these Morse cases. Let's call the first case the *typical-Morse* case, the second case the *knowing-Morse* case, and the last case the *believing-Morse* case. Many of the

conclusions I want to draw from these Morses begin with the main intuitive response I hope the reader has to the cases. This response: while typical-Morse (*t-Morse*) is inquiring into who killed the doctor, knowing-Morse and believing-Morse (*k-Morse* and *b-Morse*) are not. T-Morse is the only one of the three Morses who is genuinely inquiring into who killed the doctor; b-Morse and k-Morse are merely going through the motions.

This intuitive response to the cases already tells us something important about the nature of inquiry. Notice, from the outside, t-Morse, k-Morse, and b-Morse are mostly doing the same things. They are all talking to witnesses and asking them questions, they are all heading to Lonsdale College to talk to some people there, they are all looking at things at the scene of the crime, collecting items there, and so on. We can stipulate that all three Morses are the same from the perspective of externally observable zetetic behaviour. This means that whatever it is that makes it that t-Morse is inquiring while the others are not, is not going to be found at the level of externally observable behaviour.

Instead, if we want to tell these Morses apart, we will have to look within. Within the Morses, that is. T-Morse is genuinely trying to figure out who killed the doctor; the other Morses are not. T-Morse wants to know who killed the doctor, he's curious about who killed her, he's wondering about that question, he's deliberating about it, he is pondering and contemplating the question. But none of these sorts of descriptions apply to believing- or knowing-Morse. They aren't curious about who killed the doctor or wondering about that question. They aren't contemplating or deliberating. They don't want to figure it out since they think they already have.

So if we want to tell the various Morses apart, we should look to their mental states. In particular t-Morse seems to be well-described as having a range of 'inquisitive' attitudes: desires (broadly construed) to know and understand, curiosity, wondering, and so on. I have called these sorts of inquisitive attitudes — curiosity, wondering, deliberating, etc. — *interrogative attitudes*. And I think it is exactly these attitudes that separate t-Morse from the other Morses. Interrogative attitudes are question-directed attitudes. They have questions (rather than, say, propositions) as their contents or objects. T-Morse is curious and wondering about *who killed the doctor* (and the other Morses are not). When Inspector Morse investigates other murders in the other episodes of the show, he is curious and wondering about questions about those other murders. These interrogative attitudes are themselves inquisitive, in a way. Someone curious about a question may not be actively investigating that question, but they want to or are inclined to; they care about resolving it and will be drawn to the sort of information

that will help them make progress on it. In sum: a crucial difference between t-Morse on the one hand and b-Morse and k-Morse on the other? T-Morse has interrogative attitudes towards the question of who killed the doctor; b-Morse and k-Morse have no such attitudes towards that question.

This point extends well beyond the Morses. Almost anything we do can, in some contexts, be done as part of our inquiries, but in other contexts not be. I can look at pictures of snakes to figure out what sort of snake I just saw or because I like looking at pictures of snakes; I can take a sip of the smoothie I made to see if it tastes ok or because I'm thirsty; I can dial your number because I want to see if your phone works or because I want to say hi; and so on. In general, we need to be able to say what it is that makes some instance of φ -ing a 'zetetic' instance of φ -ing rather than a non-zetetic instance of φ -ing. My answer: at least the presence of an interrogative attitude. More precisely, any case in which one inquires into Q by doing φ is a case in which one has some interrogative attitude towards Q.

So thinking about these Morse cases brings out something important about the inner kernel of inquiring. When we are inquiring into some question that's in part because we have certain kinds of attitudes towards that question. Those attitudes can motivate and guide our inquiries. These interrogative attitudes are going to be a key to seeing why my zetetic entanglement thesis holds. To get there though, let's go back to our Morses.

When we read the three Morse cases, we only see t-Morse as a genuine inquirer. And I argued that this is because he's the only one of the three Morses to be in a genuinely inquisitive state of mind. From the outside these Morses look the same, but on the inside they are very differently poised with respect to the question of who killed the doctor. But I didn't explicitly describe this aspect of the inner lives of the Morses in the cases. Instead I largely described their views about the answer to the question of who killed the doctor. B-Morse believes that he killed the doctor and k-Morse knows that he did. Why did that element of these Morses point us to the conclusion that they weren't curious or wondering (etc.) about who killed the doctor (and therefore weren't genuinely inquiring)?

I think the answer becomes clearer if we try to imagine b-Morse or k-Morse as also genuinely curious or wondering. Imagine, for instance, a variant of believing-Morse, believing-Morse⁺. Like believing-Morse, believing-Morse⁺ is convinced that he killed the doctor. But unlike believing-Morse, believing-Morse⁺ is also genuinely curious and wondering about who killed her. This Morse is really, genuinely trying to figure out who committed this crime but also really, genuinely believes that he himself committed the crime. If you're having a hard time imagining this character, that's to be expected.

There is something quite confusing about him. For instance, think about the sorts of things he might say, e.g. ‘I killed the doctor last night, but I’m curious who killed her last night’ or ‘I’m the one who killed the doctor, but I wonder who did it’. This doesn’t make a lot of sense.

But this, I think, brings out why b-Morse and k-Morse aren’t read as having interrogative attitudes. When we read the Morse vignettes we assume that the various Morses are largely rational. Then we’re told that believing-Morse is convinced of some answer to the question of who killed the doctor and knowing-Morse knows the answer to that question. But Morses like that who also wondered or were curious about who killed the doctor couldn’t be rational Morses — they would be (as we just saw) Morses in fairly confused states, states we would have a hard time making sense of. These are not the sorts of states Morse (or anyone) ought to be in. So given that we read the Morses as largely rational, we don’t read b-Morse and k-Morse as also curious or wondering (or genuinely inquiring) since that wouldn’t be a rational combination of attitudes.¹⁰

If this is right then our intuitions about these Morse cases help to bring out the plausibility of a pair of norms that speak to the interaction between the interrogative attitudes and the doxastic attitudes.¹¹

Knowledge Norm One ought not have interrogative attitudes towards Q (/inquire into Q) while knowing the answer to Q.¹²

Belief Norm One ought not have interrogative attitudes towards Q (/inquire into Q) while believing an answer to Q.¹³

¹⁰Is it even a possible combination of attitudes? Is it possible for someone who knows or believes the answer to some question to also be curious about that question? Yes. Here’s a quick example. Say in the course of typical-Morse’s investigation he questions various people at Lonsdale College. He finds out that the college bursar was absent the day after the murder and may have known the doctor. But then he talks to the bursar and finds out that she was away on vacation at the time of the murder. Still, the next day Morse wakes up and starts going through the possible suspects at the college in his mind. But he’s just woken up and is a bit groggy (maybe even had a couple too many pints at the pub), and at that moment the bursar’s vacation slips his mind. He wonders: Why wasn’t the bursar in college the day after the murder? He starts thinking it through and looking through the schedules of everyone on the college staff. He becomes more and more curious about where the bursar was. But then it dawns on him: Oh, right, the bursar was in Greece on holiday at the time of the murder! In this case, Morse was genuinely curious and wondering about where the bursar was but all the while he knew the answer to that question.

¹¹These norms are notational variants of my Ignorance Norm from Friedman (2017) and DBI from Friedman (2019).

¹²This Knowledge Norm and the next Belief Norm are both ‘wide-scope’ norms. They place restrictions on combinations of attitudes rather than on any attitude individually.

¹³Here and throughout when I talk about answers to questions I always mean ‘complete’

Since the focus of this piece is the doxastic attitudes, let's keep our attention on the Belief Norm. I want to try to think a bit more now about why the Belief Norm holds. More specifically, what explains this conflict between having an interrogative attitude towards a question and believing the answer to the question at the same time? Why isn't this a rational combination of attitudes?

To get a better sense of the source of the tension let's go back to believing-Morse⁺. Recall, he was just like believing-Morse but also genuinely wondering and curious about who killed the doctor. We already saw that the sorts of things believing-Morse⁺ could say about his state of mind would be difficult to make sense of. It's worth drawing that out a bit more now. For instance, imagine the sort of conversation you might have with him:

You: Wait, what, you killed the doctor?!

Morse: Yeah, it's horrible, I'm a terrible person. But I'm very curious about who killed her.

You: Huh? But you just said you killed her!

Morse: Right, I did, it's awful. But I'm wondering: Who could have done this?

You: But you did it!

Morse: Yes, I did it!! But I'm really trying to figure out who did.

I could keep going with this, but the conversation is extremely confusing and I think you would throw your hands up fairly quickly. It's not just that Morse is saying something strange or unusual, it's that he seems to be saying one thing and then taking it back immediately afterwards. It's as if he's saying that he committed the crime but also that he has no clue who did it. But if he says he did it, then he does seem to have (much more than) a clue of who did it. So does he have a clue or not?

In this sense, believing-Morse⁺ seems to be in a sort of incoherent state as he both believes that something is the case and wonders whether it is the case — he's committed to the truth of p and at the same time non-committal with respect to whether p is true. This way of stating the conflict brings out what I think is at the heart of believing-Morse⁺'s incoherence: two different sorts of commitments with respect to some question Q . Believing-Morse⁺ is, on the one hand, committed to the truth of some answer to the question of who killed the doctor (in believing that he did), and, on the other,

answers. See Hagstrom (2003) for a discussion of different kinds of answers to questions and a general overview of some of the main surrounding issues.

committed to a kind of neutrality about that question (in wondering about who did). Having an interrogative attitude towards Q involves treating Q as open or representing it as unresolved — it involves a neutral commitment about which of Q's answers is the true one. Believing an answer makes for a tension with that neutral commitment since it involves treating the question as closed or settled. This is a non-neutral commitment with respect to Q since it involves treating one answer as true and the others as false.

Now we can ask: What is this neutral doxastic commitment at the core of the interrogative attitudes? What is it to treat a question as open or unresolved? We know that it's a neutral doxastic commitment that fails to cohere with believing an answer to the relevant question. Which sort of attitude combines with believing p to make for an overall incoherence? Disbelieving p does, but that's not a neutral doxastic commitment. Of course the natural hypothesis now is that it's the other doxastic attitude, suspension of judgment. Suspension of judgment is a kind of 'committed neutrality'.¹⁴ The reason it feels as though believing-Morse⁺ has made conflicting doxastic or epistemic commitments with respect to some question is because that's exactly what he's done — he's suspending judgment about who killed the doctor while also believing that he killed her. But like believing p while believing $\neg p$, believing p while suspending judgment about whether p is true (or about some other question that p completely answers) is a form of doxastic incoherence. One shouldn't have an interrogative attitude towards Q while believing an answer to Q because having an interrogative attitude towards Q necessarily involves suspending judgment about Q, and suspending judgment about Q while believing one of Q's answers is one of the basic forms of doxastic incoherence. What is it to treat a question as open or unresolved in the core zetetic sense at issue? It's to suspend judgment about that question.

We now have the pieces in place to see why my zetetic entanglement thesis holds. Before fleshing it out, let's recap. We should thank Inspector Morse since he's done a lot of work for us. We started with a series of cases in which some Morses are genuinely inquiring and others are not. Why aren't b-Morse and k-Morse genuinely inquiring? My answer is that it's in part because they don't have the right kind of attitudes — interrogative attitudes. Why do we read those non-inquiring Morses as incurious or not wondering (and so on) and therefore not inquiring? My thought is that we take them to be rational and rational subjects don't tend to be curious or wonder about questions whose answers they already (take themselves to) have. But why not? What's so bad about being curious or wondering about

¹⁴See Sturgeon (2020) on suspension of judgment as committed neutrality.

a question whose answer you already have (in the sense at issue)? My answer: having any interrogative attitude towards Q involves suspending judgment about Q which is necessarily in conflict with believing or knowing an answer to Q. One ought not to both suspend judgment about Q and believe (or know) one of Q's (complete) answers. Now on to entanglement!

4 ZETETIC ENTANGLEMENT

The entanglement thesis says that part of what it is to believe or suspend judgment is to take up a particular kind of zetetic stance or position. If we think of the different kinds of doxastic attitudes as different kinds of (cognitive) commitments, then we can think of the entanglement thesis as telling us something about the nature of those commitments: they are at least in part zetetic.

Let's start with suspension of judgment. It is fairly widely agreed that suspension of judgment is a proper (doxastic) attitude.¹⁵ But there is a bit of a mystery about the purpose of this doxastic attitude. If you have little or no evidence for or against p you can suspend judgment about the question of whether p is true. Alternatively, you can decide not to believe p and not to believe $\neg p$ but not take up this additional attitude of suspension of judgment. Both of these are epistemically appropriate responses to an absence of evidence. So why do one rather than the other? And in particular, why bother suspending judgment? Why take up a new, neutral attitude towards a question rather than just not believe any answers to that question? Anyone who thinks that suspension of judgment is an attitude should have something to say here. Why be doxastically neutral in this distinctively attitudinal way?

The arguments from the last section give us an answer: we suspend judgment in order to inquire. As we saw, suspension of judgment is the attitude at the very core of inquiry. Anyone genuinely inquiring into Q has an interrogative attitude towards Q, and anyone with an interrogative attitude towards Q is suspending judgment about Q. Every genuine inquirer then is in a state of suspension of judgment. On this picture there is no inquiry without suspension of judgment. But my claim is not just that suspending judgment about Q is a necessary condition for inquiring into Q. Part of what I argued in the last section was that anyone genuinely inquiring into Q is

¹⁵All of the following argue or assume that suspension of judgment is (or centrally involves having) a doxastic attitude (and this is just a partial list): Friedman (2013b), Sylvan (2016), Raleigh (2019), Rosa (2019), Sosa (2019), Lord (2020), Sturgeon (2020), Atkinson (2021), McGrath (2021), Wagner (2022). See Crawford (2022) for a dissenting view.

treating Q as open or as unresolved or unsettled. And that that zetetic openness at the core of inquisitiveness just is suspension of judgment.

I am not the first to tie suspension of judgment tightly to inquiry. Some of the earliest conceptions of the state do the same. For instance, here is Sextus Empiricus,

Those who are called Dogmatists in the proper sense of the word think that they have discovered the truth – for example, the schools of Aristotle and Epicurus and the Stoics, and some others. The schools of Clitomachus and Carneades, and other Academics, have asserted that things cannot be apprehended. And the Sceptics are still investigating. (Sextus Empiricus (2000): 1.1–3)

The sceptic Sextus is talking about here suspends judgment about nearly everything. And as Sextus describes that sceptic, they are ‘still investigating’. In fact, the term ‘sceptic’ derives from the Greek term ‘*skepsis*’ which means inquiry or examination. Sextus’ sceptic is suspending judgment, and that is in part to say that they are still inquiring. So for Sextus, suspension of judgment is obviously intimately tied to inquiry. And we might say the same about Descartes. When Descartes decided to try to put his knowledge on a firmer foundation by figuring out what could truly be known, his first step was to suspend judgment about all the matters under investigation.¹⁶

So suspended judgment is a zetetic attitude because suspending judgment about Q is a matter of treating Q as zetetically open, unresolved, or unsettled. What about belief? Why think that’s a zetetic attitude as well? We can start here: Just as some attitudes are zetetically open attitudes (the interrogative attitudes and any others that entail suspension of judgment), others are going to be zetetically resolving or closing attitudes — attitudes by way of which we close our inquiries and settle our questions (for ourselves).

Which attitudes are going to be the resolving attitudes? Here’s a constraint: Whichever these attitudes are, being zetetically open and zetetically closed at the same time is incoherent. So any closing attitude should be one that fails to cohere with suspension of judgment. Obviously belief is such an attitude. And this feature of belief is part of what the Morse cases bring out. A rational Morse convinced that he did the crime is not inquiring into who did it because he’s already closed the question of who did it. The believing Morse who also inquires into who did it (believing-Morse⁺) looks badly incoherent. This is in part because (as we can now see) believing an answer to Q is a way of being zetetically closed with respect to Q. Believing-Morse⁺

¹⁶See Descartes (1996), especially the First Meditation.

is treating a single question as both open and closed at the same time, and that's exactly why it's so hard to make sense of his state of mind.

Plenty of attitudes won't count as closing or settling attitudes using this criterion, and rightly so. For instance, without any incoherence you can suspend judgment about who will win the match while hoping your player does. Same with wishing or wanting. Having these sorts of attitudes towards answers to questions aren't ways of being zetetically closed.¹⁷ More interestingly, there are other belief-like attitudes the having of which won't count as ways of being zetetically closed, making belief zetetically unique among attitudes that might otherwise be hard to tell apart.

For instance, say we're playing a game of dice and I need to roll 'snake eyes' (double 1s) to win. Before I roll, you are suspending judgment about whether I'll make it. But you also know what the chances of my rolling snake eyes is and your levels of confidence match those chances. You're confident to degree 0.03 that I'll roll snake eyes and confident to degree 0.97 that I won't. In short, you are very very confident that I won't make it. But suspending judgment about whether or not I'll make it meanwhile seems perfectly reasonable.¹⁸ So being extremely confident of some answer to a question is also not a way of closing that question.

In sum, part of what it is to believe p is to have a range of questions that p answers settled or closed. This isn't to say that every belief we have is the upshot of some inquiry that we settle. My claim that belief is an inquiry-resolving attitude does not speak to how any individual belief was formed nor how our beliefs tend to be formed. Instead it's to say something about what it is to be a believer. To say that S believes p at t is, at least in part, to say something about how S is oriented towards a range of questions answered by p . In believing p one treats those questions as settled or closed.

All in all I've tried to show that both belief and suspension of judgment come into focus when we look at them through a zetetic lens: suspension of judgment as the attitude at the core of zetetic openness and belief as a

¹⁷Other doxastic(ish) states that seem not to be closers: suspecting p , guessing p , assuming p . Recently there has been some discussion about the 'strength' of belief, with some arguing that there may be 'weaker' and 'stronger' kinds of belief. I'm not convinced that we should make these distinctions, or how they should go if we did, but there is a lot to say. For some discussion see, Hawthorne et al. (2016), Holguín (2022), and Goodman and Holguín (2022). Also, see Nagel (2021) for some illuminating discussion of our uses of 'believe' and 'think'. For those who want to distinguish weak from strong belief, perhaps some very weak beliefs might not count as closers either, e.g. if there is a kind of weak believing is just identical to guessing or suspecting.

¹⁸And we can change the case to make your levels of confidence even more extreme and get the same results. See Friedman (2013a) for an argument that any credence distribution over the possible answers to Q is rationally compatible/coheres with suspension of judgment about Q .

key way of being zetetically closed.¹⁹ Having these attitudes involves having particular kinds of zetetic orientations. It's not that believing or suspending judgment always involves active inquiry (past, present, or future). Someone who believes p may never have actively inquired into questions p answers and someone who suspends judgment about Q may never get around to actively investigating Q . But someone who believes p at t or suspends judgment about Q at t is in a state that involves specific zetetic orientations and commitments at t .

5 WRAPPING UP

This brief discussion obviously leaves so much to be said about the functional and normative profiles of these zetetic orientations and commitments. In believing p we have a range of questions settled and in suspending judgment about Q we have Q open or unsettled. On its own this doesn't tell us very much about how believers and suspenders behave or are inclined or disposed to behave. But, while an in-depth discussion of this will largely have to be left for another occasion, I think some of what's already been said helps us along.

First, the Belief Norm places believers under evident zetetic restraint. Believers should not also inquire into the questions whose answers they believe. They shouldn't also be curious about those questions or wonder about them or deliberate about them (and so on). And given the assumption that rational behaviour is typical behaviour we can say that subjects who believe p do not typically investigate questions answered by p and they aren't typically curious or wondering or deliberating about those questions. So given the emerging normative picture of belief qua zetetically settled attitude we can start to see a more general functional profile emerging as well.

Although I haven't introduced a specific zetetic norm on suspension of judgment, at this point its normative profile looks intimately connected to the norms (reasons, requirements, etc.) of inquiry. For instance, it looks as though any case in which one is required to inquire into some matter, any case in which one is required to be curious or wonder (etc.) is a case in which one is required to suspend judgment. And as though reasons to be curious or wonder or deliberate or inquire are themselves reasons to suspend judgment. Moreover, some of these sorts of considerations plausibly extend to belief, e.g. reasons to be curious (etc.) about Q will look like reasons

¹⁹Staffel (2019) draws out different, but I think related, roles that belief and suspension of judgment (and credence) play in inquiry. Staffel argues that suspension of judgment and credences are 'transitional attitudes': attitudes subjects have while deliberating. Belief though is a 'terminal attitude', the sort we arrive at only at the end of our deliberations.

against believing answers to Q. Of course we'd need to say much more to really get these sorts of normative claims on the table, but they look *prima facie* plausible.

The general normative point now is that given that doxastic attitudes are zetetic in the sense at issue, normative factors that bear on whether or not to inquire or whether or not to have interrogative attitudes also bear on whether or not to believe and whether or not to suspend judgment. And, again, given the assumption that rational behaviour is the norm, typical subjects will be sensitive to these sorts of considerations in forming, having, retaining, and updating their doxastic attitudes.²⁰

The doxasticist says that epistemic norms bear only on our doxastic attitudes. But if the doxastic attitudes are themselves zetetic attitudes then even our doxasticist should say that epistemic norms are norms that bear on the making of particular kinds of moves in inquiry and the taking of particular kinds of inquisitive positions: they are norms that bear on whether to have certain questions settled or keep them open for further investigation. This leaves the doxasticist in the seemingly uncomfortable position of having to say that epistemic norms can see some small corner of inquiry but only that small corner. This is a position now in need of some more substantial defence. What's so special about the doxastic realm in inquiry?

Go back to Tom and his cat. Tom hears a sound and wonders what is making it. He has some evidence: a noise, in the far corner of the room. He follows that evidence and rearranges himself so that he is looking in the direction of the sound. Then he gets more evidence: he sees an orange cat. He follows that evidence as well and comes to believe something. The doxasticist says that one of the things Tom does is epistemically evaluable, but not the other. But both are reasonable responses to evidence: one a movement of Tom's body and one a movement of his mind. And part of what I've tried to argue here is that both are moves in Tom's inquiry. So Tom makes two zetetic moves, both in response to some evidence he has, both with the aim of figuring something out. It's difficult to see why there should be a bright normative line between these two parts of Tom's inquiry.²¹

I started this piece with the thought that theories of inquiry have gone missing in contemporary epistemology. And this is certainly right if you look

²⁰It is worth making clear that this says nothing about which sorts of considerations bear on whether or not to inquire or whether or not to be curious or wonder. A wide swath of views is open here.

²¹One might object: Only one of these moves can be justified by evidence alone. But even if that's true (and I'm not convinced that it is), it just pushes back the main question here. Why should that difference make for a bright normative line, especially given all of the other similarities?

at contemporary epistemology from one angle. We haven't really done much by way of explicitly theorizing and analyzing inquiry. But looked at another way, inquiry is everywhere in epistemology. It's hard to think of any topic in epistemology that isn't also a central topic for the study of inquiry or perhaps even itself about inquiry. Inquiry is a process by which we gather evidence, reason our way through problems and puzzles, try to add to the justification of our beliefs, try to know more and understand better. Which part of epistemology is entirely independent of all this? My zetetic entanglement thesis says: certainly not the doxastic attitudes. Those are thoroughly zetetically infused.*

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