

# Why Suspend Judging?\*

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## 1 Introduction

Even though philosophers have been thinking about suspension of judgment for nearly as long as they've been thinking about anything, and contemporary discussions have it placed as traditional epistemology's other doxastic attitude, there is only limited consensus about the nature of the state and generally very little said about its point or purpose or role in our doxastic lives (at least in comparison to its obviously far more charming doxastic bedfellow, belief). In this paper I want to try to say a little bit on these matters by providing a framework within which we can begin to answer the titular question here. The framework will tell us more both about the nature and function of suspension of judgment as well as give us some guidance as to its "normative profile" (when we should suspend, have reason to suspend, are justified in suspending and so on). The general thought is that suspension of judgment is closely tied to inquiry. In fact I want to argue that one is inquiring into some matter if and only if one is suspended on the matter.<sup>1</sup>

Tying suspension of judgment to inquiry in this way brings us back to some of the earliest views of the state. One of the thoughts that emerges in the work of both Sextus Empiricus and Descartes is that suspension of judgment is closely connected to inquiry and perhaps even that suspending is itself a way of being in an inquiring mode or frame of mind.<sup>2</sup> The thought that suspending might

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<sup>1</sup>Talking about 'the state of suspended judgment/suspension of judgment' can be a bit cumbersome. As such I will often just call the attitude 'suspension' or say that a subject 'suspends about ...' or 'is suspended'. I take it that this is also the state that people are talking about when they talk about 'withholding belief' although I won't talk in those terms. I think that it is also fine to use 'agnostic' to describe the suspended subject, but given that it tends to bring to mind discussions of theistic opinions, I'm going to avoid that terminology as well.

<sup>2</sup>'Inquiring mode' and 'inquiring frame of mind' are not meant to track anything mysterious, but are just ways of describing the state of mind of the inquiring subject. Sometimes I'll use 'inquiring state of mind' or 'inquiring stance'. These are all meant to capture the same mental/functional phenomenon.

involve inquiring can sound dramatic, but I don't think it's meant to imply that anyone who suspends must be like the detective in active pursuit of the suspect, rather that the state of mind one is in when one suspends judgment involves a kind of openness and sensitivity to certain kinds of information that makes it that it is well described as an inquiring state of mind. I think that there is something to this thought and I'll explore it later in the paper.

The first section of this paper works on clarifying some of the main elements of the discussion. The next argues that inquiring entails suspending judgment and the one after that tries to make a case for the thought that suspending entails inquiring too, at least in the sense just discussed. The first, ground-clearing portion of this paper is longer than I'd like it to be, but in this case, given that we are not quite entering into a well-defined debate, I think that it's helpful if various elements of the framework are made explicit at the outset.

## 2 Ground clearing

In this initial section I'll try to clarify some basic features of suspension of judgment and inquiry that are especially relevant for the discussion to come. I'll also bring out the force of the titular question a bit more, and then explain the view about suspension and inquiry to be argued for here, tracing it back to some of the earliest accounts of suspension of judgment that we have.

### 2.1 Suspension of judgment

Sometimes epistemologists use 'suspended judgment' to pick out a state in which a subject lacks belief on some matter and nothing more. That said, many seem to agree that there is more to suspending judgment than this. In particular, many seem to want to think of suspended judgment as an attitude in its own right. This paper takes this sort of "attitudinal" approach to suspension of judgment as its starting point.

It is easy to see how one might be pushed to thinking of suspension as a genuine attitude, rather than, say, the mere lack of opinion. Believing neither  $p$  nor  $\neg p$  (let's call this being in a state of *non-belief* with respect to  $p$ ) doesn't look sufficient for suspending about those propositions – typical worries stem from thoughts about ungraspable propositions or ones never actually considered. With respect to the property of neither believing  $p$  nor disbelieving  $p$ ,

Wedgwood (2002) says, “even rocks and numbers have *that* property”. As Friedman (2013c) argues, adding some bells and whistles to a “non-belief” account of suspension doesn’t seem to help much either. For instance, just adding that the subject consider the relevant matter won’t do, for the considering might be brief and incomplete and merely accidentally connected to the non-belief. And adding some sort of cognitive act or event seems misguided as well: one is suspended when one is in some temporally extended state of mind. In fact it looks as though we should say that one is suspended on some matter when one has some sort of opinion on the matter. Sturgeon (2010) characterizes this opinion as a “committed neutrality” (which is neither to say that we have to be entirely committed nor entirely neutral). The thought that emerges then is that suspension is an attitude – a kind of neutral doxastic attitude.<sup>3</sup>

I think that once we start to think of suspension as a genuine doxastic attitude, our titular question looms. One way to see this is to generalize the metaphor of a belief box. To say that some  $p$  is in  $S$ ’s belief box is to say that  $S$  has a specific sort of attitude towards  $p$ , one often largely characterized functionally. Once we think of suspension as a contentful attitude then we should also start to wonder about suspension boxes. Why put some content in a suspension box? Why suspend judging?

I take it that one sort of answer that people are initially tempted to give is something about one’s deficient epistemic standing on some matter. Why suspend judgment? Because one is not in the position to know or because one’s evidence fails to settle some matter or because one has insufficient reason to believe and so on. But this sort of answer feels inadequate once we admit that suspending is a matter of taking up some attitude rather than merely not having some. Very plausibly, if my epistemic standing with respect to some propositions is deficient in the relevant senses, then I shouldn’t believe those propositions. But if suspending is different from merely not believing, then the claim that I shouldn’t believe those propositions is not equivalent to the claim that I should suspend judgment. Should I do this other thing, too? Why, as a rational subject whose epistemic circumstances are relevantly deficient, would I ever adopt this attitude of “committed neutrality” rather than simply not believe or stop believing? Again, why suspend judging?

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<sup>3</sup>I think something like this was already assumed in many discussions of the “tripartite division” of the doxastic, e.g., Chisholm (1966).

### 2.1.1 Questions and conflicts

Let me briefly bring out a few starting assumptions about suspension of judgment. First, suspension reports are most naturally made with interrogative complements, rather than declarative ones. Ascriptions like, ‘Alice is suspending judgment about whether it’s going to rain later’ are fine, but ones like, ‘Alice is suspending judgment that it is going to rain later’ are not. In general, most ascriptions of the form ‘S suspends/suspended/is suspending judgment about Q’ in which ‘S’ is replaced with the name of a subject and ‘Q’ with an indirect interrogative sentence, e.g., ‘who went to the party’, ‘where to buy an Italian newspaper’ (and so on) are grammatical, but similar ascriptions with declarative complements instead are not.<sup>4</sup> This sets suspension ascriptions apart from both belief ascriptions (‘believe’ embeds declaratives, but not interrogatives) and knowledge ascriptions (‘know’ embeds both), in English at least. Picking up on this, there have been some recent suggestions that we should be thinking of suspended judgment not as a propositional attitude but as a *question-directed attitude*.<sup>5</sup>

I am going to use the relevant sorts of interrogative constructions throughout and take it that what is suspended on is a question. Questions are abstract objects though they are not propositions, as these are standardly understood (for instance, questions are not truth-conditional). While I don’t think that considerations of syntax alone should push us to this shift in our thinking about the contents of our “suspendings”, they certainly should be taken seriously. From the perspective of the attitude itself, I don’t think that the thought that we suspend on or about a single proposition has much plausibility. In “suspending about a proposition” one suspends about the truth of that proposition, about whether that proposition is true or false. Someone keen on thinking of suspended judgment as a propositional attitude then should at least be averting to sets of propositions, e.g.,  $\{p, \neg p\}$ . But ‘whether’ questions do the job just as well in these sorts of basic cases, i.e., one suspends about whether it’s going to rain

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<sup>4</sup>Suspension reports (and others we’ll soon discuss) can also sometimes be made with noun phrase complements, e.g., ‘S suspended judgment about the result of the match’. The subject matter *the match* is often thought to be something very much like a general question or set of questions about the match. See, e.g., Lewis (1988) for discussion.

<sup>5</sup>See, e.g., Friedman (2013a) and Booth (2014). For an earlier and related thought: Higginbotham and May (1981), inspired by Levi (1967), claim that a subject’s suspension of judgment should be represented with a partition of the “possible states of nature”. Many have argued for a close connection between questions and partitions of logical space.

later rather than the propositions that it will and that it won't. Moreover, since we can make sense of suspension reports with the whole range of interrogative complements ('what', 'where', 'who', and so on), the "propositionalist" about suspension will have to tell us which propositions are being suspended on when these ascriptions are true, e.g., when it's true that S is suspended about why grass is green or how the hacker accessed the bank's computers. This is no easy task. Again, the far more natural approach here is to just take these ascriptions on their face, taking it that what is suspended on is the question itself.

Linguists have had a lot to say about questions since it is now commonplace to treat questions as the semantic contents of interrogative sentences. For instance, 'Who went to the party?' (an interrogative sentence) has the question of who went to the party (an abstract object) as its semantic content. The details of these accounts needn't occupy us here. One quick thought is worth drawing out though: while questions are not propositions, questions have answers and those are typically thought to be propositions. A standard thought is that a typical question can be associated with a set of propositions which count as the *possible answers* to that question, e.g., the set consisting of the propositions  $r$  (Rover broke the vase) and  $\neg r$  is the set of possible answers to the question of whether Rover broke the vase ( $R$ ). Let's say that a question is *sound* at  $w$  just in case it has a *true answer* at  $w$ . This true answer will be a member of the question's possible answer set. If at  $w$  Rover broke the vase, then  $R$  is sound at  $w$  and  $r$  is  $R$ 's true answer at  $w$ ;  $\neg r$  is a merely possible (possible, but false) answer to  $R$  at  $w$ . Assuming there was only one vase-breaker,  $r$  will also be the true answer to  $R'$  – *Who broke the vase?* – at  $w$  and the rest of  $R'$ 's possible answer set will consist in propositions of the form 'x broke the vase' (while  $R$ 's answer set had only two members, this one will have more).<sup>6</sup> The logically strongest possible answers to a question  $Q$  at  $w$  are  $Q$ 's *complete* possible answers at  $w$  and so if  $Q$  has a complete true answer at  $w$  it will be one of those ( $r$  is the complete true answer to both  $R$  and  $R'$  at  $w$ ). The strictly weaker possible answers to  $Q$  at  $w$  can be thought of as  $Q$ 's *partial* possible answers at  $w$ . When I use 'answers' in what's to come, unless I say otherwise, I mean complete, possible answers.

In taking the attitudinal approach to suspension for granted I take it that S's not believing that Rover broke the vase and not believing that he didn't break

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<sup>6</sup>Some have identified questions qua abstract objects with sets of these possible answers. See, e.g., Hamblin (1973), Karttunen (1977), Groenendijk and Stokhof (1982) and Groenendijk and Stokhof (1984), for some central "sets of answers" accounts.

the vase is not sufficient for S's suspending judgment about whether Rover broke the vase. In fact, I don't think that S's lacking those beliefs is necessary either. I imagine that there is an initial temptation to say that lacking these sorts of answer-beliefs is necessary and that a subject who is suspended about whether Rover broke the vase cannot also believe that he did/didn't break it. I think that this initial temptation should be resisted.<sup>7</sup>

It is commonly thought that subjects can have conflicting beliefs at a time. That is, it is often simply taken as a datum that a subject can both believe  $p$  and believe  $\neg p$  at a single time. Certainly, everyday experience taken on its face makes this sort of thing look not only possible but commonplace. There are typically (typically unnoticed) conflicts across our vast doxastic corpuses. But once we admit that doxastic conflict is possible, why shouldn't we admit that possibility in full generality? Just as a subject can be conflicted with respect to her beliefs on some matter, she can be conflicted with respect to her beliefs and suspendings on some matter. Of course, most will want to say that a subject who both suspends about  $Q$  and believes one of  $Q$ 's complete answers is not only in some sort of conflicted doxastic state or has incoherent doxastic commitments, but is in a normatively defective state. But this is par for this course. In the end, I think that if we are happy to accept the possibility of doxastic conflict with respect to belief, then we should accept the possibility of doxastic conflict across the board, which means denying that "answer-non-belief" (not believing any of the answers to some question) is even necessary for being suspended about some question.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup>I want to put aside Frege/Kripke-style cases here. I think there is a route into the thought that belief and suspension are compossible via these sorts of moves (see Salmon (1995) for some discussion), but I think we can get there even if we want to think of contents as very fine-grained or think of the relevant attitude ascriptions as indexed to closely related guises.

<sup>8</sup>The phenomenon alluded to in this paragraph have prompted some to claim that our doxastic states are "fragmented" or "compartmentalized". Rather than our having a single doxastic corpus we have many. Different fragments may regulate different bits of behaviour, and these fragments are not fully integrated with one another. See Lewis (1982) and Egan (2008) for some discussion. Those inclined towards this sort of "compartmentalization" picture should have little difficulty accepting the compossibility of belief and suspension: shouldn't it then be easy to find cases according to which relative to one fragment a subject believes that Rover broke the vase, and relative to another she's suspending judgment about whether he did?

## 2.2 The view

My aim here is to propose an account of suspension of judgment that starts to answer our titular question. The view I want to defend has old roots, or at least is inspired by some truly canonical views of suspension of judgment. We can start by thinking about what happens at the start of the *Meditations*. There, Descartes effectively sets out to inquire into the truth of all things (or some relevant subset thereof). The first step on this inquiry? Suspending judgment. Anything whose truth needs to be inquired into is questioned and suspended on it before it is investigated. While there is, of course, much debate about what exactly Descartes is doing at the start of the *Meditations*, I think what we find is a general thought that suspension is closely tied to inquiry, and a specific thought that suspending is something one does in order to genuinely inquire.<sup>9</sup>

We can find a tight connection between suspension and inquiry in one of the earliest discussions of suspension as well. Sextus Empiricus, the main recorder of Pyrrhonian scepticism, portrays the Pyrrhonists as inquirers or investigators – ‘sceptic’ literally means searcher or investigator – and sometimes insists that what distinguishes them from all the other philosophical schools is their persistent engagement in inquiry. For Sextus the (Pyrrhonian) sceptic suspends on all matters (or perhaps: the sceptic about matter *M* suspends judgment about *M*). So one thought here is that the sceptic – the suspender – is distinguished from all others by her persistent engagement in inquiry.<sup>10</sup>

Here are a couple of passages from *Outlines of Scepticism (PH)* (Sextus Empiricus (2000)):

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

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<sup>9</sup>The “method of universal doubt” – the method Descartes deploys at the start of his inquiry in the *Meditations* – might not be his only method of inquiry. Although he does say things in both the *Rules for the Direction of the Mind* and the *Discourse on the Method* that do make it seem as though he thinks that all inquiry ought to proceed in accordance with that method. For a good discussion see, Broughton (2003).

<sup>10</sup>Again, I don’t mean to be saying here that Sextus’ view and mine align perfectly. There is a great deal of literature devoted to understanding and squaring the various aspects of Sextus’ views about suspension of judgment, inquiry, the search for truth or knowledge, belief, and tranquility. I am merely picking up on one line of thought that can be extracted there. The papers in Burnyeat and Frede (1997) are a nice place to start to get a sense of some of the complexities here, and Grgić (2012) is a good discussion of some especially relevant issues having to do with suspension of judgment and inquiry in Sextus.

schools of Clitomachus and Carneades, and other Academics, have asserted that things cannot be apprehended. And the Sceptics are still investigating. (*PH* 1.1–3)

For those who agree that they do not know how objects are in their nature may continue without inconsistency to investigate them: those who think they know them accurately may not. For the latter, the investigation is already at its end, as they suppose, whereas for the former, the reason why any investigation is undertaken – that is, the idea that they have not found the answer – is fully present. (*PH* 2.11)

Again, we can find the thought that suspension is closely tied to inquiry. More specifically, I think that we can extract the following line of thought from at least these bits of Sextus (even if some other bits complicate the story): the suspender is essentially an inquirer, and it is only the suspender who is an inquirer. I want to argue for a version of this thought here.

There are other accounts of suspension of judgment out there. Some of those reject the attitudinal approach entirely (e.g., DePaul (2004)), and those who accept it part ways over what sort of attitude suspension is or involves. Some options: middling credence (e.g., Hájek (1998), Christensen (2009)), mushy credence/confidence (e.g., Sturgeon (2010)), as involving higher-order doxastic or epistemic states like believing that one doesn't know  $p$  (e.g., Bergmann (2005)). And there are other variations still. It is not my plan to argue against these other accounts. Although I've already said a little bit about why I think some of them must be wrong, I am not going to speak to others. In particular, I am not going to say anything about whether suspending might not be given a thoroughly credence-theoretic treatment. Thinking this way about suspension might help us to get an answer to our titular question, but I want to argue for a different one. Suspension was born and finds a natural home in a more "traditional" framework and I think it's worth thinking about what work it might be doing there.<sup>11</sup>

All of that said, I do think that all of the accounts of suspension mentioned are in agreement about the thought that suspension of judgment is some sort

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<sup>11</sup>Also: for a discussion of why we should resist reducing suspension to degrees of belief, see Friedman (2013b).



of neutral state. And I agree, too. The view I want to propose cashes out this neutrality or indecision at least in part in terms of an openness or even willingness to inquire further. This isn't to say that I think that there are no aspects of the view to be presented here that are revisionary, but only to locate a common starting point.

The last part of our ground-clearing section focuses in a little bit more on the second key player in this discussion: inquiry.

### 2.3 Inquiry and inquiring states of mind

I want to connect up suspension of judgment and inquiry here, and even eventually go on to suggest that there's a sense in which suspending itself involves inquiring. Sometimes we use 'inquiring' to describe a subject's actions – picking up items at the crime scene or talking to witnesses. But not all inquiring is or even involves action like this: Descartes march to the *cogito* didn't, for instance. Whatever we say about inquiry in general though (perhaps it's some sort of activity?), any thoughts to come about the connection between suspension and inquiry should not be taken to imply that one can only be suspended at a time if one is in some very active sense in pursuit of answers at that time. The claim that one is suspended at some time only if one is knocking on doors and talking to witnesses is obviously not right. The claim I want to eventually argue might be right though is that one is suspended about  $Q$  at  $t$  only if one is an inquiring state or frame of mind with respect to  $Q$  at  $t$ , so let me say a little bit more about what that amounts to here, and more will emerge as the discussion progresses.

First, I take it that anyone genuinely inquiring is in this sort of inquiring state of mind. Picking up items at a crime scene doesn't make it that one is inquiring into who committed the crime. Whether those actions count as part of an inquiry into who committed the crime depends in part upon the state of mind of the relevant subject. When the detective does these things in the relevant sorts of cases they count as part of her inquiry because they are done with the aim of figuring out who committed the crime. The trash collector who has no such aim or goal, is not inquiring into who committed the crime, even if he picks up all of the same items as the detective. Being in an inquiring state or frame of mind is a matter of being in this sort of aim- or goal-directed state. Whenever one is genuinely inquiring, one is in a state of mind like this.

Moreover, this goal-directed state of mind also seems to be question-directed.

All of the considerations that pushed us to thinking of suspended judgment as question-directed apply to inquiring as well. Syntactically, ‘inquire’ and (‘inquire into’) cannot embed declarative complements, but can embed interrogatives. Moreover, if we say that a subject is inquiring into some proposition  $p$ , then that seems to mean that she’s inquiring into whether that proposition is true or false. And again, it looks as though we can inquire into the whole range of questions – we can inquire into how to get to Vancouver from here, who broke the car mirror, what happens to a grapefruit when it’s put in the freezer for a week, and so on.

So every inquirer is in some sort of question-directed, inquiring state of mind. As we will soon see, I think there are a number of familiar attitudes that count as or involve inquiring attitudes in the sense at issue here (and ultimately I want to suggest suspension should as well). In general we can say that we are in this sort of inquiring frame of mind with respect to  $Q$  when (and only when)  $Q$  is on our *research agenda*.<sup>12</sup> I take it that our research agendas record our epistemic goals by way of the questions we wish to answer.

What more can we say about the relevant sort of inquiring state of mind (or of having a question on the agenda)? As we have already seen, it is a goal-directed state of mind. It’s a state of mind that has specific sorts of epistemic or doxastic satisfaction conditions: in inquiring into some question we aim to resolve or answer the question – we aim to (e.g.) know the answer to the question. Here is a further thought about the functional profile of this state: typically it will involve at least a sort of orientation towards or sensitivity to information that bears on the focal question, and perhaps some other related sorts of dispositions to come to know things that will help one close that question. A subject aiming to resolve a question is one aiming to get new information that will lead to this resolution, and as such she will be at least minimally sensitive to or oriented towards information that will bear on the question and so help her to answer it (although just how sensitive this subject will be can vary given the strength of her need to close the question, among other things). Of course, these are some very preliminary thoughts. In the next section I’ll highlight some

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<sup>12</sup>This talk of a subject’s “research agenda” comes from some recent discussion of extensions of the AGM framework for belief revision that include a model for a subject’s research agenda, which can be thought of as a set of questions the subject wishes to close. See, Olsson and Westlund (2006) for the initial suggestion. A number of refinements and additions have been suggested since as well.

familiar folk-psychological attitudes that look like inquiring attitudes in the relevant sense, which should give us further insight into what having an attitude like this amounts to.

With all of this in mind, let me flesh out the main claims to come. The claim that one is inquiring into *Q* only if one is suspended about *Q* is the claim that any case in which one has *Q* on one's research agenda, any case in which one is in the relevant sort of inquiring state of mind (and so any case in which one is genuinely inquiring) is a case in which one is suspended about *Q*. And the claim that one is suspended about *Q* only if one is inquiring into *Q* is the claim that any case in which one is suspended about *Q* is a case in which one is in an inquiring state of mind with respect to *Q* (or rather a case in which *Q* is on one's research agenda, or in which one has an attitude towards *Q* with the relevant sorts of epistemic satisfaction conditions, or in which one aims to close *Q*).

### 3 Inquiring into *Q* entails suspending judgment about *Q*

Suspension of judgment is a question-directed attitude. Inquiry is also question-directed. They are not alone in this regard. There seems to be a whole range of attitudes that have questions as their contents or objects: wondering, curiosity, investigating, deliberating, contemplating and there are certainly more.<sup>13</sup> The very considerations that lead us to the conclusion that suspension is question-directed and inquiry too, apply to these other attitudes. Syntactically, the VPs that pick them out don't embed declaratives but do embed interrogatives (and the whole range). And in each case it looks as though 'whether' questions are more appropriate objects than single propositions in the basic case. This list of question-directed attitudes is not exhaustive. My goal here is not to get a complete list, and I will focus the discussion largely on wondering and curiosity, as well as, of course, on inquiry and suspension, taking them as representative of the class as a whole. For now we have more of a loose collection of attitudes that seem to share an important property: they are all question-directed attitudes. Let's call all of these question-directed attitudes, *interrogative attitudes (IAs)*.

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<sup>13</sup>There are a number of issues that are being glossed over by calling all of these 'attitudes'. For one thing, some of these look like states and others processes. For another, perhaps some are even better classed as activities rather than mental items (whether states or processes). In general, while I think that the items listed are central members of an interesting class and so can be discussed as such, there are also clearly all sorts of differences between them that I'm going to (unfortunately) ignore in the discussion to come.

Later I'll further refine the class.

Many of the IAs seem to share another key property as well. At least at first glance many of these attitudes – e.g., wondering, curiosity, deliberation (and more) – seem to share the same sort of orientation towards or with respect to the relevant focal question that we find in inquiry. When we wonder, are curious, deliberate, investigate, and so on we are aiming to answer questions, and can be at least loosely described as wanting to know.<sup>14</sup> So, many of the IAs involve having some relevant question open in thought and aiming at answering or resolving or closing. As I've already said, later I'm going to suggest that suspension should be thought to have this property as well.

For now though I want to explore a different (but related) feature of the IAs: it looks as though they don't interact well with knowing, although it is not entirely clear just how or where the relationship breaks down. I want to argue though that the breakdown gives us reason to think that genuinely inquiring into *Q* entails suspending judgment about *Q*. Let's start here. Assertions like, 'I know whether Bob went to the party, but I wonder whether he went' or 'I know who won the election, but I'm curious about who won' sound awful. And 'Bob went to the party, but I wonder whether he went', or 'Alice won the election, but I'm curious about who won' sound just as bad, if not worse. This requires some sort of explanation.

One thought is that the subject who utters 'I know *Q*, but I wonder/am curious (etc.) about *Q*' is uttering an inconsistent pair of propositions. Jason Stanley's claim that, "If you *wonder* who went to the party, you certainly don't know who went to the party" seems to be a push in that direction.<sup>15</sup> Taken as a general claim about the IAs, this amounts to the thought that wondering *Q*, being curious about *Q*, inquiring into *Q* and so on entail not knowing *Q*.<sup>16</sup> On this account there is no possible case in which a subject both knows *Q* and has a *Q*-IA (IA directed at *Q*). Making an assertion of the form, 'I know *Q* and I  $\phi$  *Q*' (where ' $\phi$ ' is replaced with an IA-expressing VP) means asserting that one is in a state that it is not possible to be in, and this can play the key role

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<sup>14</sup>In describing the inquiring subject as "wanting to know" though I don't mean to imply that she literally has desires with that sort of explicitly epistemic content. I think she can be truly described as wanting to know *Q* simply in virtue of the fact that she has *Q* on the agenda.

<sup>15</sup>See Stanley (2011): 42.

<sup>16</sup>For the purposes of this piece we can assume that knowing *Q* (at *w*) is reducible to knowing *p* (at *w*), where *p* is *Q*'s true, complete answer at *w*. See Mastro (2010) for a good overview of the "knowledge-*wh*" debate.

in understanding why the assertions sound bad. And we can then explain why uttering something of the form ‘ $p$ , but I  $\phi$   $Q$ ’, where  $p$  is one of  $Q$ ’s complete answers, also sounds bad by via a knowledge norm on assertion.

This explanation is not right though. There are possible cases in which subjects know  $Q$  and have IAs towards  $Q$ . Here is one, fairly commonplace sort of case (let’s just stay focused on wondering for now). I know that my colleague Alice is on leave in Paris this term, she told me last month that she would be. Still, yesterday I seemed to have no memory of that conversation with Alice and I wondered why she hadn’t been to the talk last week; today I remembered. Yesterday I knew why Alice hadn’t been to the talk, and yet I wondered why she’d not been there at the same time. It is extremely easy to generate more cases like this. In these sorts of cases, some knowledge that I have temporarily escapes my view along with the knowledge that I have it, and as a result I reconsider a question that that knowledge fully answers. I know that I’ve put my keys in my tennis bag, but I spend 20 minutes wondering where they are. Eventually I recall what I’ve done. In recalling I don’t learn something new, but the thing that I knew all along comes back into view.<sup>17</sup>

What should we say about the troubling assertions then given that wondering  $Q$  and knowing  $Q$  are compossible? I think that the sorts of cases from the last paragraph give us some guidance. These are not epistemically happy cases. Once I recall that Alice is on leave or where I’ve put my keys I don’t feel good about having wondered about each of the relevant questions – I realize that I was confused. Since I knew all along, I shouldn’t have been or didn’t need to be wondering. And this sort of unhappiness is not particular to wondering while knowing. While wondering about why Alice hadn’t been at the talk, I can be curious about that question, investigate it or inquire into it (and so on). But just as in the case of wondering about that question, given that I do, in fact, know why Alice wasn’t at the talk, it feels as though there is something less than ideal about my having these attitudes towards that question. I was curious about or inquiring into a question whose answer I already knew.

Notice, past-tense or third-person versions of our troubling assertions – e.g.,

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<sup>17</sup>We should take care to distinguish these sorts of cases from ones in which I take myself to have or know the answer to the relevant question but cannot seem to call it up from memory, e.g., familiar (and familiarly annoying) tip-of-the-tongue cases. In the cases in this paragraph I do not take myself to have the answers to the relevant questions in memory. I am, in this sense, genuinely wondering about where Alice is, genuinely trying to figure that out, rather than trying to dislodge an answer that I take to be stuck in memory (say by running through the alphabet).

‘She’s wondering whether Bob went to the party, but she knows he went’ or ‘Yesterday I wondered whether Bob went to the party, but I knew he went’ – don’t sound quite as bad as the first-person present-tense ones do, but don’t sound good either. A natural interpretation of these assertions has them describing unfortunate states of affairs and confused states of mind.

So, I think we should say that there is a sort of incompatibility between knowing *Q* and having an IA towards *Q* but that incompatibility is not impossibility but normative incompatibility. There is something epistemically inappropriate about having that sort of combination of attitudes.<sup>18</sup> There is a discussion to be had about just what sort of inappropriateness this is. For instance, do we want to use axiological normative concepts here or deontological ones? Is this a rational conflict? It is not my intention to adjudicate here. I want to say generally that the subject ought not to be in this sort of conflicted state where this should track at least the thought that the state is sub-optimal (if not worse). I’ll generally stick to ‘appropriateness’ talk.

To capture this thought we can say that the IAs are subject to an *Ignorance Norm*: a norm that (in this case) bars both having a *Q*-IA at *t* and knowing *Q* at *t*. If one knows the answer to some question at some time then one ought not to be investigating that question, or inquiring into it further or wondering about it, or curious about it, and so on, at that time:

**Ignorance Norm for the IAs** Necessarily, if one knows *Q* at *t*, then one ought not have an IA towards *Q* at *t*.<sup>19,20</sup>

But what is it about inquiry and about the IAs in general that makes having them impermissible or inappropriate in this way while knowing? We can think

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<sup>18</sup>This is not to say that this sort of conflict is merely epistemically inappropriate. It may be practically sub-optimal as well in that I may waste time continuing to try to answer a question I’ve already answered. I don’t think though that re-opening a question that I’ve already closed is always a bad idea practically speaking: sometimes recovering the thing known from memory is more cognitively taxing than just working it out again. What I think remains in all cases though is a basic epistemic conflict or incoherence between a certain kind of attitude towards a question and a certain kind of attitude towards that question’s answer.

<sup>19</sup>Although I have the ‘ought’ scoping just over the consequent here, something “wide scope” would do just as well in what’s to come.

<sup>20</sup>There may be some cases – at least some of which are related to mismatched guises – in which one is unaware or ignorant of the fact that some known *p* completely answers some *Q* one has asked. As before I want to try to bracket these sorts of cases here. The Ignorance Norm applies in any case in which there is no such ignorance. The issues that arise in thinking about the remaining cases can be left aside for now.

of the situation this way: a subject with an IA towards  $Q$  is a subject for whom  $Q$  is open or unanswered or unresolved. But a subject who knows  $Q$  is a subject for whom  $Q$  is closed. This subject has resolved or answered the question – she knows the answer to that question. So we can frame the conflict in those terms: a subject who knows  $Q$  and has an IA towards  $Q$  at the same time is treating a closed question as open.<sup>21</sup>

With this thought we can say a little bit more about the epistemic openness that is involved in inquiry, and in having an IA more generally: it should be a sort of epistemic openness that is in normative conflict in this way with knowing  $Q$ . Perhaps some forms of epistemic openness combine happily with knowing  $Q$ , e.g., being less than perfectly certain. So what sort of epistemically open attitude towards  $Q$  conflicts in the way we're after with knowing  $Q$ ? Obvious candidate: suspension of judgment about  $Q$ .

My thought here is that inquiring (and having any IA whatever) involves a certain kind of epistemic stance or commitment or attitude that is in conflict with or fails to cohere with knowing  $Q$ , and that the most straightforward candidate for this stance or commitment or attitude just is suspension of judgment. Knowing  $Q$  and suspension about  $Q$  are conflicting sorts of attitudes or orientations towards  $Q$ . And so the reason that one ought not to inquire into  $Q$ , or have any IA towards  $Q$ , when one knows  $Q$  is that inquiring into  $Q$  always involves suspension of judgment about  $Q$ . One inquires into  $Q$  only if one is suspended about  $Q$ . This is not a normative claim, but a descriptive one – a claim about what it is to be genuinely inquiring into some question, and what it is to genuinely wonder or be curious or investigate a question. One has an interrogative

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<sup>21</sup>Is this necessarily a bad thing though? Potentially worrying case: imagine a detective illegally obtains decisive evidence that Alice rigged the election ( $Q = \text{Did Alice rig the election?}$ ) and as such comes to know  $Q$ . She cannot bring this evidence to her bosses or the courts and so she needs to keep at it until she gets the right kind of evidence. Isn't this knowing detective continuing to inquire into  $Q$  without doing anything epistemically inappropriate? Response: if she's fully rational, then she's not genuinely inquiring into  $Q$ . Perhaps there is a sense in which this detective is continuing on an inquiry into  $Q$  – the main inquirer in this case is not a single individual but the police force or the government and that inquirer doesn't have the sort of information that can close their question. The detective may be thought of as continuing on an inquiry into  $Q$  on behalf of that other body. On the other hand, I hope that it is clear enough that the detective herself isn't naturally thought of as continuing to inquire into whether Alice rigged the election: she's doing the sorts of things she would do were she genuinely inquiring into  $Q$ , but she's not aiming to figure out or come to know whether Alice rigged it, and what she's doing looks like a sort of ersatz inquiry into  $Q$  at best; it's not genuine inquiry into that question. She is trying to gather more relevant evidence though. Perhaps it's better to see her as inquiring into some nearby questions rather than  $Q$  itself, e.g., where can I find a reliable witness?

attitude towards a question only if one is suspended about that question.

So this is one way into the thought that inquiry entails suspension of judgment. This entailment helps to explain a conflict we want explained. This argument trades on the thought that knowing and suspending are a conflicting pair of attitudes. I think that this is fairly straightforward thought, but we can plausibly say more about the conflict here. The cases that I used to verify the claim that it is possible to both wonder or be curious about or inquire into  $Q$  while knowing  $Q$  should have a familiar feel to them. They are very much like typical and familiar “doxastic conflict” cases discussed earlier in the paper. Just as subjects sometimes end up with conflicting doxastic commitments to a proposition by both believing and disbelieving, they can end up with conflicting commitments here too. But if knowledge entails belief, and the IAs entail suspension, then these cases feel a lot like doxastic conflict cases for good reason – they are cases that essentially involve basic doxastic conflict since they are cases in which subjects both believe and suspend at a time. At least some of the normative pressure to avoid having an IA while knowing is the normative pressure to avoid having conflicting doxastic commitments at a time.

This also gives us a nice explanation of what’s going wrong with the sorts of assertions that we started with in this section. If we report that  $S$  both believes  $p$  and believes  $\neg p$  we report  $S$ ’s unfortunate doxastic state – she’s confused and somehow ended up with conflicting beliefs about the truth of  $p$  (and in at least some of those cases she’ll have got there by wondering or being curious about or inquiring into something that she already knew). But when  $S$  herself utters things like ‘I believe  $p$ , and I believe  $\neg p$ ’ or ‘ $p$ , but I believe  $\neg p$ ’ or just ‘ $p$  and also  $\neg p$ ’ things seem worse by a mile for  $S$ . Clear-eyed assertions of first-personal doxastic conflict begin to verge on incoherence. And this is just the pattern we find in the sort of assertions that prompted this section’s discussion (and not the pattern we find in, e.g., Moore-paradoxical assertions). This is further evidence that we should be treating these conflicts as involving doxastic incoherence, and so further evidence that the IAs entail suspension of judgment.

### 3.1 Worries

One central claim so far is that inquiring while knowing is somehow epistemically impermissible or inappropriate, and that the subject who is in a state like this is in a doxastically or epistemically conflicted state. But one might think



that this is not always the case. Isn't some double-checking epistemically appropriate? More specifically, if it isn't clear to a subject that they know when they do, isn't further inquiry just fine?

The first thing to flag here is that the Ignorance Norm does not say or imply that it is epistemically inappropriate or impermissible in every sense or all things considered to inquire into  $Q$  when one knows  $Q$ , but that it is in some sense or way or to some extent epistemically inappropriate. There may be some sense in which it is epistemically appropriate to inquire despite knowing in some sorts of cases. My claim though is that there is some sense in which it is not. The subject who inquires while she knows will be doing something epistemically inappropriate, but not necessarily everything.

Furthermore, I take it that even those uncomfortable with the Ignorance Norm are going to be happy with something in its vicinity. While double-checking might seem fine sometimes, the incessant double-checker is very far indeed from the epistemic ideal. And while inquiring into  $Q$  when one's knowledge of  $Q$ 's answer is obscured from view might seem acceptable, continued inquiry into  $Q$  when one's knowledge is perfectly transparent in every relevant respect typically does not. But I don't think that there is much hope of capturing what's going wrong in the cases in which it is more obvious that something is going wrong without the Ignorance Norm.

For instance, one might be tempted by the thought that the Ignorance Norm should be replaced with (e.g.) an "Awareness-Ignorance Norm", a norm that says (roughly) that one ought not to have an IA towards  $Q$  if one is aware that one knows  $Q$ . This norm says that inquiry is impermissible in cases in which the inquiring subject is aware that she knows, but is silent about cases in which she knows  $Q$  but isn't aware that she does, leaving it open that knowing  $Q$  and inquiring into  $Q$  are a perfectly permissible combination sometimes. I take it that this norm would have to be refined to be made truly plausible, but the spirit is clear enough. But it is very hard to see how these sorts of higher-order norms could be in place without there being something wrong with the first-order combination of attitudes. That is, it is hard to see how there could be an Awareness-Ignorance Norm for the IAs were there not an Ignorance Norm for them. If there's nothing wrong with inquiring into  $Q$  while knowing  $Q$ , then why should we be bothered when the subject is aware of being in this state of mind (we can just assume that she's also aware that she's inquiring)? If

knowing the answer to some question is normatively compatible with inquiring into that question, then when the subject comes to be aware that she knows and is inquiring, she's not being alerted to anything going wrong – she's becoming aware of being in a combination of first-order attitudes that is just fine (and we can assume she knows this). Why would a rational subject modify her first-order attitudes in light of this awareness then? I think the problem is this. We need some explanation of why this Awareness Norm should hold. But without a first-order Ignorance Norm it is very hard to see how that explanation will go. If there's nothing wrong with inquiring while knowing then why shouldn't I inquire while knowing, in full awareness?<sup>22</sup>

In general, if we want to say that there is something going wrong with the subject who continues to inquire into *Q* despite it being perfectly clear to her that she knows *Q*, I think that we have to say that at bottom there is a fundamental conflict between knowing *Q* and inquiring into *Q* and so that it is always in some sense or to some extent epistemically inappropriate to be in a state of mind that combines the two. Of course, subjects may well violate some additional norms when they are fully aware that they know the answers to the questions they're inquiring into.<sup>23</sup>

Let me raise one further concern about the view so far. I think that some people have the feeling that suspension of judgment is something that comes at the end of inquiry – that after a struggle to answer some question one finally gives up and suspends. The account of suspension that I have so far proposed is at odds with that feeling, placing suspension at inquiry's start, rather than as inquiry's outcome. For independent reason I think that the view that suspension closes inquiry isn't right. It seems to make it impossible to inquire into *Q* while being suspended about *Q* (or at least make it epistemically bad in some way) and the feeling seems to confuse the process leading up to the attitude with the

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<sup>22</sup>This objection applies not only to the Awareness-Ignorance Norm, but to other, related norms that try to make some relevant sorts of metacognitive attitudes incompatible with inquiry without making the relevant sorts of first-order ones incompatible.

<sup>23</sup>Does this mean that there is always something epistemically inappropriate about double-checking? Not necessarily. If a double-checker has to be a subject who continues or re-opens inquiry while knowing throughout, then the Ignorance Norm renders all cases of double-checking inappropriate in some sense. On the other hand, if the extension of 'double-checking' includes cases in which one is inquiring into *Q* without knowing *Q* – e.g., cases in which one knew *Q* in the lead-up to the inquiry, but relented before re-opening the question – then the Ignorance Norm is compatible with perfectly appropriate double-checking. When the subject drops her knowledge (say, by dropping her belief) while inquiring further, the Ignorance Norm is silent.

attitude itself.

Something in the vicinity of this feeling does seem right though: perhaps suspension of judgment typically does and often should come on the heels of some period of reflection on a question. And moreover, we should be able to be suspended on a question after a period of active, but inconclusive inquiry. But the account of suspension of judgment that I've proposed here is compatible with both of these. Nothing I've said so far should lead us to worry about the view's compatibility with post-active-inquiry suspension, but let me say a little bit more about its compatibility with pre-suspension question reflection. The view does not render it impossible for a subject to reflect on a question before suspending on it, but does insist that this pre-suspension period of reflection also counts as a pre-inquiry stage of question evaluation.

I think that a nice way to think of this pre-inquiry stage is provided by some accounts of the psychology of question answering. According to these accounts question answering is divided into distinct stages. In the first stage, the subject "decides" whether the answer to the relevant question is likely to be in memory. If she concludes that it is, she'll look for it there, but if she concludes that the answer is unlikely to be in memory already, then she'll shift to genuinely trying to figure out what the answer is.<sup>24</sup> I take it that it is only in this later stage that subjects are genuinely inquiring into questions (or genuinely curious or wondering, and so on). This sort of picture fits nicely with mine, and can give us some insight into what this sort of "pre-inquiry" stage of question evaluation might look like. Roughly: we first consider and decide whether we already know *Q*, and if we decide that we don't but somehow want to, then we suspend and open the question up for genuine investigation. Of course, this is just one way to conceive of a stage of pre-suspension question evaluation, I think it's a nice way, but my hope is at least to have made clear that there is space for such a thing.<sup>25</sup>

This concludes my case for one direction of our suspending-inquiring biconditional. In the next section I'll discuss the other direction. My discussion there will be somewhat more speculative, and so it's worth making clear at this point

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<sup>24</sup>Central accounts of this sort of picture can be found in the work of Lynn Reder. See, e.g., Reder (1987) and Reder (1988).

<sup>25</sup>Although the focus here has been on "pre-inquiry" question reflection, the considerations generalize. There may well be other sorts of question reflection that don't involve truly asking the question and don't entail suspension of judgment.

that there is no forced march from one conditional to the other – either can be accepted without the other. Although the next section effectively claims that suspending judgment is itself a kind of inquiring attitude, even this first conditional – that one is inquiring into  $Q$  at  $t$  only if one is suspending judgment about  $Q$  at  $t$  – ties suspending and inquiring tightly together. A nice analogue of the upshot of this section is some of the things that Timothy Williamson says about knowledge and the factive mental states. In *Knowledge and Its Limits* Williamson wants to say that although the concept ‘knows’ is unanalyzable, this shouldn’t be taken to mean that a positive account of the concept cannot be given. Williamson’s suggestion is (roughly) that knowledge plays a special role for a class of mental states – the factive mental states – seeing, remembering, and so on. Williamson argues that knowledge is the most general factive mental state, the factive mental state one is in if one is in any factive mental state at all.<sup>26</sup> My claim about suspension and the interrogative attitudes is in many ways analogous to Williamson’s about knowledge and the factive mental states. If one has an IA towards  $Q$ , then one is suspended about  $Q$ . If one wonders  $Q$ , one is suspended about  $Q$ ; if one is curious about  $Q$ , one is suspended about  $Q$ ; if one is investigating  $Q$  or deliberating about  $Q$  or otherwise inquiring into  $Q$ , one is suspended about  $Q$ . Williamson says that knowledge matters because the factive attitudes matter and I think we should say much the same about suspension of judgment and the interrogative attitudes here. The IAs are not only a class of utterly familiar and commonplace folk-psychological attitudes, but they are the attitudes that are at the centre of any genuine inquiry – the attitudes we have as we intentionally move ourselves from ignorance to knowledge, playing a central role in our epistemic pursuits. Suspension of judgment then matters (at least in part) because the IAs matter, and because inquiry matters.

#### **4 Suspending judgment about $Q$ entails inquiring into $Q$**

I’ve argued that any genuine inquirer is suspending judgment. Now I want to suggest that any genuine suspender is an inquirer – or at least has what I’ve been calling an inquiring attitude. While neither direction of our suspension-inquiry biconditional is without controversy, I assume that this direction will prove more contentious than the previous one. I feel the force of some of the

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<sup>26</sup>See Williamson (2000), chapter 1 for this discussion.

common reservations and will try to address a few directly later on. Despite some intuitive misgivings though, I think there is a case to be made for this connection between suspension and inquiry as well, and in this section I'll try to make it.

First some clarificatory remarks. The claim at the centre of this section is that someone who is suspending about  $Q$  is in an inquiring mode or inquiring state mind with respect to  $Q$  or simply has  $Q$  on her research agenda. As we saw, this is closely related to the claim that the suspender about  $Q$  is oriented towards or sensitive to information that bears on  $Q$  or that will help her to answer  $Q$ . This characterization is obviously incomplete, but can be improved upon somewhat by thinking about the other IAs. My thought is that all of the other IAs mentioned (ignoring suspension for now) share a common property. Someone who is contemplating or wondering or curious etc., has an attitude that counts as an inquiring attitude in the sense at issue here. These attitudes are all goal-directed, or have epistemic satisfaction conditions as discussed. My suggestion in this section is that suspension of judgment shares this property as well.

It's helpful to think of curiosity in this context, I think. A subject who is curious about  $Q$  has an attitude of the relevant sort. This curious subject roughly wants to know  $Q$ , will be sensitive to information that bears on  $Q$ , might act to get information that will help her to close  $Q$  when she can and so on. Of course, someone curious about  $Q$  at  $t$  needn't be inquiring into  $Q$  at  $t$  in the most active sense of 'inquiring'. She doesn't need to be doing anything at all that counts as helping her to advance the goal of closing  $Q$ . At any given time we are typically curious about all sorts of questions. Which, if any, will prompt action at that time is a function of the strength of our curiosity, our other goals and needs, and much more. The same is true of our research agendas more generally. There is no straightforward route from the claim that some  $Q$  is on a subject's research agenda at  $t$  to the claim that that subject is going to act in some particular way at  $t$  or any time after  $t$ . That said, the curious subject (like the wondering subject and the contemplating subject...) is nonetheless in something of an inquiring mode or state of mind even when she's not acting to resolve her open question. She's in some sense asked and wants to answer some question. My claim for suspension is that like curiosity (and the other IAs), it's a kind of mental asking,

too – in suspending about *Q*, one puts *Q* on the agenda.<sup>27</sup>

Let me start with a few different sorts of considerations in defence of the claim that someone who is suspended about *Q* is in an inquiring state of mind with respect to *Q*. I don't think that any are decisive, but together they make an intriguing case. The objections and responses will round that case out.

To start, there are some cases in which suspension of judgment becomes epistemically inappropriate exactly when further inquiry does. The view being proposed here can give a straightforward explanation of those cases. For instance, say that at *w*, the world of inquiry, *S* realizes that *Q* has some false presupposition or is similarly unsound, e.g., *Q* = *What colour was Thomas Jefferson's Ferrari?* (and *w* is the actual world). When *S* discovers that *Q* is faulty in this way, it looks as though further inquiry into *Q* would be irrational or similarly epistemically inappropriate. But in this sort of case continuing to suspend about *Q* seems to be inappropriate as well, and in much the same way. If you know that Jefferson didn't have a Ferrari then suspending judgment about what colour his Ferrari was looks irrational (or otherwise epistemically inappropriate).<sup>28</sup>

Why should suspension be inappropriate in these cases? Notice, in these sorts of cases it isn't just suspending judgment that looks inappropriate, but having any IA whatever: if you know that Jefferson didn't own a Ferrari, then being curious or wondering about what colour his Ferrari was also seem irrational. So it looks as though having these sorts of questions on one's research agenda in any sense is a bad idea in these cases. If suspending about *Q* involves having *Q* on one's research agenda, then we have a nice explanation of why suspension looks bad in these cases. And if we deny that suspension involves this sort of openness, then we'll have give some other explanation of why it starts to look bad exactly when having a question on the agenda starts to look bad.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>27</sup>The comparison with curiosity is apt for another reason as well. A number of the IAs we've been discussing seem like processes. Curiosity though – like suspension of judgment – is a state. In this respect it gives us a model for a stative inquiring attitude.

<sup>28</sup>These sorts of cases can also be used against some of the more "reductionist" accounts of suspension of judgment. Imagine a case in which I'm asked a question I recognize as unsound. I consider the question and decide not to believe any answer. Say I even know that I don't/can't know the answer. We don't want to say that I've (thereby) suspended judgment on this question in this case.

<sup>29</sup>I think we can run a similar sort of argument in some cases involving vague questions – questions involving vague predicates in the right sorts of ways. Getting the details just right is somewhat tricky, and perhaps something hangs on how we (or our subjects) think about vagueness. Say *Q'* = *Was Jefferson tall?*. If one thinks that it's vague whether *Q'* and that this means that there's "no fact of the matter" about whether Jefferson was tall, then plausibly inquiring into

Here are some other relevant considerations. First, as we've already seen, there is a sense in which the view tracks the treatment of suspended judgment through the history of philosophy in that it is plausibly closely aligned with the Cartesian and Pyrrhonian accounts of that state. We can connect it up with some more modern thoughts as well. In particular, we can find some related inspiration in some Peircian thoughts about doubt:

Thus, both doubt and belief have positive effects upon us, though very different ones. Belief does not make us act at once, but puts us into such a condition that we shall behave in some certain way, when the occasion arises. Doubt has not the least such active effect, but stimulates us to inquiry until it is destroyed. (Peirce (1877): 6)

According to Peirce, doubt has a kind of suicidal tendency – it prompts us to inquire until it is extinguished. My proposal is that suspension shares this push towards its own demise: in suspending we ask a question and (at least in some minimal sense) seek an answer. Although I don't think that doubt and suspension are identical, and I don't know whether Peirce's claim about doubt is right, it wouldn't be surprising if doubt and suspension shared this property. It is widely thought that we find uncertainty and ambiguity and the like aversive. This helps to explain our pervasive efforts to explain the behaviour of others, why unpredictable events tend to produce much stronger emotions than predictable ones, why we choose the way we do in Ellsberg-type experiments, and more.<sup>30</sup> From this perspective, it is easy to get into the thought that in suspending about a question we put ourselves into a state that aims at closing. Any normal subject at any given time is ignorant over a vast space of possibilities. In most cases the specifics of this expanse of ignorance goes unnoticed. When we suspend judgment though we frame up some portion of this space of the unknown (at least typically these questions are unknown, but not always as we've seen). When we do this we move ourselves from a state of mere ignorance, to one of explicit uncertainty – we bring some aspect of the unknown into view. If explicit uncertainty and ambiguity are typically experienced as aversive, then

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*Q'* and having IAs towards that question are inappropriate in the same sorts of ways as they were in the case of unsound questions; and suspension of judgment seems bad in just those ways as well (the discussion of wondering about vague questions in Field (2010) seems to me entirely apt here). If our subject treats vagueness as merely tracking some sort of ignorance (or if we do), then the matter may be more complex.

<sup>30</sup>See Wilson et al. (2003) for a very small overview of a very large body of relevant literature. Also see Loewenstein (1994) for some discussion of the aversiveness of curiosity.

in suspending judgment we enter into a state which we want to get out of in a particular way: by answering or resolving the question.

Further, I think that suspension's role amongst the interrogative attitudes should push us towards the conclusion that suspending aims at closing. So far the IAs have been flagged as a class of attitudes that are question-directed. All I've supplied is the start of a list. Now I want to further refine the class of interest here. Let's say that the IAs are not only question-directed, but are bound by the Ignorance Norm and that they entail suspension of judgment. All the members of the tentative list fall into this narrower class still, although perhaps there are some question-directed attitudes that won't, e.g., understanding a question. So, the IAs are a collection of states and processes, all question-directed, all entailing suspension of judgment.

Two observations now. First, suspension of judgment, on the view I've so far proposed here, is not just any IA, it's an absolutely central member of the class in virtue of being entailed by every member. In this sense it's the, or at least a, core IA. Second, every other member of the class we've so far seen has the sort of orientation with respect to the focal question that I want to say suspension shares. Wondering, curiosity, investigation, deliberation, and so on, all seem to have the relevant sort of aims or satisfaction conditions and in much the same way. Qua core IA, it isn't a stretch to think that suspension shares this property, that it too is a kind of "asking".

We can press further here as well. Inquiry, wondering, curiosity, and so on, begin when a subject "opens a question in thought". In opening a question in thought in this sort of way the question becomes an object of inquiry or wondering or curiosity, it becomes a question one aims to resolve or settle. I've argued that one cannot have an IA towards a question without having suspended about it. But thinking of suspension as a basic way of making a question an object of inquiry, brings this story together in an elegant way: we can say that there is nothing more to "opening a question in thought" than simply suspending judgment on that question. In suspending about  $Q$  we make  $Q$  an object of inquiry. From there we can wonder or be curious or deliberate (and so on) about  $Q$ . Suspending about a question puts that question on our research agenda.

Finally, there is a sense in which this connection between suspension of judgment and inquiry is right on the surface. My claim here is that by suspending judgment about  $Q$  we commit to a particular sort of neutrality with respect to  $Q$



– we commit to keeping the question open in thought, or to keeping it an object of inquiry. In a way, we can get to this thought just from the form of words we use to pick out the attitude. When we suspend some event or activity we put a stop to it, but only temporarily – we put the activity in abeyance, and leave it to be taken up again at a later time. We suspend the match due to rain only when the plan is to start up again later (if not we cancel it) and we suspend the student for bad behaviour only when we intend for her to return to school (if not we expel her).<sup>31</sup> ‘Suspending judgment’ then seems to imply putting off or delaying making that judgment. And this seems to imply that one is intending or aiming to judge or decide on the relevant question. But someone aiming to judge is someone who is in the sort of inquiring frame of mind at issue here. That one suspends judging seems to imply some sort of commitment to continued efforts to judge.<sup>32</sup>

#### 4.1 Worries and replies

Suspension’s question-directedness, its being an state of explicit uncertainty or ambiguity, the fact that it seems to become inappropriate to suspend exactly when it’s inappropriate to inquire in some cases, and some other considerations push us towards the conclusion that in suspending about *Q* we, at least in some minimal sense, aim to close *Q*. Still, some concerns linger. I will try to address a couple of particularly salient ones.

Worry: Even if there are some cases in which suspension is not the appropriate attitude to have once an inquiry is frustrated, aren’t there other sorts of cases in which it is? For instance, cases in which subjects come to know or believe that they should stop inquiring because they think that continued inquiry will be too difficult or that there is no further evidence to find seem to be ones in which continued inquiry is out of place, but suspending judgment is appropriate.

Reply: Let’s say that an inquiry into *Q* is *frustrated* at *t* just in case the inquiring subject comes to think (or if one prefers: know) that it is unlikely that

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<sup>31</sup>And when we experience suspense when reading a novel or watching a film, that experience involves exactly the sort of aversiveness discussed earlier – it isn’t just a matter of not knowing how the film will end, but wanting or needing to know as well.

<sup>32</sup>Some epistemologists use the terminology of ‘withholding’ rather than ‘suspending’ to pick out the focal attitude here, but this has related implications. A subject who withholds something (e.g., supplies, affections) keeps it back in cases in which she wants to or is somehow expected or inclined to grant it. Again, some sort of pull towards granting the thing being withheld is implied. In the case of withheld belief, the pull is to settling the relevant matter by believing some answer.

she will be able to answer  $Q$  at  $t$  or going forward for some reasonable amount of time. It seems clear enough that there are many cases in which suspension is appropriate even when inquiry is frustrated. What is less clear, I think, is that maintaining the sort of inquiring stance that I want to say comes along with suspending is not appropriate in these sorts of cases.<sup>33</sup> It is not right that any case in which one thinks or even knows that that an inquiry into  $Q$  is (even very badly) stalled in the relevant sorts of ways is a case in which  $Q$  should be dropped or abandoned rather than kept open in the relevant sense. In fact, I think that we should say that any case in which suspension is appropriate will also be one in which some sort of inquiring stance is just fine.

To fix ideas say  $Q = \textit{How did the thief escape from the building?}$ . Imagine that up until  $t$  detective  $S$  has been engaged in a fairly long-term inquiry into  $Q$ , but has yet to figure it out. Over some stretch of time before  $t$  she and her team have searched for evidence in every way they knew how and pursued every avenue of inquiry they could conceive of. At  $t$ ,  $S$  comes to think that she is very unlikely to be able to answer the question and she recognizes that she can think of no further avenues of research into  $Q$ . I take it that the feeling is that  $S$ 's being suspended about  $Q$  at  $t$  and going forward seems appropriate. And the worry is that the view being proposed here is not compatible with that feeling since it takes suspending about  $Q$  to involve an inquiring stance towards  $Q$ .

But this concern only has teeth if in this case (1)  $S$ 's being suspended about  $Q$  at  $t$  (and for some relevant interval of time going forward) is epistemically appropriate and (2) maintaining an inquiring stance towards  $Q$  at  $t$  (and forward) is not. We can simply grant (1) here. But in the case as described we should not grant (2). Here's a quick way to see this:  $S$ 's remaining curious about  $Q$  at  $t$  (and forward for the relevant time), even once she's concluded that her question is unlikely to be successfully answered, seems epistemically unproblematic (in contrast with the cases from the last section in which one realizes that one's question is somehow defective). But if curiosity is appropriate, then so is maintaining some sort of inquiring stance towards  $Q$ .

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<sup>33</sup>One thing worth flagging here. These cases will be ones in which subjects have certain kinds of higher-order beliefs about how they are faring or will fare epistemically. They will involve subjects believing things about their current and future evidence or about the rationality of further inquiry (etc.). Although there hasn't been much discussion about these sorts of distinctively "meta-investigative" beliefs or knowledge and what sort of impact they ought to have on our first-order attitudes, given the state of the debate about higher-order evidence generally, we should not expect any easy resolutions in this case either.

I take it that these considerations generalize. When inquiry is frustrated due to a (perceived) lack of evidence that bears on *Q* or the thought/known inability to get more evidence or other sorts of broadly epistemic considerations, maintaining an inquiring stance or having an inquiring attitude towards *Q* is typically epistemically unproblematic. I may know that I cannot get any further evidence about exactly how many times Henry VIII ate custard in 1512, but I'm not epistemically remiss if I remain even deeply curious about that question, nor if I contemplate or wonder about it some.

Of course, in many of these cases, all sorts of actions designed to close the relevant open question may look inappropriate. Perhaps there will even be cases in which rational subjects take no further action aimed at closing or resolving those questions. But, and as we have already seen, it does not follow from the fact that certain courses of action designed to close a question look inappropriate in a case that keeping that question open in thought is inappropriate in that case.

Worry: Aren't there cases in which we are asked a question, don't know its answer but then never reflect on the question again, and then that question plays no further role in explaining what sorts of information/evidence we come to acquire, i.e., we show no further sensitivity to information that bears on the question and are not at all disposed to come to know the sorts of things that would help us to resolve the relevant question?

Reply: These seem like perfectly possible cases to me. The question though is whether subjects in these sorts of cases are genuinely suspending judgment. I think that this is difficult to decide and judgments on the matter would need to be taken on a case-by-case basis. Let me say a few general things though.

Recall, a starting point here is that suspension of judgment is some sort of doxastic attitude. To be suspended about a question is to be in a state distinct from merely lacking beliefs in some answers. The mere fact that one is asked a question and one utters or thinks, 'I don't know' in response is not sufficient to make it that one has suspended judgment on that question. And the fact that one suspends about some question at  $t_1$  does not mean that one continues in that state for a lifetime. As in the case of belief, one can change one's mind at  $t_2$ , and one can also forget. Some beliefs we form we hold onto for a long time and others we lose almost right away. Qua doxastic attitude we should say the same for suspension of judgment. Sometimes we shrug off a question without suspending, sometimes we suspend and contemplate the question briefly, drop-

ping the question soon after, and sometimes we remain in states of suspension for extended periods of time.

So the view plausibly has the result that in some cases someone who is asked a question and cannot answer does not suspend judgment and is not in a state of suspended judgment going forward; and the result that there are some cases in which someone who suspends judgment at  $t_1$  stops suspending at  $t_2$  (without shifting to belief). These are not problematic results so far and I take it that anyone who wants to think of suspension as a doxastic attitude – and many who do not – should like them. The pressing question though is whether the view here has the result that subjects are not suspended in cases in which it seems clear that they are. As I said, I think that fully settling this would require us to go case by case. I don't think that such cases will be easy to find though.

I think that the general difficulty is this: the sorts of cases in which it seems clearest that the subject is not in an inquiring mode with respect to  $Q$  are ones in which the subject recognizes (or had previously recognized) that she doesn't know the answer to  $Q$  but has absolutely no interest in  $Q$  or resolving  $Q$  at all. And the problem is that once we start to describe these sorts of circumstances we also start to describe circumstances in which it seems implausible that the subject has any sort of attitude towards  $Q$ . We simply don't tend to have attitudes towards contents that we don't care about in the least. For instance, we typically don't pay attention to matters that seem to be of no practical or theoretical interest to us and even if we happen to we typically don't retain that information for any extended period of time.

Moreover, as we've seen, if we're to think of a subject's open questions at a time as the questions she in some broad sense wants or needs to close at that time, then we should allow that these wants or needs can vary in strength and so that the subject can have questions open or on the agenda that she only just barely wants or needs to close. This means that for this last worry to get a grip here we need a case in which  $S$  is clearly suspended over some interval of time but in which she genuinely has absolutely no interest in (resolving) the relevant question. But if it's going to be hard to find subjects who have attitudes towards  $Q$  but absolutely no interest in  $Q$ , then it's going to be hard to find cases that clearly do have the relevant combination of features.

There are a range of putative counterexamples to the view here that attempt to present cases in which subjects are suspended but not at all in inquiring states

of mind (or at least should not be). My thought is that when we look more closely at these cases it will be difficult to find any that clearly have that combination of features. In some it will be plausible that the subject's inquiring state of mind is appropriate, and in others I think we'll simply want to deny that the relevant subjects are genuinely suspending judgment.

## 5 Concluding remarks

In this paper I've tried to show that suspension of judgment and inquiry are closely connected. To do this, I've looked to a family of familiar, folk-psychological states and processes – wondering, curiosity, deliberation, contemplation and more. These are the sorts of attitudes a subject has when she is inquiring into a question, and they involve or amount to having an inquiring attitude towards a question. I've tried to argue that all of these interrogative attitudes entail suspension of judgment. Given that the interrogative attitudes are at the centre of a typical inquiry, suspension of judgment is right there as well. This already gives a nice answer to our titular question. Why suspend judging? To inquire.

I've also tried to tie inquiry and suspension even more closely together than that, albeit somewhat more tentatively. I've given a number of reasons to think that suspension of judgment can itself be thought of as an inquiring attitude, one with the sorts of aims and satisfaction conditions that the other IAs share.

I assume that this last claim about suspending judgment will prove particularly controversial, with some feeling as though suspension can be less robust and directed than I'm suggesting here. As mentioned at the outset of the paper, I think philosophers use 'suspend judgment' in a number of different ways, sometimes just to describe the lack of any sort of doxastic or epistemic commitment. For instance, when parties in the peer disagreement literature argue about whether one should suspend judgment when one discovers that an epistemic peer disagrees with them, as far as I can tell this is just an argument over whether those subjects should drop their belief when in those sorts of epistemic circumstances. Of course, I've given some reason for thinking that dropping one's belief and the like are not identical to suspending judgment.

That said, one might propose that suspended judgment has many faces or can be done in many ways, and try to hold on to these more minimal (putative) manifestations of the state. In that case, perhaps one can think of the

project here as one of describing one of those many faces – something like *active suspension of judgment*. Active suspension involves having a sort of neutral contentful attitude over some interval of time. And as I've now tried to suggest it is intimately tied to inquiring into questions.

That aside, the biconditional I've argued for here gives us the start of a story about the nature and function of suspended judgment via its connection to inquiry. We might also find some guidance as to suspension's normative profile there. When should a subject suspend? When is she justified in suspending or permitted to suspend? When does she have a reason to suspend? The following answers suggest themselves (let's just focus on reasons for now; I take it these considerations generalize): when she has reason to be curious, wonder, investigate, inquire, and so on. In effect, we typically have reason to suspend when we have reason to aim to resolve or answer or close some question, when we have reason to try to come to know. If we think that subjects have reason to inquire into Q only when their evidence or epistemic standings with respect to Q are deficient in some way, then we stay close to the expected result that having reason to suspend judgment is, at least in part, a function of being in those sorts of epistemic circumstances. But I think that the framework also stands to get us to some more interesting normative results: the class of reasons to inquire looks broad and diverse. At least at first glance the class does not seem to be populated with uniformly "epistemic" sorts of considerations – there may all sorts of non-epistemic and non-evidential reasons to inquire (and so suspend). In general, inquiry looks to be a place at which the practical and the epistemic collide. In inquiry we aim to know, and that aim can be prompted by pure epistemic interest or pure practical necessity, or anything in between. The moves the subject makes to come to know, and that will be evaluated in her quest to know, are actions, inferences, attitudes, and more. And these moves can be evaluated along both epistemic dimensions (e.g., evidence-respecting) and practical dimensions (e.g., means-end efficiency).

It is sometimes said that belief has an aim: beliefs aim at truth or aim at knowledge, for instance. But now much of what we say about the aim of belief we can also say about traditional epistemology's other attitude and its aim. We suspend judgment in order to get to the truth or to know (and the like). If we want to move ourselves from a state of ignorance to a state of knowing by inquiring, then at least two things need to happen: a question needs to be

opened or asked and then it needs to be closed in the right sort of way or answered. The point or purpose or aim of opening is typically the very same point or purpose or aim of closing when the circumstances are right: to improve our epistemic standing on some matter – to settle a question and to come to know.<sup>34</sup>

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