THE EPISTEMIC AND THE ZETETIC

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DRAFT. COMMENTS VERY MUCH APPRECIATED††

1 INTRODUCTION

We are inquirers. Not just qua philosophers but qua humans and even qua ani-
mals. We are subjects in pursuit of information, from the mundane to the extraor-
dinary and everything in between. We want to know where our keys are, who will
win the next election, how life began, and more. How should we conduct ourselves
in inquiry? Which norms should we conform to as we inquire? Let’s call norms of
inquiry ‘zetetic’ norms.1 How are zetetic norms related to epistemic norms? Here’s
a plausible thought: they are closely related. Aren’t epistemic norms norms of in-
quiry, norms that bind us qua inquirers?

I think so. But it turns out that like many close relationships, the relationship
between the epistemic and the zetetic is somewhat fraught. In this paper I’m going
to argue that some of our familiar contemporary epistemic norms are in tension
with and even conflict with central zetetic norms. I’ll also explore the relationship
between the epistemic and the zetetic more generally. The upshot of this paper is
not that there is no way of thinking about epistemology that keeps it in close har-
mony with a theory of inquiry; in fact I think there are many such ways. What I
do want to say though is that epistemology as we know it, as it is currently done,
doesn’t seem to be leaving as much room as we might like for the sorts of norms
that are central to the practice of inquiry. At the heart of this paper then is a puz-
zel: a puzzle for a picture of epistemic normativity that doesn’t accommodate the
norms of inquiry, and a puzzle about how to conduct ourselves in our efforts to get
more information, acquire knowledge, and understand better.

††Please ask if you want to cite it though.

1The Greek verb ‘ζητέω’ means “seek for” or “inquire after”. The adjective ‘ζητητικός’ is formed
in a standard way from the verb, and means “devoted to inquiry” or “disposed to inquire”. The word
is used in this paper in a slightly different way, to mean “related to inquiry”. Thanks to Harvey Led-
erman for suggesting the term.
I want to start by getting a feel for a key sort of tension I’m going to explore in this paper. Think about any typical inquiry – I want or need to figure something out. Say, for instance, that I want to know how many windows the Chrysler Building in Manhattan has (say I’m in the window business). I decide that the most reliable way to figure this out is to head down there myself and do a count. To do my counting, I set up outside of Grand Central Station. Say it takes me an hour of focused work to get the count done and figure out how many windows that building has.

Now think about the hour during which I’m doing my counting. During that hour there are many other ways I could make general epistemic gains: I’m standing outside Grand Central Station and so there is obviously a huge amount I can come to know (most of which is completely unrelated to my counting task or windows or the Chrysler Building). More specifically, during that hour I can extend my knowledge in two sorts of ways. First, I’m a typical person and so I arrive at Grand Central with a huge store of evidence: the body of total evidence, relevant to all sorts of topics and subject matters, that I’ve acquired over my lifetime. Second, I’m standing outside Grand Central Station for that hour and so the amount of perceptual information available to me is absolutely vast. This is all to say that there is a lot of new knowledge that I can acquire and a lot of evidence I can follow during my hour outside of Grand Central, both by extending the body of total evidence I arrived with (e.g., by drawing all sorts of inferences that evidence warrants at the time) and by just soaking up what’s going on around me.

During my hour examining the Chrysler Building though I barely do any of that. I need to get my count right and to do that I really have to stay focused on the task. So during that hour I don’t extend my current stores of knowledge by drawing inferences that aren’t relevant to my counting task, and I do my best to ignore everything else going on around me. And this seems to be exactly what I should be doing during that hour if I want to actually succeed in the inquiry I’m engaged in. If that’s right though then what I should be doing during that hour includes ignoring available evidence and information. I succeed at my inquiry then by behaving in a somewhat epistemically dubious way. There is an important sense in which I succeed in inquiry by failing to respect my evidence for some stretch of time. It’s not that my success in this case comes by believing things my evidence doesn’t support, but it does come by ignoring a lot of my evidence and failing to come to know a great deal of what I’m in a position to know. So it looks as though there’s a kind of incongruence here: my success as an inquirer requires
somewhat epistemically suspect behaviour.

What we have here, I think, is a mismatch between the demands of inquiry and some widely accepted epistemic norms. Since I'm trying to figure something out, there is zetetic pressure to take the means to that end – to do the things required to get to an answer to my Chrysler Building question. That's to say there is some sort of zetetic instrumental norm I should conform to – a norm that says that I should take the means to my inquiry-theoretic ends. My end in this case is figuring out the answer to some question, i.e., How many windows does the Chrysler Building have? We can generalize this thought to get a zetetic instrumental principle (call it 'ZIP'):

**ZIP** If one wants to figure out $Q^?$, then one ought to take the necessary means to figuring out $Q^?$

ZIP is just an instance of a familiar sort of norm – a norm of instrumental rationality which enjoins us to take the means to our ends. In this case, the end is figuring out the answer to some question, $Q^?$ (What kind of tree is that? Why are the bees behaving this way? Is justified true belief knowledge? Etc.). But as we just saw, conforming to ZIP can sometimes require us to stay focused on some particular inquiry for some stretch of time. And staying focused on a particular task often means avoiding certain kinds of distraction. And sometimes following the evidence we already have and that's easily available to us down some “inquiry-irrelevant” path can be just such a distraction. This means that were we to come to know that irrelevant information over the course of some inquiry, we could be violating ZIP – we could be doing something impermissible from the perspective of ZIP.

This sits uneasily with some of our core epistemic norms. Consider, for instance, the following two epistemic norms:

**EP$_a$** If one has excellent evidence for $p$ at $t$ then one is permitted to judge $p$ at $t$.

**KP$_a$** If one is in a position to come to know $p$ at $t$, then one is permitted to come to know $p$ at $t$.

The ‘$a$’ subscript in these norms stands for ‘act’ indicating that these are norms for forming beliefs (which I’m calling ‘judging’ here) and coming to know. These sorts of act or process norms can be contrasted with more state-oriented epistemic
norms which tell us which states to be in (rather than which states to get into).\textsuperscript{2} I'll discuss epistemic state norms a bit later in the paper. $\text{EP}_a$ is a fairly standard (weak) evidentialist norm, and $\text{KP}_a$ is a kind of generalization of that sort of evidentialist norm. These norms say that it's always epistemically permissible to form beliefs in response to the right kinds of evidence and always epistemically permissible to come to know something. Both norms get at fairly core commitments of normative epistemology as it's currently conceived of. In fact, on our current way of thinking of epistemic normativity, it’s difficult to even make sense of the claim that coming to know some $p$ was epistemically impermissible – you came to know after all and so you seem to have done great epistemically.

So, it looks as though according to $\text{KP}_a$ and $\text{EP}_a$ it was perfectly permissible for me to come to know anything at all that was available for me to know outside Grand Central. But to succeed at my count I needed to stay focused and do my best to ignore much of what was going on around me. So, according to ZIP it wasn't permissible for me to come to know all sorts of things I was in a position to come to know over the stretch of time during which I was inquiring (and I had all sorts of excellent evidence that I had to ignore). ZIP declared it impermissible for me to do things epistemology never declares impermissible.

There was nothing special about my Chrysler Building inquiry. It was fairly typical: I wanted or even needed to figure something out, I came up with a strategy for figuring that thing out and deployed that strategy carefully. But typical inquiries don't proceed in informational vacuums. They proceed out in the world. Given this, there will typically be plenty we can come to know via perception (visual, auditory, etc.) throughout the intervals of time during which we’re inquiring. This isn’t a special feature of inquiring throughout those intervals, but merely a feature of moving through the world as a typical subject does over a typical interval of time\textsuperscript{3}

To succeed in my inquiry I had to stay focused on the task and not get too distracted. And I did that: the inquiry required some of my attention and I gave it. But being a diligent inquirer meant I was not allowed to do what core epistemic

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\textsuperscript{2}Just to be clear: I am calling the “act” of forming a belief, ‘judging’. Some use ‘judging’ to mean something more robust than just coming to believe, but I am using the term in only that very thin sense. And while I’m calling judging an act, I also don’t mean anything metaphysically or ethically robust by ‘act’, and ‘process’ would work just as well for our purposes.

\textsuperscript{3}Moreover, at any given time over a typical inquiry interval, an inquirer will have a fairly extensive body of total evidence: they will have plenty of information and knowledge already stored. And we can assume that a typical inquirer has not drawn out all of the implications – deductive, inductive, abductive – of their total evidence. But drawing out those sorts of implications will, in many cases, also result in an inquirer knowing more. Again, this is not a special feature of being an inquirer during some stretch of time, but just a feature of being a typical human during that stretch of time.
norms always allow me to do.

This is not to say that in being a diligent inquirer I had to violate KP or EP. From the perspective of just those norms I was permitted to come to know anything and everything about the scene outside Grand Central, but not required. So conforming to ZIP didn’t force me to violate those epistemic norms (I’ll say more in the next section about whether I had to violate some other epistemic norms). But the problem I’m highlighting right now isn’t a problem of violation, it’s a problem of normative coherence.

Even though ZIP is a “zetetic” norm in the first instance, that doesn’t seem to fully capture its normative force or perhaps the source of the demand it imposes on us as inquirers. ZIP just like EP and KP, strikes me as a distinctively epistemic norm: it’s the sort of norm the conforming to which is partly constitutive of good inquiry; it’s a norm that rational subjects in pursuit of knowledge and understanding are going to conform to; it’s a norm that we’ll follow if we want to successfully move ourselves from ignorance to knowledge or from confusion to comprehension; it’s a norm of inquiry.

And this, I think, is where the rubber meets the road. The problem is that these two kinds of distinctively epistemic norms are inconsistent: they make it both permissible and impermissible to form some beliefs or to acquire some knowledge. And it looks as though this sort of normative inconsistency or incoherence is going to be pervasive in inquiry so that inquirers will regularly be confronted with incoherent epistemic advice. Are inquirers allowed or not allowed to come to know whatever they are in a position to come to know over the courses of their inquiries?

The rest of this paper fleshes out, defends, and extends this concern. In the next section (3), I say more about the ZIP and zetetic normativity. In section 4, I say more about contemporary epistemic norms, more carefully bring out the tension described in this section, and then bring out a series of closely related tensions that emerge with other familiar epistemic norms, including more “state-oriented” epistemic norms. And in section 5 I explore the different paths forward and the difficulties we face along each, signalling where I think we should land.

This paper raises a puzzle for our current picture of epistemic normativity. The puzzle comes via thinking about the norms of inquiry and their place in epistemology. I find the puzzle worrying and I hope that by the end of the paper the reader

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4 Although I said the problem here wasn’t a problem of violation, there is a nearby problem of violation lurking now: there is all sorts of knowledge available to us over the courses of our inquiries the coming to know of which would constitute a violation of the norms of inquiry. But can I really violate a norm of inquiry by coming to know something? This does not seem like a good result either.
will understand my concern. Beyond the puzzle though, part of the aim of this paper is to make space for zetetic normativity, which has been woefully under-explored. I take it that engaging in the project of exploring the norms of inquiry requires no special justification, but I hope that the sort of reflection on the interaction between the epistemic and the zetetic to come will bring out some of the intricacies involved in figuring out just how inquiry should proceed.

3 ZIP

Recall our zetetic instrumental principle:

**ZIP** If one wants to figure out $Q^?$, then one ought to take the necessary means to figuring out $Q^?$

ZIP is a familiar kind of norm in a less familiar context. It's an instrumental norm: a norm that rational subjects conform to in pursuing their goals. In this case though, it's a specifically zetetic instrumental norm.

A norm like ZIP follows fairly naturally from the thought that central to inquiry is an aim of epistemic improvement. We inquire in order to figure something out, or get more information or knowledge, or understand something better. Where we find goal or aim-directed activities we find instrumental norms. That said, while that may mean that some ZIP-like norm will be central to inquiry, we haven't got all the way to ZIP yet. In this section I want to say more about instrumental norms in general and about ZIP in particular. I will also say more about the “kind” of norm ZIP is, and especially whether we should be thinking of it as an epistemic norm (as I suggested in the last section).

In general, an ‘instrumental principle’ tells us to take the means to our ends. The literature on instrumental rationality is largely in agreement that a norm like this governs goal-directed activities, but exactly how to formulate this sort of instrumental principle is a matter on which opinions diverge. I want to try to stay as neutral as I can on these matters, but let me at least flag some of the axes of debate that are relevant for the discussion to come.

First, there are questions about the “strength” of an instrumental principle. In general, an instrumental norm tells us to take the means to our ends. But if there is more than one means available (say there are 10 possible routes I can take to work), then ‘the means’ might not refer. We might say instead that the principle tells us to take any available means to our ends, or at least any that’s necessary for

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5For a helpful overview of some of the issues being contended see, Way (2012).
our getting to our ends. But this can seem too weak: if some means are obviously better than others – more efficient, more enjoyable, more reliable, etc. – shouldn't I be taking those rather than the obviously worse ones? At the other extreme, the principle is sometimes formulated as a maximizing or optimizing principle, i.e., one that demands we take the best means to our ends. But this version might feel too strong: do we really have to do the absolute very best all the time? Perhaps the principle should demand we satisfice with respect to our means at least.6

Beyond these sorts of strength questions there are also some “scope” questions. In particular, there is a fairly voluminous debate about whether we should say that the ‘ought’ in an instrumental principle takes wide or narrow scope. A wide-scope instrumental principle will say (roughly) that we shouldn't both have an end and not take the means to that end.7 A narrow-scope instrumental principle will say that if we have an end, then we ought to take the means to that end. The distinction is important since in only the narrow-scope case does the mere fact that one has an end imply that one ought to take the means to that end.8

And beyond these scope questions, there are (related) questions about the very nature of the instrumental ‘ought’. If an instrumental ought can be generated just because I happen to have some end or desire, what kind of requirement could it be? If my ends are boring or evil could I really be somehow required to take means to them (those means themselves can be boring or evil)? That said there does seem some sense in which the mere fact of having an end or goal or aim puts some rational constraints on our actions.9

While on the question of strength I am partial to a maximizing norm, we only need a weaker principle for the arguments to come, so I’ve formulated ZIP as a demand to take the necessary means to our epistemic ends. On the question of scope, ZIP is so far ambiguous, but I am going to assume for now that it’s to be read as a narrow-scope principle. This is largely for expository ease, and I’ll revisit the question of scope in section 5.

As to the “nature” of the requirement in ZIP, on the one hand the answer comes

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6For just a small taste of this debate see, Byron (1998), Schmidtz (2004), Henden (2007), and Tenenbaum (2015).
7Here and throughout I am not making very fine-grained deontic distinctions. Talk of what we ought to do is going to be interchangeable with talk of what we should do, what we’re required to do, what we’re obligated to do, and so on. And the same goes (mutatis mutandis) for ‘permit’ and its relatives.
8See Way (2010) for a nice overview of this debate in the case of practical reason. John Broome (in e.g., Broome (1999)) is often associated with the wide-scope view, with Niko Kolodny (in, e.g., Kolodny (2005)) and Mark Schroeder (in, e.g., Schroeder (2004)) pushing in the other direction.
9See Setiya (2007), Schroeder (2009), and Finlay (2010) for some different and interesting ways of thinking about an instrumental requirement.
easily—it’s a zetetic requirement. On the other, this doesn’t do much to settle concerns about the different approaches to instrumental normativity. Does the mere fact that wants or needs to figure something out trigger a genuine zetetic requirement to try to figure it out? In the case of practical rationality some have suggested that an instrumental principle should have us take means to our ends only in the cases in which we have good reason to pursue the ends in the first place (or at least are allowed to).¹⁰

This issue dovetails with another complicated one relevant to the discussion to come. Goal pursuit—epistemic or otherwise—is typically a temporally extended activity. When I’m counting windows or looking for my keys or learning karate or trying to solve a crime or trying to figure out if the mind and body are identical, I’m doing these things over (sometimes quite long) intervals of time. An instrumental principle tells me to take the means to these ends. But when do I have to do this? Right away? Can I delay a bit? A lot?

Although a complete theory of rational goal pursuit will have to speak to these sorts of difficult questions, I’m going to do my best to sidestep much of this complexity here. To do that I’m going to focus on “temporally urgent” inquiries: inquiries in which the goal is to figure out \( Q \) by \( t \), where \( t \) is a time in the very near future. I take it many of our epistemic goals are temporally urgent in this sense. If I want to know whether my neighbours are home so I can borrow a flashlight to fix my fuse box, I want to know whether they are home now. And when I’m looking for my keys, I need to find them right away so I can leave the house. And when I’m tasked with counting windows outside Grand Central for work, that project has a deadline. All of these inquiries—and many that we perform every day—are temporally urgent in the sense I intend: they have to be completed fairly quickly. Perhaps I can delay figuring out whether my neighbours are home for a bit, but if I want to check the fuse box and get the power back on before my guests come, there is a limit to how long I can put my investigation off.

An inquiry may be temporally urgent because we need some information in order to act (Is the restaurant north or south of here?), or we need the information in order to help resolve some other temporally urgent inquiry (What did these witnesses see?), or perhaps even because we’re just deeply curious about some question (What’s the difference between a domain of life and a kingdom of life?). Some of our inquiries may well have little or even no temporal urgency, but most have some, and many have a great deal. For the purposes of this discussion at least I’m

¹⁰For instance, see Raz (2005) for a defence of the thought that one has reason to take a necessary means to one’s ends only if one has reason to pursue the ends.
going to focus on inquiries with sufficient temporal urgency to make it plausible that inquirers need to deploy their zetetic strategies with little delay. So it’s not simply that I want to figure out how many windows the Chrysler Building has, but that I want to figure that out in the next hour, or by the end of the day, or as soon as possible.

Beyond these general issues about instrumental norms and normativity and their application to ZIP, I want to make a few more ZIP-specific comments.

First, ZIP is formulated as a norm about wanting and trying to figure out the answers to questions. I am assuming that it is often the case that we inquire in order to answer questions: Who robbed the bank? Where did I leave that book? Is this soil acidic enough for a cactus to grow? Is the good prior to the right? And so on. There may well be parts of inquiry during which we don’t quite have a clear question before our minds, but my focus for now is on determinately question-directed inquiry.

I’ve also described the relevant inquiry-theoretic goal as the goal of “figuring out $Q$?” (where ‘$Q$?’ is to be replaced with an indirect interrogative sentence). “Figuring out” is a sort of generic placeholder for our epistemic aims in inquiry. I’ll often talk about wanting to know the answer to questions and wanting to resolve questions. These are simply the most natural ways to talk but I mean to stay largely neutral on how to think about our (question-directed) epistemic aims in inquiry.

Further, as formulated, ZIP is somewhat over-simplified. Presumably, subjects can (and do) want to figure out many different things at any given time: there are all sorts of questions we’re curious about and want answers to. And it’s certainly possible that taking the necessary means to answering one question can mean that we won’t be able to take the necessary means to answering another. There are a number of ways ZIP could be modified to handle this additional complexity, e.g., ceteris paribus or pro tanto riders. Rather than get too off track working through those though, I’m going to leave ZIP unmodified. The reader can assume that in all the cases I discuss there are no competing zetetic ends or other such complications.

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11This isn’t to say that ZIP isn’t relevant or in force when there is less temporal urgency, it’s just to say that the issues in those cases are decided more complex. See, Tenenbaum (2010) and Tenenbaum (2016) for some interesting discussion about rational action in the context of temporally extended activities.

12There is some disagreement about how to think of the aim of inquiry. It’s widely agreed that we are trying or aiming to get to the truth on some matter, but there are questions about whether something weaker than knowing the truth might do, as well as whether something stronger than knowing might be required. For some helpful discussion see, Misak (1987), Sartwell (1992), Hookway (2007), Whitcomb (2010), Millar (2011), Kvanvig (2011), and Grimm (2012).

13This means that the zetetic requirements and permissions I’m discussing here are “all zetetic
Beyond these matters of formulation, there are looming questions about what “kind” of norm ZIP is. Again, there’s an easy answer and a more involved one. The easy answer is that it’s a zetetic norm. But is it also an epistemic norm? Is it a practical norm? Is zetetic normativity sui generis? This set of issues is going to come up a number of times in this paper, and it’s an important thread in the discussion to come. As I’ve already said, I think that ZIP has a good claim to being an epistemic norm.

ZIP is a norm that speaks to how we should inquire. Whether or not we conform to ZIP is highly relevant to whether or not we come to know what we want to know and whether or not we understand what we want to understand, and not merely in some superficial sense. ZIP tells us what to when we want to come to know or understand something. This is obviously a consideration in favour of thinking of ZIP as epistemic, even if it isn’t one of our familiar epistemic norms. It is the sort of norm that a rational subject trying know more and understand better will conform to.

Why might someone think ZIP is not an epistemic norm? Well, it isn’t one of our more familiar ones. Of course, on its own this thought doesn’t amount to much, but perhaps it can be pursued in some more promising directions resulting in a sufficiently narrow conception of the epistemic that cordons off ZIP. One thought might be that we can form beliefs in violation of ZIP and still end up with knowledge. Relatedly, ZIP is not a standard evidentialist norm telling us no more than how to respect our evidence. I don’t know that either of these is much evidence that ZIP isn’t epistemic though. I can fail epistemically in all sorts of ways and end up with knowledge, e.g., be obtuse or closed-minded. But norms that tell us to be epistemically virtuous in those sorts of ways are presumably epistemic norms. Moreover, if those sorts of virtue-theoretic norms are epistemic norms, then the “purely evidentialist” conception of the epistemic is also not in good standing. And there are other (presumably epistemic) norms widely things considered” requirements and permissions. That said, it’s worth making clear that this does not make them the final word on what subjects should or may to do at some time once all things are truly considered. That one zetetically ought to $\phi$ at $t$, does not entail that one ought, all things considered, to $\phi$ at $t$. The norms of inquiry might tell you that you ought to do your count, but if someone from the window factory calls and says there’s been a welding accident, then perhaps all things considered you should leave your counting station and not do what you zetetically ought to do.

14This sort of “narrow” conception of the epistemic has proven hard to pin down. I’m raising doubts about the plausibility of two attempts but I think others will face similar difficulties. Relatedly, Cohen (2016b) argues against a series of proposals for when a belief’s justification counts as epistemic. He argues that the sorts of proposals that define ‘epistemic’ in terms of its relation to truth or knowledge fail. Cohen ultimately thinks that ‘epistemic’ is ill-defined, but I think his arguments make room for some more expansive accounts of the epistemic as well.
discussed in mainstream epistemology that are not obviously evidentialist norms, e.g., coherence norms, norms for responding to peer disagreement, anti-akrasia requirements, and so on.\textsuperscript{15}

I suspect some will take the fact that ZIP is an instrumental norm to be evidence that it's a practical norm rather than an epistemic one. But I don't think ZIP's status as instrumental is evidence that it's a practical norm, at least not in any sense of 'practical' that renders it non-epistemic.

In support of this: there is a serious debate in epistemology about whether all epistemic norms are, at bottom, instrumental norms. For instance, we think rational epistemic subjects should follow their evidence. But why should they? An instrumentalist answer is that it's because rational epistemic subjects are trying to (say) know more, and following their evidence is a means to that end. On this sort of account all epistemic norms are instrumental. But it is not part of this sort of account that those norms are no longer epistemic, or that they are practical in some sense that's incompatible with their being epistemic. In the debate over whether epistemic rationality is a species of instrumental rationality, the instrumentalists are not arguing that epistemic rationality is something other than epistemic rationality.\textsuperscript{16} That ZIP is a norm for subjects in pursuit of goals, is not on its own a reason to think that it's not an epistemic norm or that it's a practical norm in any sense that tells against its being epistemic.\textsuperscript{17}

I will come back to these issues again in section 5, but until then will continue to treat ZIP as an epistemic norm.

\textsuperscript{15}Even if ZIP is not a standard evidentialist norm, it will sometimes demand that we follow our evidence. This is because following some evidence relevant to a question we're inquiring into is typically going to be a necessary means to coming to know the answer to that question. Some epistemologists have claimed that only reasons to believe what the evidence supports are true epistemic reasons (see, e.g., Kelly (2003)). But if ZIP itself can give us (or constitutes) a reason to believe what the evidence supports does that make ZIP epistemic too for these evidentialists? I think they'd want to say 'no', but this question makes vivid the challenge one faces in trying to cordon norms like ZIP off from other epistemic norms.

\textsuperscript{16}Instrumentalism about epistemic norms is not a fringe position either. For some defences see, Foley (1987), Stich (1990), Kornblith (1993), Leite (2007), Grimm (2008), Street (2009), Steglich-Petersen (2011), Cowie (2014), and Sharadin (2018). Relatedly, a largely instrumentalist account – where the relevant goal is accuracy – of the norms of probabilistic coherence has become popular lately. See Joyce (1998) for everyone's inspiration here.

\textsuperscript{17}Although there is a notion of 'practical' that is contrasted with 'epistemic' in the epistemology literature, I think that it's just as hard to pin down as 'epistemic' is. There is a weak sense of 'practical' according to which a norm is practical iff it tells us what to do (rather than how to be). But this sort of practicality is not incompatible with a norm being epistemic. Nor is the sort of practicality involved in instrumentality. What is this sense of 'practical' that to be contrasted with 'epistemic' then?
In section 2, I described a kind of normative incoherence generated in the interaction between some of our contemporary epistemic norms on the one hand and a central norm of inquiry on the other. The culprits, I argued, were ZIP and some permissive epistemic norms. But those permissive epistemic norms are not the only norms at the centre of our current picture of normative epistemology. In this section, I’ll say more about ZIP’s interaction with those permissive norms as well as about its interaction with other familiar epistemic norms. In each case we’ll find similar sorts of normative discord. Altogether this should make clear that the tension I’m pointing to in this paper is not merely a superficial tussle, but a more serious mismatch between zetetic normativity and our current picture of normative epistemology.

Let’s say that $Z$ is the set of all the true and genuine zetetic norms, and $E$ the set of all the true and genuine epistemic norms. $Z$ and $E$ are, in a sense, objects of inquiry for us as philosophers. In fact, we might characterize the aim of normative epistemology as a whole as that of figuring out what is (and it not) in $E$. Before thinking about the relationship between $Z$ and $E$ in general, I want to focus on the relationship between $Z$ and a different set of norms, $CE$.

$CE$ is the set of all of our familiar contemporary epistemic norms. $CE$ is not an object of investigation for philosophers (perhaps one day it will be for historians), but is more of a record of contemporary epistemology’s efforts to figure out what’s in $E$. It’s a bit of a hodgepodge, with all sorts of norms that we no longer think genuine and all sorts of inconsistencies (e.g., see the internalism/externalism debate).

This section focuses on some of the points of friction between $Z$ and $CE$. Since $CE$ is somewhat inconsistent and unruly on its own, I’ll stay focused on its most promising corners. That is, the norms in $CE$ I’ll focus on are those that strike me as most central and widely accepted.

Some of what’s already been said gives us some starting insights into the relationship between $CE$ and $Z$. I am assuming that ZIP is an element of $Z$. It doesn’t seem to be a member of $CE$ though. This means that $Z$ and $CE$ are not identical, and $Z$ is not a subset of $CE$.

The claim that some of the norms of inquiry are not central to contemporary epistemic theorizing should not be confused with the more general claim that some of the norms of inquiry are not epistemic. On the assumption that $CE$ and $E$ are not identical, the claim that at least some elements of $Z$ are not elements of $E$.

\footnote{How should we be thinking about the relationship between $CE$ and $E$? Well, let’s hope they intersect at least.}
CE does not imply that \(Z\) and \(E\) are not identical. I am going to be taking the claim that \(Z\) and \(E\) are identical to be equivalent to the claim that all zetetic norms – all norms of inquiry – are epistemic, and all epistemic norms are norms of inquiry. I’ll say more about whether \(Z = E\) in the next section.

While it’s helpful to think about \(Z\) – the set of zetetic norms as a whole – the discussion in this paper hardly does justice to the shape and character of \(Z\). My discussion is largely focused on ZIP, but ZIP is far from the only interesting norm in \(Z\), nor is it the only norm in \(Z\) that might come into conflict with our familiar epistemic norms. \(Z\) will contain norms for starting inquiry, changing strategies or switching inquiries, settling questions, giving up inquiries, and much more. I don’t want the focus on ZIP here to obscure other parts of \(Z\) even though serious discussion of those other norms in \(Z\) and their place in epistemology will have to be postponed for now.

4.1 INCONSISTENT/INCOHERENT PERMISSIONS

I want to go into a bit more detail about the sort of tension I articulated in section 2. Recall \(EP_a\) and \(KP_a\):

\[EP_a\] If one has excellent evidence for \(p\) at \(t\) then one is permitted to judge \(p\) at \(t\).

\[KP_a\] If one is in a position to come to know \(p\) at \(t\), then one is permitted to come to know \(p\) at \(t\).

I’ll call these the ‘\(P_a\)-norms’. I said that the \(P_a\)-norms are central to normative epistemology as it’s currently done. I hope that strikes the reader as fairly obvious (of course, ‘excellent’ needs filling in, but most any plausible way will do for our discussion).\(^{19}\) Not only do I not know of anyone who explicitly denies these sorts of permissibility norms in the literature, but I don’t know of anyone who might want to given their other commitments. These norms say that if you have no opinion about whether \(p\) is true but have excellent evidence for \(p\), then you’re epistemically permitted to come to believe \(p\), and that if you have no opinion about whether \(p\) is true but are in a position to come to know \(p\), then you’re epistemically permitted to come to know \(p\). I find it hard to think about normative epistemology as we know it without norms like the \(P_a\)-norms.\(^{20}\)

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\(^{19}\) \(EP_a\) and the other evidentialist norms officially need some kind “basing” clause as well, but since nothing in what follows hangs on any particular articulation of the basing relation, I’m just going to leave it unarticulated.

\(^{20}\) Here is a way to get at the centrality of a norm like \(EP_a\) in the literature. Claim 1: Judging \(p\) at \(t\) is
To make the tension between ZIP and the $P_a$-norms precise we should assume that ‘ought’ and ‘permit’ are duals, i.e., that one ought to $\phi$ at $t$ just in case one is not permitted to not-$\phi$ at $t$.\footnote{This assumption is widely made. Intuitively, it certainly feels as though part of what I’m saying when I tell you that you are required to go to class tomorrow is that you’re not allowed to miss class tomorrow. That said, I don’t think we absolutely need the assumption. I could have cast our zetetic instrumental principle as a prohibition against failing to take a necessary means, which, although more cumbersome, is no less plausible. For ease of exposition I’ll sometimes say things like, “Z/ZIP prohibits $\phi$-ing”. Strictly speaking it’s Z/ZIP plus this duality assumption getting us to the relevant prohibitions.} Let’s also say that if a subject cannot both $\phi$ and $\psi$ at $t$, then $\phi$-ing and $\psi$-ing are ‘incompatible’ for that subject at $t$. And finally, if $\phi$-ing and $\psi$-ing are incompatible at $t$, then we can say that $\phi$-ing at $t$ is a way of not-$\psi$-ing at $t$, and $\psi$-ing at $t$ is a way of not-$\phi$-ing at $t$. Altogether then, we can say that if you’re required to $\phi$ at $t$, and $\psi$-ing at $t$ is incompatible with $\phi$-ing at $t$, then you’re not permitted to $\psi$ at $t$.

Now we can go back to the case in which I have to figure out how many windows the Chrysler Building has ($W$) by the end of the day. Take some time after which I really do have to get going and focus or I will not get the job done. If I spend this time just people watching outside Grand Central I will fail to complete my task. If I start counting but get distracted by the scenes unfolding before my eyes and ears, the count will be unreliable and I won’t figure out $W$.

So, according to ZIP I should start counting and stay the course for some interval of time, $T$. I assume that taking in some of the sights and sounds around me is compatible with my doing as I zetetically ought. But there’s also some limit: at some point those sights and sounds will be a distraction and so I’ll have to tune them out. So, at some point forming beliefs based on the evidence around me or in my possession will be incompatible with my doing as I zetetically ought. But that means that from the perspective of ZIP I’m not permitted to come to know some of what I’m in a position to come to know during $T$, and not permitted to follow some of my evidence during $T$. But the $P_a$-norms do permit me to do those things during $T$.

This sort of case is very easily multiplied. For instance, imagine you’re at a busy restaurant, and the dinner bill arrives. In order to figure out what you owe, you

\begin{itemize}
  \item justified if that judgment is based in sufficient evidence for $p$ at $t$. Claim 2: If $\phi$-ing at $t$ is justified, then $\phi$-ing at $t$ is permissible. Claim 1 has its roots in Feldman and Conee (1985) and remains widely accepted. And Claim 2 is a general claim about the relationship between justification and permissibility. These two claims can get us to $EP_a$. And while $KP_a$ is somewhat less familiar than $EP_a$, it’s at least as plausible and widely accepted (if less explicitly discussed in this form). Knowledge has its epistemic goodness baked right in. If you judge $p$ and in so doing succeed in coming to know $p$, then you’ve done something epistemically right or good or reasonable or justifiable (or all of these). But again, these seem to entail that what you did was epistemically permissible.
\end{itemize}
have to do some mental math. Maybe it's possible to acquire some of the other visual and auditory knowledge available in the restaurant while doing the math, but at some point doing the calculation is going to require you to focus on that task, where that will mean not learning about everything going on around you in the restaurant. But all of that knowledge is still available to you when your bill arrives. So again, if you ought to do your bill calculations now then you're not permitted to come to know all about (e.g.) the conversation at the next table now.

Or say you need to talk to a witness and write down what they say in order to resolve some inquiry of yours. Again, this will require you to attend to some of your available evidence but also ignore some of it: you can't follow what the witness is saying and write it down while also taking in all of the mundane information available to you. If you ought to pay attention to the witness and write down what they say then you're not permitted to spend that time (e.g.) memorizing the colours of all the cars passing by.

In all of these cases we have ZIP declaring the making of some judgments impermissible, and, at the same time, the $P_a$-norms declaring the making of those same judgments permissible. We'll be able to find tension like this in most any inquiry that requires our attention for any stretch of time (which I assume is most any inquiry). In those sorts of cases, there will typically be some epistemically impeccable judgments that it won't be permissible to make. These judgments are then both permissible and impermissible.

As I've said, the force of this tension is amplified significantly if we maintain that ZIP and the $P_a$-norms are all of the same kind or type or part of the same domain of normativity. This domain of normativity is giving flatly inconsistent advice to inquirers, telling them all at once that making some judgments is permissible and that making those judgments is impermissible. I've already argued that ZIP should be thought of as an epistemic norm which means that the result here is that epistemic normativity is badly incoherent. And this is not the only problem...

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22 Here's a general recipe. Take a case in which a subject S is inquiring into a question but is also in a position to come to know other things not relevant to settling that question. In some of those cases, S's acquiring that "irrelevant" knowledge is compatible with their doing as they zetetically ought at the relevant time, but in others it's not. When it's not, the norms of inquiry will declare it impermissible for S to make all sorts of epistemically impeccable – and permissible – judgments.

23 Is this so bad? Couldn't the $P_a$-norms issue in fairly weak or mere prima facie permissions so that they can easily be outweighed by the requirements ZIP issues? Or might there not be some "higher-order" epistemic norms that resolve conflicts like this? Perhaps. But this would have the result that in the end there are many cases in which we are not epistemically permitted to come to know and not epistemically permitted to judge $p$ even though our evidence clearly and decisively supports $p$. This would mark a significant shift away from our current picture of epistemic normativity. The picture that would result is largely equivalent to one according to which we outright reject the $P_a$-norms. I'll say more about that sort of picture in section 5.
atic aspect of the relationship between ZIP and CE.

4.2 CONFLICTING REQUIREMENTS

So far I’ve been focused on the interaction between ZIP and some fairly weak epistemic norms – norms that issue in epistemic permissions. But many epistemologists think that epistemology demands more of us, e.g., that it sometimes requires us to believe what our evidence supports. For instance, at least some will want to insist that norms like the following are also in E (and they are clearly in CE):

**EO**$_a$ If one has excellent evidence for $p$ at $t$ then one ought to judge $p$ at $t$.

**KO**$_a$ If one is in a position to come to know $p$ at $t$, then one ought to come to know $p$ at $t$.

These norms (call them the ‘O$_a$-norms’) are a bit more controversial than the P$_a$-norms but are still fairly central to our current conception of epistemic normativity. It’s easy to feel the force of the claim that rational epistemic subjects don’t simply turn their backs on the evidence. If one has excellent evidence for $p$, it seems right that judging $p$ is permitted. But is it also permissible to fail to judge $p$? Is it never the case that the evidence demands we form a belief (rather than merely allow it but also allow us to remain agnostic)? The thought that, yes, sometimes evidence demands we make certain judgments rather than merely leaving them optional is fairly intuitive.\(^{24}\)

But I hope that at this point it’s easy to see how tension between ZIP and the O$_a$-norms is going to emerge. ZIP will demand I focus on my window counting and the O$_a$-norms will demand I come to know all I can about what’s going on outside Grand Central. But I can’t do both of these things. And ZIP will demand we do some mental math to figure out what we each owe, or listen to the witnesses and write down what they say, or watch carefully so we measure the liquid’s volume properly, or try to think through the start of a proof, while the O$_a$-norms will demand that we come to know all we can during those intervals of time. Again, we cannot do all the things we ought to do when we ought to do them: we can’t focus

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\(^{24}\)Support for the existence of a requirement to believe what the evidence supports can be found in all sorts of spots in the literature, e.g., BonJour (1980), Feldman and Conee (1985), Feldman (2000), Kelly (2007), and more. We find a slightly different thought in a slightly different context as well: for Bayesians if you learn some proposition $p$ you don’t then have the option of conditionalizing on $p$ or not – you are required to conditionalize on that new evidence. And for more intuitive support open most any epistemology textbook which will tell you that a central question epistemologists are trying to answer is: What ought we to believe?
on our inquiries and come to know everything else our evidence supports while focusing.

This tension is slightly different from the last one. Here we have something closer to a dilemmatic structure. Any case in which $S$'s acquiring some knowledge interferes with or is incompatible with their doing as they zetetically ought at $t$, is going to be a case in which the $O_a$-norms demand that $S \phi$ at $t$ while ZIP demands that $S \psi$ at $t$, and $S$ won't be able to both $\phi$ and $\psi$ at $t$. In these sorts of cases inquirers face conflicting requirements. Inquirers in these sorts of predicaments are going to have to violate the norms of inquiry or the norms of epistemology (or both).

4.3 DIVERGENT IDEALS

The $O_a$-norms demand a lot of us. And some have suggested that they demand too much (Are we really epistemically required to believe absolutely everything our evidence supports at a time?).\footnote{For instance, Nelson (2010) argues that there are no purely epistemic requirements to believe based on something like demandingness considerations. Instead, he endorses what he calls a ‘permissivist epistemology’, according to which there are epistemic permissions to believe, but no epistemic requirements to believe. Cohen (2016a) and Dogramaci (2018) are also in this sort of “permissivist” camp.} But even if the $O_a$-norms strike us as too demanding, we might still want to say that those norms somehow state ideals. While we may not fault subjects like us for failing to live up to them, perhaps we do think of them as setting some sort of epistemic standard that it would be better to live up to (all else equal, at least). Doesn't the ideal epistemic subject come to know all they can, and believe everything their evidence supports, and have a set of beliefs that are closed under all of the relevant logical operations?

If norms like $EO_a$ and $KO_a$ set or express ideals, then we should be able to think about how close or far epistemic subjects are from those ideals. And plausibly, the more one approximates the ideal the better. While we don't want to have to count propositions, when it comes to ideals that emerge from the $O_a$-norms, we'll want to say something like: the more of what $S$ is in a position to come to know at $t$, $S$ in fact comes to know at $t$, the closer $S$ gets to the epistemic ideal at $t$ and the better $S$ does epistemically at $t$. But if this is the epistemic ideal then I think it’s going to be fairly different than the zetetic ideal.

Again, think about Grand Central or the busy restaurant or any other inquiry that takes place out in the world where all sorts of other information is available while we inquire. Say I go to get my window count done, but instead of figuring out how many windows the Chrysler building has during $T$, I take in as much infor-
mation as I can about the activity around Grand Central. I learn a ton, way more than I would have had I actually focused on counting windows. From the perspective of the sorts of ideals we get from the $O_a$-norms, I’ve done very well during $T$, maybe even as well as I could have. But from the perspective of my goal of figuring out how many windows the Chrysler Building has, I seem to have failed fairly dramatically: I failed to figure out the one thing I was meant to figure out.

The inverse sort of case is telling as well. Say I do my count over the course of $T$, staying focused so I can do it well, ignoring virtually all of the other available information during $T$. Given this, I do not extend my knowledge in any of the other ways I easily could have over the course of $T$. In that case, I will have been a complete zetetic success (at least from the perspective of $W$), but far from epistemically ideal. This is all to say that if we think of $EO_a$ and $KO_a$ as setting epistemic ideals then an extremely successful epistemic subject can be an utter failure zetetically and a completely successful inquirer can be largely a failure epistemically. This makes for a significant gulf between the epistemic ideal we can read off of the $O_a$-norms and the zetetic ideal.

4.4 ZIP AND EPISTEMIC STATE-NORMS

So far I’ve been investigating the interaction between ZIP and epistemic act-norms, but what about ZIP and epistemic state-norms, e.g., epistemic norms that range over belief states (rather than acts of belief formation)? Certainly a good deal of normative epistemology has focused on norms that tell us how to be (rather than what to do), doxastically speaking. Given this, the following norms are also in CE and are good candidates for being in $E$:

$EP_s$ If one has excellent evidence for $p$ at $t$ then one is permitted to have a $p$-belief at $t$.

$EO_s$ If one has excellent evidence for $p$ at $t$ then one ought to have a $p$-belief at $t$.

$KP_s$ If one is in a position to know $p$ at $t$, then one is permitted to know $p$ at $t$.

$KO_s$ If one is in a position to know $p$ at $t$, then one ought to know $p$ at $t$.

These norms are the state-focused twins of the epistemic norms I’ve been discussing, and so I’m going to assume that their place in contemporary epistemology needs no further defence. However, we don’t seem to have the same sort of conflict between ZIP and these state-focused epistemic norms (call these the ‘$s$-norms’),
at least not in the first instance. The \( s \)-norms make claims about the permissibility and obligatoriness of having beliefs and of having knowledge, but they are entirely silent (at least in the first instance) about the permissibility and obligatoriness of judging and coming to know. ZIP bars subjects from acquiring certain kinds of “irrelevant” knowledge over the course of inquiry since doing that can distract us and interfere with our success in inquiry. But this argument doesn’t obviously extend to merely having the relevant knowledge. That coming to know \( p \) at \( t \) will distract you from some other task doesn’t mean that knowing \( p \) at \( t \) – just having that knowledge – will. Perhaps ZIP doesn’t interact in the same sorts of worrying ways with the epistemic \( s \)-norms?

I’m not sure this serves as much of a reprieve here though. We do, after all, have conflict between ZIP and other central epistemic norms. And worse, even if the tension between ZIP and the \( s \)-norms isn’t right on the surface, it doesn’t take much digging to get there.

First, we should expect that the \( s \)-norms and their act-focused twins (call these the ‘\( a \)-norms’) won’t be entirely independent of one another. For instance, isn’t the best explanation of one’s having a requirement to form a belief, one’s having a requirement to have that belief? If that’s right then it should turn out that requirements to form beliefs and requirements to have beliefs don’t come apart all that often: we should expect these two sorts of requirements to move largely in lockstep. And the same goes for the various permissions. But if we can move fairly quickly from the \( s \)-norms to the \( a \)-norms, then while we don’t have immediate tension between ZIP and the \( s \)-norms, we are only a bridge principle away. While I think there is a great deal to say about these \( a \)-norm-to-\( s \)-norm bridge principles, I don’t want to get too far off track. Especially since I think there’s trouble for the \( s \)-norms even if one wanted to insist on radical independence between \( a \)-norms and \( s \)-norms. \(^{26}\)

Part of what’s meant to be worrying about the conflicts I’ve brought out so far is that they dash our hope that epistemic and zetetic normative verdicts would largely align. But the normative verdicts issued by ZIP on the one hand and the \( s \)-norms on the other are also fairly incongruous.

Thinking back to our toy inquiries again, it looks as though it will regularly be the case that having some belief at \( t \) is perfectly permissible from the perspective of the \( s \)-norms, but making the judgment one would need to make to get into that

\(^{26}\)The rest of this section will also speak to the sort of reader who is thinking about suggesting that none of the \( a \)-norms from the last section are in \( E \). According to this vision of \( E \) (which strikes me as badly implausible), epistemic norms are completely indifferent or blind to the judgments we make, ranging only over our doxastic states.
belief state at \( t \) is impermissible from the perspective of \( Z \). For instance, according to the \( s \)-norms it's epistemically permissible for me to have all of those beliefs about the goings-on outside of Grand Central while I'm figuring out \( W \), but according to ZIP I'm not permitted to form those beliefs during that stretch of time. So according to the \( s \)-norms I'm allowed to have beliefs that according to ZIP I'm not allowed to come to have. While there may be no act that's both permissible and not now, this is an uncomfortable set of normative verdicts. And as before, these sorts of conflicts are going to be entirely commonplace.

And if we think that norms like \( EO_s \) and \( KO_s \) are genuine epistemic norms, then there will be all sorts of cases in which inquirers are required to have some beliefs at \( t \) according to the \( s \)-norms, but the norms of inquiry bar them from forming those beliefs at \( t \). In these sorts of cases epistemology will demand we be in states that our inquiries don't permit us to get into. Given this, conforming to ZIP can mean violating even \( s \)-norms like \( EO_s \) and \( KO_s \).

Overall then, while the relationship between the \( s \)-norms and \( Z \) might not be quite as fraught as the relationship between the \( a \)-norms and \( Z \), these sets of norms are not operating harmoniously either.

### 4.5 SUMMING UP

So far I've articulated a series of related tensions between ZIP and different norms in CE. At the core of these is tension between the kinds of focused intellectual or theoretical norms that govern good inquiry and the sorts of very general and diffuse intellectual or theoretical norms that are central to our current conception of normative epistemology.

Among other things, these tensions make clear that we really cannot read the norms of inquiry off of our familiar contemporary epistemic norms. That it's permissible or obligatory to form or have some belief \( p \) at \( t \) according to our familiar epistemic norms, tells us very little about whether making the judgment that would result in having that belief at that time is permissible or obligatory from the perspective of the norms of inquiry. Epistemic permissibility as expressed by the norms in CE we've been focused on so far is not a guide to zetetic permissibility. And epistemic obligatoriness as expressed by the norms in CE we've been focused on so far is not a guide to zetetic obligatoriness.

I've claimed that at some point in fairly typical inquiries inquirers will need to avoid distraction. I have not claimed that once an inquiry into a question starts it must proceed distraction-free, nor that inquirers cannot drop their inquiries or switch to inquiring into some other question or matter part-way through. I as-
sume that typical subjects have all sorts of things they want to know about at any
given time and that a more in-depth account of the norms of inquiry will speak to
how to manage these different epistemic goals (as well as how they should interact
with our more practical goals). The only claim I need for now is that sometimes
inquirers will have to bear down on a question if they want to answer it.

When inquirers have to focus on answering some particular question, they will
also (at least typically) have to ignore some other available information and not
come to know other things that their evidence supports. This isn't because it's im-
possible in principle to calculate or count or listen carefully or explicitly reason
while also taking in everything going on around you and drawing inferences from
your body of total evidence. Perhaps some creature with recording and processing
power well beyond ours could do this, but we cannot (think about how often you
ask someone to stop talking so you can think). And this means that the norms of
inquiry and the norms of epistemology are regularly giving creatures like us con-
flicting and even inconsistent advice.

I am not the first to use claims about some limitations of ours in an argument
questioning some of epistemology's normative commitments – demandingness
complaints about strong epistemic requirement norms and Harmanian "clutter
avoidance" arguments are two other examples that easily come to mind.\footnote{For Harman's discussion of clutter avoidance see Harman (1986), especially chapter 2, but also chapters 4 and 6.} The arg-
ments in this paper certainly have some points of contact with those arguments,
but my arguments are not demandingness or clutter avoidance arguments. On the
former, I've been mostly focused on the tension between zetetic norms and en-
tirely undemanding epistemic norms. On the latter, while it's true that the norms
of inquiry might insist on our ignoring certain kinds of "irrelevant" information
during certain stretches of time, that zetetically irrelevant information need not be
clutter for us (Harman also called this cluttering information "trivial"). That some
information is irrelevant to my figuring out \( W \) is perfectly compatible with my
also wanting and needing that "irrelevant" information. The information I need
to ignore during my inquiry into \( W \) need not be clutter for me or trivial for me in
any sense that Harman intended. That information might be important, valuable,
meaningful, interesting, and generally zetetically relevant for me (even if not zetet-
ically relevant to \( W \) specifically). Unfortunately, I simply cannot do everything at
once, and so even knowledge I do and should want and need might have to fall by
the wayside if I'm going to succeed in some other specific inquiry. This is true even
if I'm the kind of creature for whom no information is trivial or cluttering.
This leaves us with a cluster of related tensions between the epistemic and the zetetic. That we have this sort of mismatch between the norms of inquiry and all sorts of different contemporary epistemic norms should lead us to suspect that the friction between the epistemic and the zetetic that I’m pointing to will need more than a superficial fix. This section confirms that suspicion.

My plan now is to think about the sorts of responses one might have to these epistemic-zetetic tensions. Part of the goal of this section is to make clear the costs of taking those various routes forward. I think in each case they are substantial. I will indicate which path strikes me as the least painful, but the spirit of this section is largely ecumenical. Other people may well find other paths more palatable than I do. How one responds to these tensions will depend on one’s answers to other big questions about norms and normativity, questions I won’t be able to fully speak to here. By bringing out the dangers along each path forward, I hope to at least make clear that we have some difficult decisions to make.

I’ve explored two different sorts of norms in CE that sit uncomfortably with a demand to take the necessary means to our ends in inquiry – epistemic requirement norms (‘O-norms’) and epistemic permissibility norms (‘P-norms’). Some of the tensions I’ve explored can be avoided by jettisoning the O-norms. But clearly not all. If ZIP and the P-norms are part of the same normative domain – whether epistemic or zetetic – then that domain is badly inconsistent.

This opens up two important paths forward. One involves making peace with this sort of normative incoherence, and the other involves keeping ZIP and the P-norms sequestered from one another. Neither of these paths seems good to me.

I don’t have very much to say about simply being sanguine about the sort of normative incoherence at issue now. Perhaps someone with a different sort of meta-epistemic or meta-normative picture than mine has the stomach for this vision of normative epistemology and domains of normativity in general, but I do not. If ZIP and the P-norms are all in E then E regularly gives inquirers contradictory advice. Is it epistemically permissible or not epistemically permissible to form those beliefs? This E is sufficiently unruly that I think we should worry that we’re mistaken about some of its elements. Can a set of norms that regularly issues inconsistent normative advice represent (or be) a genuine domain of normativity?\(^{28}\)

\(^{28}\)I take it that genuine normative domains (e.g., morality) are typically thought more unified and coherent than any set of norms that has both ZIP and the P-norms as members. Just how incoherent can normative domains get? Even if we say that they can fall short of full normative coherence, so that they sometimes deliver contradictory normative verdicts (e.g., that S is permitted to φ at t and
I suspect that the second path forward – the path that involves pulling apart the epistemic and the zetetic – will strike readers as a more tempting path. If ZIP were not an epistemic norm and the P-norms were not zetetic norms, then perhaps some of the sting of inconsistency would be lessened. 29

But this path, too, strikes me as too costly. I’ve already said a fair bit in defence of the claim that ZIP is an epistemic norm in section 2. I’ve defused some of the temptation to classify ZIP as non-epistemic, indicated some of the difficulties that come with trying to define epistemic norms narrowly so that they include only, e.g., evidentialist norms, and made a positive case that a norm as central to our epistemic pursuits as ZIP is should count as epistemic. That case still stands. And rather than revisiting it here, I want to add to it from a slightly different direction – by thinking about the relationship between the epistemic and the zetetic generally.

The claim that the epistemic and the zetetic are just a single normative domain is equivalent to the claim that Z and E are identical: it’s the claim that all epistemic norms are norms of inquiry, and all norms of inquiry are epistemic. Call this claim, ‘the unity of the epistemic and the zetetic’. I want to make a case here for the unity of the epistemic and the zetetic on general theoretical grounds.

One way to defend the unity of the epistemic and the zetetic is to precisely delineate the borders of each domain and show them to be the same. I don’t know how to do that. Figuring out exactly where the epistemic starts and ends has proved notoriously tricky 30 And what counts as a “zetetic” norm is not a matter of discussion at all (given that it’s a neologism in this context). My plan then is to aim for something more modest. I want to give some reason to think that in general, (a) all epistemic norms are norms of inquiry, and (b) all norms of inquiry are epistemic.

First, on (a). I take it that at first glance we are inclined to say that epistemic norms are norms of inquiry. Perhaps once we reflect on our current way of conceiving of epistemology we begin to think twice, but that first glance is telling: conceiving of epistemic normativity as tied to inquiry comes naturally. The alternative is to say that epistemic norms aren’t norms that bind us qua inquirers. But isn’t

29 How much that sting would be lessened depends upon what kind of norm one decides (e.g.) ZIP is (if it’s not epistemic). It’s worth pointing out that the person who wants to insist that ZIP is a practical norm in some sense that renders it non-epistemic and perhaps does reduce some of the sting of inconsistency, may have to re-think some of their picture of norms for belief. If ZIP is a practical norm in this sense, then the arguments I’ve given show that we are regularly not permitted to do what epistemic norms say is perfectly permissible because practical norms don’t let us. This would give these sorts of practical norms a huge amount of (so far unnoticed) normative sway over what we should/shouldn’t believe and when.

30 For some recent debate about the matter, see Cohen (2016b) and responses.
that exactly the point of epistemology? Or at least part of the point? Isn't it at least part of the business of normative epistemology to tell us how we should conduct ourselves in inquiry, how we ought to go about properly acquiring and managing information? This is not so much an argument for (a) as it is a challenge to those who want to put the relevant sort of daylight between the epistemic and the zetetic. How should we think of the normative force of epistemic considerations if they aren't closely tied to the ideals of inquiry?

Second, on (b). Some of what I've already said in defence of ZIP's status as epistemic can be generalized to all zetetic norms. We inquire in order to reach some epistemic ends – knowledge, better understanding, some sort of epistemic improvement. The norms of inquiry tell us how to properly engage in the activity so that we end up in the sort of epistemic state we want or need to end up in. The norms of inquiry tell us how to get the knowledge and understanding that we're after. Even without a precise statement of what makes a norm epistemic, it seems to me clear enough that there is some important sense in which the norms that guide and constrain us in our efforts to acquire knowledge and understanding are epistemic.

Moreover, a more restrictive conception of the epistemic, e.g., one that limits epistemic norms to only those that tell us how to proportion our beliefs to the evidence, can feel awkward and unprincipled. Contemporary epistemology is already engaged in the project of telling us how to end up with knowledge when we form our beliefs. When the norms of inquiry are epistemic this project simply extends its purview backwards in time so that it doesn't only focus on the moment of belief formation, but the entire length of our knowledge-acquisition efforts. There's a kind of temporal parochialism to normative epistemology as it's currently done that is not obviously well motivated. What's so special about the moment of belief formation?

In fact, an exclusive focus on norms that tell us how to fit our beliefs to the evidence strikes me as doubly parochial. Those sorts of norms tell us what to do with new information when it happens to come our way. But epistemic subjects don't just want to know what to do when they happen to be hit in the eye with new information, they also want to know how to get and manage the information they want and need. Evidentialist norms are silent on much of this: they are silent on what new information should come in, whether that's the sort of information subjects need, how subjects should get the sort of information they're after, and more. Why should epistemology care about what to do with the information we happen to get but not about our getting the information we actually want and need?
I take it that the feeling that epistemology should be able to tell us how to come to know what we want to know – from start to finish – is not misplaced. Zetetic norms are part of that sort of project and so thinking of them as epistemic is not misplaced either. Zetetic norms are norms that guide and regulate our pursuit of knowledge.\textsuperscript{31}

These considerations move us towards a somewhat expansive picture of the epistemic. Although it may well be more expansive than some might like, it’s certainly not more expansive than many pictures of the epistemic explicitly or implicitly defended in the literature. For instance, two hugely popular contemporary debates have been over the character of epistemic norms for assertion and action. Those sorts of epistemic norms are certainly not narrowly focused on whether some beliefs are knowledge or fit the evidence: they are epistemic norms for saying and doing.\textsuperscript{32} And while some epistemologists have wanted to insist that any norm for action – inquiry-related action and action in general – must be non-epistemic, others have argued that all sorts of norms for action in and outside of inquiry can be epistemic.\textsuperscript{33} And certainly one strand of virtue epistemology focuses discussion on epistemically or intellectually virtuous actions like hypothesis generation, considering objections, and searching for evidence.\textsuperscript{34} The unity of the epistemic and the zetetic demands a somewhat expansive vision of the epistemic but one that fits nicely into all sorts of existing treatments.

Altogether, the path of normative sequestering strikes me as not only too unprincipled, but it leaves both normative epistemology and the norms of inquiry on unstable ground. How could epistemic normativity be entirely independent of the normative force of inquiry-theoretic considerations? And how could the normative force of those inquiry-theoretic norms be entirely detached from the normative force of epistemic norms – the norms that already tell us how to come to know? I don’t think this sort of sequestering leaves us with pictures of either epistemic normativity or zetetic normativity that are sustainable.

So, if we do want to keep the epistemic and the zetetic closely connected and we don’t want to tolerate the sort of normative incoherence I’ve described, then

\textsuperscript{31}In fact, my sense is that this more expansive way of thinking of the epistemic or of epistemology is consonant with a lot of the history of philosophy. I take that a number of philosophers through the ages – from Aristotle to Bacon to Peirce – were thinking about epistemology as (also) concerned with more obviously inquiry-theoretic questions. Hookway (2006) is a contemporary example of this sort of inquiry-influenced expanded vision for epistemology.

\textsuperscript{32}See Benton (2014) for a nice overview of these two (vast) debates.

\textsuperscript{33}In the no-epistemic-norms-for-action camp see (e.g.), Kelly (2003), Cohen (2016b), McGrath (2016), and Simion (2018), and in the opposing camp, see (e.g.), Kornblith (1983), Hall and Johnson (1998), Booth (2006), Booth (2009), and Field (2009).

\textsuperscript{34}For some discussion, see, e.g., Battaly (2008).
what options do we have left? It looks as though we'll have to reject ZIP or reject the P-norms (or both).

Can we reject ZIP? Here I assume that 'reject' means insisting that ZIP is not a norm of inquiry. I don't see how to deny that there is some ZIP-like norm at work in inquiry: inquirers are pursuing epistemic ends – they are trying to get more evidence or trying to figure something out. That said, ZIP itself is my specific articulation of an inquiry-theoretic instrumental principle, and so perhaps there's some wiggle room there?

One potentially controversial decision I made early on was to treat ZIP as a narrow-scope norm rather than a wide-scope norm. Can one insist that the 'ought' in ZIP takes wider scope and thereby find some relief? If we were to think of ZIP as a wide-scope norm, we could think of it as issuing in a disjunctive demand: either take the necessary means to figuring out what you want or need to figure out, or stop wanting or needing to figure it out. When we read ZIP this way it's not in tension in quite the same sorts of ways with our familiar epistemic norms since it doesn't say straightforwardly that you should take the necessary means to figuring things out. That said, in the end I don't think that there is much relief along this path.

If ZIP were a wide-scope norm then there would be cases in which, according to the P-norms, making some judgment \( j \) was permissible, but according to ZIP it was impermissible to both want to figure out the answer to some question and to make \( j \). I take it that this is still a bad or strange result for the relationship between the epistemic and the zetetic even if it's not quite the same conflict. In these cases it is not permissible to both want to figure out \( Q \) and make some other epistemically impeccable judgments, but from the perspective of the P-norms, this combination looks perfectly fine.

Moreover, what should the wide-scooper say about cases in which subjects have excellent reason to inquire or genuinely need to figure something out? Plausibly, in these sorts of cases the requirement in a wide-scope ZIP “detaches” – these subjects ought (full-stop) take the necessary means to their epistemic ends. And, again, this gets us right back to where we began. While there are all sorts of interesting questions about the shape a zetetic instrumental principle should take, I don't think insisting that the principle’s ‘ought’ operator takes wider scope will have much impact on sorts of arguments in this paper.

“Subjectivizing” ZIP won't help either. If ZIP were modified to say that inquirers should take what they (e.g.) think are necessary means to their epistemic ends, we'd have the same issues. A subjectivized ZIP would still leave the making of
some epistemically impeccable judgments impermissible, although exactly which might be different now. In this case inquirers’ thoughts about means and ends might play a more significant role in determining what they are required to do and prohibited from doing over the course of their inquiries.

I don’t see much other wiggle room with respect to ZIP. And given this, I don’t see how to proceed down a path that denies ZIP’s place as a key norm of inquiry. So, we are left with the option of sending off the P-norms along with their O-norm counterparts, i.e., denying that the P-norms are genuine epistemic norms. And this is, in the end, what I think we should do, although as we’ll see this path forward is fairly bumpy as well.

To be clear, rejecting the P-norms means denying that we are always and everywhere epistemically permitted to judge $p$ when the evidence clearly supports $p$ and that we are always and everywhere epistemically permitted to come to know. Denying these things doesn't mean saying that we're never epistemically permitted to believe in accordance with our evidence, or never epistemically permitted to come to know. It does mean denying that there are blanket epistemic permissions to follow our evidence and blanket epistemic permissions to come to know. This leaves it open that there are possible cases in which believing in accordance with the evidence and/or coming to know are not epistemically permissible.

Those sorts of blanket permissions are central to normative epistemology as we know it and so rejecting them should force a fairly significant re-think of our current understanding of epistemic normativity. If we insist that the P-norms are not in $E$, then we will have to say that there may well be cases in which following our excellent evidence and coming to know will have been a mistake – a thoroughly epistemic mistake. It’s hard to even make sense of epistemically problematic knowledge or knowledge acquisition on our current understanding of normative epistemology.\[35\]

Moreover, there are some pressing questions on this path about some of our other beloved epistemic-normative modalities, ones that I have not much discussed in this paper. For instance, do we want to maintain that there are (blanket) epistemic constraints against, say, judging $p$ when one’s evidence for $p$ is not excellent? If so, we’ll need to be careful: in order to avoid inconsistency, the absence of this sort of epistemic constraint at a time cannot entail an epistemic permission. This means that we could easily be left with cases in which there is no epistemic

\[35\]This might be a bit too strong. Although I don’t know of any epistemologists who want to say that there are cases in which it is not epistemically permissible to come to know $p$, some discussions might open up the possibility. One nice example of this comes in the account of “unreasonable knowledge” in Lasonen-Aarnio (2010).
constraint against coming to know \( p \) at \( t \), but in which it’s also not epistemically permissible to come to know \( p \) at \( t \). This is obviously not an entirely comfortable set of normative commitments.\(^{36}\)

Even more pressing seems to me to be what to say about epistemic justification. The following are both fairly plausible justification-theoretic principles:

**J-to-P** If S’s believing \( p \) at \( t \) was epistemically justified, then S’s believing \( p \) at \( t \) was epistemically permissible.

**K-to-J** If S’s believing \( p \) at \( t \) resulted in S’s knowing \( p \) at \( t \), then S’s believing \( p \) at \( t \) was epistemically justified.

But it’s hard to see how to maintain both of these without the P-norms. With the P-norms gone there can be cases in which S’s coming to know \( p \) is not epistemically permissible. On the assumption that ZIP is also epistemic, we already know what some of those possible cases look like, i.e., cases in which ZIP demands certain kinds of zetetic focus. Take a case like that. Say, for instance that instead of calculating your portion of the dinner bill you eavesdrop on the table next to you and find out that one of the people at the table just won the lottery. You come to know this, but this is a case in which believing it and coming to know it were not permissible. Were you epistemically justified in believing that that person won the lottery? Given K-to-J you were. And then given J-to-P we should also say that your believing that they won was epistemically permissible. But it wasn’t. So either K-to-J or J-to-P will have to be rejected as well. And I suspect we’ll have some similar difficulties with other familiar epistemic-normative modalities like epistemic warrant and epistemic reasons. So rejecting the P-norms doesn’t make for smooth sailing either. It strikes me as the best of the options so far though.

Here is a way to think about that space of options. First, are the epistemic and the zetetic closely connected? If yes, then can widespread normative inconsistency be tolerated? If no, then one should either say that ZIP is not a norm of inquiry or that the P-norms (and the O-norms) are not epistemic norms (or both). Of course, one might feel the best landing spot is one where we say ‘no’ to (at least) one of those first two questions, i.e., where we tolerate normative incoherence or pull apart the epistemic and the zetetic. As I’ve said, my main goal in this section has been to lay out the terrain and show the difficulties in navigating it. I assume different readers will have different views about the size and scope of the costs and

\(^{36}\)If there are cases in which there is no epistemic constraint against judging \( p \) but in which it is also not epistemically permissible to judge \( p \), then we should say that normative epistemology is “gappy”. See von Wright (1991) for some discussion of these sorts of normative gaps.
benefits along the different paths given their other normative and meta-normative commitments.

My own leanings are towards epistemic revision, i.e., the path on which we re-think even the P-norms. While there are clearly details to be worked on this path, and some difficult decisions to be made, the revisions it forces are theoretically well-motivated and help to ground epistemic normativity in a satisfying way. One way to think of at least part of what's been revealed in this paper is that the norms in CE we've been investigating – O and P alike – really aren't zetetic norms. That is, they aren't the sorts of norms that a rational inquirer will conform to. But what grounds these norms then? Why should epistemic subjects conform to them at all? If we let go of any putative epistemic norms that can't be zetetically grounded, then while we'll certainly have to do some revising, at least what we'll be left with will be both tidy and theoretically robust.37

6 CONCLUDING REMARKS

The thought that the project we're engaged in when thinking about normative epistemology is the project of formulating or articulating a picture of rational inquiry is prima facie plausible. Isn't theoretical rationality (at least in part) the rationality one displays in inquiring well? Part of the upshot of this paper is that the interaction between the epistemic as we currently conceive of it and the zetetic is far from harmonious. While there's good reason to think that the epistemic and the zetetic are intimately connected, thinking more about the norms of inquiry makes clear that our familiar epistemic norms are also in tension with some central zetetic norms. That some judgment or belief is, by our current measures, in impeccable epistemic standing is not a good guide to whether it's an acceptable judgment to make in inquiry.

I've explored different ways we might try dealing with this normative discord and brought out some significant costs each faces. There is obviously much more to say about all of this. To my mind, a few things are already clear though: the epistemic and the zetetic are very closely connected and inquiry is a goal-directed

37To be clear, this “zetetically grounded” vision for E is one according to which ZIP is in E and the P-norms are not. Of course, claiming that the P-norms are not in E is perfectly compatible with also claiming that ZIP is not in E. But in this discussion, the motivation for rejecting the P-norms is coming largely from the thought that ZIP is a central norm of inquiry as well as an epistemic norm. A zetetically grounded E will presumably include permissions to believe what the evidence supports and permissions to come to know in cases in which doing that serves one's inquiries in the right sorts of ways. Of course, this barely even makes the contours of this picture of epistemic normativity clear, and unfortunately getting even there will have to wait.
activity. I think following just those thoughts through calls for a revision to our standard epistemic norms, and perhaps even a significant one. The only alternative seems to me to involve insisting on a fairly radical separation of epistemology and a theory of inquiry. But if epistemic norms are not norms of inquiry then what are they, and why should we conform to them?  

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