1 INTRODUCTION

We are inquirers. Not just qua philosophers but qua humans and even qua animals. We are subjects in pursuit of information, from the mundane to the extraordinary and everything in between. We want to know where our keys are, who will win the next election, when 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. How are zetetic norms related to epistemic norms? Here’s a plausible thought: they are one and the same – epistemic norms are norms of inquiry and norms of inquiry are epistemic. And even if you find that thought too strong, this weaker one might still seem right: epistemic norms are zetetic norms; the norms of epistemology are norms of inquiry. Aren’t they?

While I’m partial to the stronger identity claim, in this paper I’m going to make some trouble for both the stronger and weaker claims. In fact though, a lot of the focus in what’s to come will be on a claim much more specific than either of those general claims about epistemology and inquiry. That focal claim will be that our familiar contemporary epistemic norms, the ones epistemologists write and talk about these days, that those norms are norms of inquiry. I’m going to argue that some of those familiar epistemic norms are in tension with and even conflict with some central zetetic norms.

Before we get to those aspects of the relationship between the epistemic and the zetetic that really worry me, I want to do a bit to warm the reader up to some other ways that the epistemic and the zetetic might collide. For instance,
it’s easy to imagine cases in which one needs to make a false or unjustified judgment in order to succeed in one’s inquiry. Say the detective wants to figure out who committed some murder but knows they’ll be too distracted to succeed if they thought that their partner was secretly stealing money from the police force. All the evidence says the partner is crooked. Nonetheless, plausibly, believing that the partner is not stealing is the thing to do if the detective wants to figure out who committed the murder. Similarly, the evidence suggests you won’t be the one to solve the mind-body problem, but if that’s what you’re working on, then plausibly the norms of inquiry will say that you should not believe that you’re likely to fail.

I think these are all interesting cases, although we’d obviously need to do more work to really make them stick. These are somewhat familiar sorts of tensions. For instance, it’s no surprise that what we believe about our co-workers or our own chances of success can impact how well we perform our jobs. It turns out that this might make for friction between the epistemic and the zetetic at times.

These sorts of cases will not be my focus here. I want to think about some much more “direct” sorts of tensions between the norms of epistemology and the norms of inquiry. My plan in this paper is to look to completely typical sorts of inquirers in completely typical sorts of situations. What we’ll see is that even in these types of cases our familiar epistemic norms are going to regularly not just come apart from, but be in tension with, what I’ll argue are some central zetetic norms.\footnote{This isn’t to say that some of the atypical cases aren’t fun to think about too. For instance, say you want to know whether you can believe something completely unreasonable. One way to resolve this inquiry is to make (or at least try to make) a completely unreasonable judgment. Should you do that?}

This paper is about the norms of inquiry. But it’s also centrally about contemporary normative epistemology. The upshot of this paper will not be that there is no way of thinking about “the epistemic” that keeps it in close harmony with the zetetic; in fact I think there are many such ways. What I do want to say 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 central norms of inquiry.

To show this I want to start by drawing out a key zetetic norm. With that (and a close relative) in place, I’ll be able to bring out the tension between those central norms of inquiry and some of our familiar epistemic norms. More specif-
ically, section 2 will make the relevant zetetic norm(s) precise; the main argument showing the tension between the epistemic and the zetetic will come in section 3; the argument will be extended in section 4; and in section 5 I’ll discuss how we might proceed given that the epistemic and the zetetic do not appear to be operating harmoniously. My own view is that our best path forward involves some revision to normative epistemology.

2 A KEY ZETETIC NORM

Let’s say that \( Z \) is the set of all zetetic norms. And let’s say that \( CE \) is the set of our familiar contemporary epistemic norms. One of the goals of this paper is to say more about the relationship between these two sets. To do that I want to start by arguing for a couple of somewhat unfamiliar norms of inquiry. I think these will have to be central zetetic norms, but they are not the sorts of norms on which contemporary epistemologists have focused. Getting these norms out then already gives us some insight into the relationship between \( Z \) and \( CE \), e.g., they are not identical.

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. Let’s say that \( E \) is the set of all epistemic norms. If we assume that \( CE \) and \( E \) are not identical, then the claim that at least some elements of \( Z \) are not elements of \( CE \) does not imply that \( Z \) and \( E \) are not identical. I am 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 also norms of inquiry. I’ll say more about whether \( Z = E \) in the next section.

Let me say just bit more about \( Z \), \( E \), and especially \( CE \), since all three will figure centrally in the discussion to come. I’m thinking of \( Z \) as the exhaustive set of true or genuine zetetic norms and \( E \) as the exhaustive set of true or genuine epistemic norms. Figuring out which norms are in these sets is a huge task (in fact, we might characterize normative epistemology as a field as dedicated to figuring out what’s in \( E \) and what’s not). How should we conceive of \( CE \) though? My suggestion is to simply think of it as the set whose members are all of the epistemic norms proposed by contemporary epistemologists. On this way of thinking about \( CE \), I’m assuming that it does not have only true or
genuine epistemic norms as members and that it is not identical to (or even a subset of) \( E \).\(^3\) What is the relationship between \( CE \) and \( E \) then? Well, let’s hope they intersect at least. The norms in \( CE \) I’m going to be focused on in this paper are those that strike me as (a) most central and widely accepted and (b) as having the best shot of also being in \( E \).

On to our zetetic norms now. I want to start by drawing out what I think will have to be a key zetetic norm. We can give voice to this norm via the following commonplace thoughts:

(i) Inquiry is a goal-directed activity: in inquiring we are in pursuit of an epistemic end like true belief or knowledge or understanding.

(ii) Goal-directed activities are governed by instrumental norms. Very roughly, a subject pursuing some end ought to take the best means to that end.\(^4\)

From these two thoughts we get the further one that inquiries are governed by an instrumental norm. Let me make a couple of comments about (i) before articulating the specific instrumental norm of inquiry that will be a focus in the discussion to come. (i) says simply that in inquiring we are in pursuit of a goal or we aim to achieve something. Most every treatment of inquiry takes this sort of tack. And just as commonly, the end or goal of inquiry is some sort of epistemic improvement. There is some debate about exactly what the aim or goal of inquiry is, and I’ve listed a few options in (i). In what’s to come I’m going to take a stand on these issues. I think much of what I argue in this paper could be re-cast were I to think of the end differently, but fixing these things in one way now will help keep the discussion simpler.

In the discussion to come I’ll assume that the end of inquiry is knowledge: in inquiry we aim to come to know something. And I’ll also assume that what we aim to know is the answer to a question. So we can think of inquiry as focused on a question \( Q \) – where are my keys, who went to the party, where can I buy an Italian newspaper – and the aim of inquiry as knowing \( Q \). For our purposes one knows \( Q \) just in case one knows \( p \) where \( p \) is the complete true

\(^3\)And this is just to confirm: when I use the word ‘norm’ in this paper, I mean it in the more inclusive sense so that, e.g., every member of \( CE \) counts as a norm (not only the true or genuine ones).

\(^4\)Or a means as good as any other. I’m going to mostly talk about the “best” means here although I’m happy to allow for ties.
answer to $Q^7$. In inquiry we aim to come to know answers to questions. Or another way to say this: in inquiry we aim to resolve questions (where resolving $Q^7$ is a matter of coming to know $Q^7$).\(^5\)

(ii) says that there is a type of norm that governs goal-directed activities: an instrumental norm. Instrumental norms direct subjects pursuing goals or ends to act in ways that will help them achieve those goals or ends. What should an instrumental norm for inquiry look like? Here is my suggestion:

**Zetetic Instrumental Principle (ZIP)** If one is inquiring into $Q^7$ at $t$, then one ought to take the best means available to resolving $Q^7$ at $t$.

Let me make a few comments about ZIP. First, ZIP demands that inquirers optimize with respect to the means they take in pursuit of the knowledge they are after: they shouldn’t merely take some available means, but they should take the best of the available means.\(^6\) I think this is the right way to think about the normative demands that are central to goal pursuit (in general). But I want to point out quickly – and I’ll comment on this again later – that the arguments to come mostly do not require this demand to optimize. The arguments I make are tidiest with the demand in place, but versions go through even with milder demands, e.g., a demand to satisfice with respect to the means one takes in inquiry or even a very weak demand to take some means (rather than a non-means).\(^7\)

Second, ZIP says that one ought to take the best (available) means to resolving rather than that one ought to take what one thinks is the best means

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\(^5\) As I said, there 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. See Sartwell (1992), Hookway (2007), Whitcomb (2010), Millar (2011), Kvanvig (2011), and Grimm (2012).

\(^6\) I am using ‘ought’ and ‘should’ interchangeably in this discussion. This is a stylistic rather than a substantive decision. See Sloman (1970) and von Fintel and Iatridou (2005). In general, I’m not going to be making very fine-grained deontic distinctions here. 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 cognates.

\(^7\) At no point in what’s to come will I be giving a precise ordering of means to ends in inquiry. See Stegenga (2013), Bedke (2017), and Kolodny (2018). And for some about “truth-finding efficiency” see Kelly (2007a). I’m going to stick to (hopefully) intuitive and uncontroversial claims about some means being better than some other(s).
or what one reasonably thinks is the best means. Some might prefer a more “subjectivist” ZIP. I don’t, but I don’t think that the decision matters for what’s to come. Again, I’ll point this out later on.

Third, does the ‘ought’ in ZIP scope over the entire conditional or just the consequent? If the former – if ZIP is a “wide-scope” norm – then we can take it to say (roughly) that one ought to either take the best means to resolving $Q$ at $t$ or not be inquiring into $Q$ at $t$. If the latter – if ZIP is a “narrow-scope” norm – then we should take it to be saying that one ought to take the best means to resolving $Q$ (when one is inquiring). In this latter case, but not the former, we can say flat-out that an inquirer ought to do something (if they’re inquiring). There is some debate about whether we should think of the ‘ought’ in instrumental norms like ZIP as taking wide or narrow scope. For now I’m going to assume ZIP is a narrow-scope norm and I’ll revisit the issue near the end of the paper.

Fourth, one might worry about ZIP in cases in which subjects have no reason at all to pursue some epistemic end – and this worry becomes acute, I think, with a narrow-scope ZIP. For instance, if I have various morbid, immoral or just plain boring fascinations, is it really the case that I ought to take the best means to figuring out the relevant details? Considerations like this have led some to worry about whether we could have any reason at all (never mind a requirement) to take even the necessary means to ends we have no reason to pursue. I feel the force of the concerns here. In response, one might suggest a modification to ZIP: that one ought to take the best means to one’s ends in inquiry just in case one ought to be inquiring (or perhaps just in case one has good reason to be inquiring, etc.). For the purposes of this discussion I am going to leave ZIP unmodified. This is merely for expository ease though. Nothing in the argument to come relies on cases in which we have no reason to inquire. So even if we modified ZIP in the relevant ways, the sorts of tensions I am about to discuss will still emerge.

Finally, ZIP involves an important simplification. When we think of the archetypal inquirer we often picture someone like Sherlock Holmes holding up

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8See Way (2010) for a good overview of the debate in the practical case.
9See, for example, Raz (2005) for a defence of the thought that one has reason to take a necessary means to one’s end only if one has reason to pursue the end in the first place.
10This raises very interesting (and important) questions about the shape of reasons and requirements to inquire in the first place. I am not going to be able to think about norms that speak to opening inquiries in this paper, but of course they will be in Z as well. My focus on ZIP in this paper is not intended to indicate that Z is limited to these sorts of instrumental norms.
his magnifying glass to inspect some (very tiny) evidence at a crime scene. But when Holmes heads home to Baker Street to relax after work, he might say to Watson, “Watson, we've been investigating this crime for three months already, why haven't we cracked it?” On the one hand, it's obviously not the case that Holmes and Watson have been working on the case at every moment over those three months. On the other, there's nothing at all wrong with Holmes' lament – they really have been investigating this crime for three months. That said, I assume we do not want to say that every moment during these past three months that Holmes wasn't taking the best means to cracking the case he was in violation of ZIP: he's got other cases to work on as well, and even Sherlock Holmes needs to eat and sleep sometimes.

Upshot: it's not quite right to say that one should take the best available means to resolving $Q^t$ at any time during which one is inquiring into $Q^t$. It is only when $Q^t$ is an object of active investigation – when one is actively working on resolving $Q^t$ – that one ought to take the best available means to resolving $Q^t$. From here on in, when I talk about what we ought or ought not to do in inquiry, unless I say otherwise I mean active inquiry.

With ZIP made clearer, I want to highlight another zetetic norm. ZIP demands that we perform certain actions in certain circumstances. I take it that

11I obviously haven't done very much to flesh out this notion of active inquiry (nor its more passive counterpart). I do think there is a lot to say, but I'll have to save it for another time. For now, hopefully the Holmes case makes the distinction between active and more passive inquiry intuitively visible at least. We can also compare inquiring to other activities that extend over long periods of time and involve both active and more passive stages (or even pauses, perhaps). If we're out for coffee and you ask me what I've been up to lately, I might say, "I'm writing a book!" or "I'm tearing up the old carpet in the cabin". There's nothing wrong with either claim although I'm obviously not actively doing either while we're out for coffee. One issue worth noting: if we can actively inquire into more than one question at a time, then ZIP needs to be complicated somewhat in order to properly accommodate cases in which the best means to resolving the various questions are incompatible. For the purposes of this discussion then let's just assume that we can only actively investigate one question at a time.

12There is a question here about the normative force of the mere fact that one happens to be actively inquiring. This is closely related to the earlier question about the normative force of the mere fact that one happens to be inquiring more generally. In this case we can ask: should one take the best means to resolving $Q$ whenever one is actively focused on resolving $Q^t$ or whenever one ought to be actively focused on resolving $Q^t$ or some combination of those? And again, for the sake of simplicity I'm going to talk as if the mere fact that one is actively inquiring into $Q^t$ at $t$ is sufficient to make it that one ought to take the best means to resolving $Q^t$ at $t$, even though the matter is obviously not as straightforward as that. Although I'm going to mostly talk in the simpler way in what follows, it's absolutely fine if the reader assumes that whenever I discuss an actively inquiring subject in what's to come, they not only are actively inquiring but ought to be as well.
those can be bodily or mental actions. That is, the norms of inquiry might demand we pick something up and examine it, but they can also demand that once we examine it we make certain kinds of judgments and draw certain inferences from the beliefs that result from those judgments. (Quick note: I’m assuming here and throughout that there is nothing more or less to judging than coming to believe. The word ‘judgment’ is sometimes used to pick out something more robust than a mere coming to believe, but I’m using it in just that thin sense here.)

Let’s call a judgment that resolves a question a ‘resolving judgment’. In making a resolving judgment an inquirer comes to know the answer to their question. I think we should say that if someone inquiring into $Q^t$ at $t$ is in a position to make a resolving judgment with respect to $Q^t$ at $t$, then making that judgment is their best available means to resolving $Q^t$ at $t$. Given ZIP, this means that when an inquirer is in a position to resolve their inquiry, that’s the thing they ought to do. And so we have the following zetetic norm:

**Resolve! (RES)** If one is inquiring into $Q^t$ at $t$ and in a position to resolve $Q^t$ at $t$ by making a judgment $j$, then one ought to make $j$ at $t$.

RES says that if you’re actively investigating and are in a position to close your inquiry, you ought to close. To see RES at work, let’s imagine a couple of simple inquiries. I’ll keep coming back to these throughout the paper. First, let’s imagine that you see an article about the plight of the grizzly bears in Yellowstone. That gets you wondering: do grizzlies sleep at all when they aren’t hibernating? In addition to their big winter sleep, do they also take regular little sleeps during the spring and summer months? You think more about this little sleep question ($LS^5$). You click around on the internet and finally the answer is up on your screen. RES says that you ought to come to know $LS^5$ at this point in your inquiry. Of course there are other things you could do at that time instead of coming to know $LS^5$: you could make some other judgments instead about (say) the colours and fonts on the site you’re looking at, you could get up and walk away making no judgment, etc. RES tells you that you should resolve.

Or to take another example, say you want to know whether your neighbours’ kids are home ($H^1$), say you want to know if they want to play with your kids. You know that if your neighbours are home then their kids are home. You ring your neighbours’ bell and they answer. You come to know that your neighbours are home. Given what else you know, you’re now in a position to come...
to know (by inference) that their kids are home. RES says that at that time you ought to draw that inference and make that judgment – you ought to come to know $H$.

With ZIP and RES in Z, we are now a bit clearer on what some of the elements of Z are. In the next couple of sections I want to think more about how Z fits into contemporary epistemology given that ZIP and RES are elements of Z, and bring out some tension between Z and CE.

Before that though, I want to quickly speak to two questions. First, is ZIP a “practical” norm? In one sense it is obviously practical – it tells subjects what to do. Is it practical in some other sense though, one that’s in contrast to its being epistemic, for instance? As I said, I’ll say more later about whether zetetic norms are epistemic, but it’s worth pointing out already that the mere fact that ZIP is an instrumental norm doesn’t tell us much about whether it is practical (in this more robust sense) or epistemic or something else. There is genuine debate in epistemology about whether our familiar epistemic norms are 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 account that those norms are no longer truly epistemic, or that they are practical instead. I don’t want to get too caught up in how to use terms like ‘epistemic’ and ‘practical’, but simply want to point out for now that the fact that some norms are instrumental is not a reason to think that those norms are not epistemic.

Second question. As we can see, the norms in Z sometimes demand we make certain judgments. One might worry about how norms like that sit with thoughts about the extent to which judging and believing are voluntary. If judging (which, again, is simply coming to believe) isn’t voluntary, can there really be norms that demand we make (or resist making) judgments at all?

I’m not sure I have an especially illuminating answer here, but I don’t see any special problem for norms like ZIP and RES that isn’t already there for standard epistemic norms, which also seem to demand and prohibit certain kinds of judgments. Epistemologists have been discussing these sorts of issues about

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'doxastic voluntarism' and norms for belief for a long time. This discussion is still thriving. Although I don't want to commit to any particular way forward here, like many people engaged in these discussions, I think there is a great deal to say about the extent to which what I judge or believe is “up to me”, much of which seems to make room for norms for forming and having beliefs. And I don't see any reason to think that norms like ZIP and RES aren't on the table via these sorts of strategies in just the same way that our familiar epistemic norms are.

3 TENSION

ZIP and RES don't, in the first instance, govern states of belief but instead speak to inquirers' actions, including their judgments or acts of belief formation. While contemporary epistemic norms – the norms in CE – range over judgments as well (and other mental actions or processes like inferring or suspending judgment), they also range over doxastic states. In this section I’m going think about the interaction between Z and some of the ‘act-norms’ in CE – in particular, some of the epistemic norms that tell us which beliefs to form when. While I’m calling these ‘act-norms’ I don't intend anything particularly robust by ‘act’ (‘process’ would have been fine as well). The acts I’m concerned with now are acts of belief and knowledge formation – acts of judgment making.

14 Alston (1988) is a canonical articulation of the (putative) problem that the (putative) involuntariness of believing raises for normative epistemology. There is an incredibly rich literature that responds to this (putative) problem and makes space for genuine epistemic norms. For just a few such space-making strategies see: Feldman (2000), Steup (2000), Ginet (2001), Yee (2002), Ryan (2005), Hieronymi (2006), Weatherson (2008), Chuard and Southwood (2009), McHugh (2012), and Rott (2017).

15 More generally, I am assuming that zetetic norms “see” the judgments we make: that those judgments fall within the scope of zetetic evaluation. I think that this is right on both principled and intuitive grounds. Acts of judgment making are the sorts of doings that are regularly subject to normative evaluation in epistemology. So why shouldn't they be subject to inquiry-theoretic evaluation? Moreover, take a norm like RES, a norm that explicitly articulates a zetetic requirement to judge or come to know. This norm is not somehow confusing or nonsensical. Quite the reverse: it strikes me as not only in perfectly good standing but as clearly true. If you are in the position to resolve your inquiry and resolving is exactly what you're aiming to do, then you should do that.

16 None of this is entirely uncontroversial. For instance, at least some of the American pragmatists thought we should be focused on justifying changes in view rather than states of mind. See, Levi (1998) for a good overview. Somewhat similarly, Kolodny (2005) argues that all norms of rationality, epistemic or otherwise, should be thought of as “process requirements” rather than “state requirements".
Whether or not one wants to think of these acts as products of our agency or full-blooded actions, they are things we do: they are doxastic changes we make in moving from one doxastic state to another. These changes unfold over time, although often very brief intervals of time. These sorts of “coming-to-believe”s and “coming-to-know”s are to be contrasted with the doxastic states that result from those acts – states of believing and states of knowing. In section 4, I’ll think about the interaction between $Z$ and norms for doxastic states.

For now I want to focus on these epistemic act-norms:

$\textbf{EP}_a$ If one has excellent evidence for $p$ at $t$ then one is permitted to judge $p$ at $t$.

$\textbf{EO}_a$ If one has excellent evidence for $p$ at $t$ then one ought to judge $p$ at $t$.

$\textbf{KP}_a$ If one is in a position to come to know $p$ at $t$, then one is permitted to come to know $p$ at $t$.

$\textbf{KO}_a$ If one is in a position to come to know $p$ at $t$, then one ought to come to know $p$ at $t$.

The requirements and permissions in all of these norms are epistemic. There’s a sense in which it’s difficult to evaluate exactly what role these norms play in contemporary normative epistemology because it’s not always clear whether those who discuss norms like these mean to be expressing act-norms

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17 In general, there is a great deal to say about which of my mental processes might count as actions in a more robust sense or as products of my agency. My intention is to remain neutral on these matters. See O’Brien and Soteriou (2009) for some of the debate.

18 ‘Excellent’ is obviously vague. I leave it to the reader to flesh it out as they wish. I think all of the cases to come will involve the sort of evidence for $p$ we would typically class as excellent, e.g., $p$ is easily inferable from other known propositions or even right before one’s eyes.

19 On $\textbf{EO}_a$ and $\textbf{EP}_a$. There is an important complication that I am putting aside in this discussion that is relevant to these first two norms. Say you have excellent evidence for $p$ and you judge $p$, but you do so not based on your excellent evidence but based on the tea leaves. Was that judgment permitted? There’s obviously an important sense in which it was not. And similarly for evidential requirements: there’s an important sense in which you have not discharged your evidential duty if you form your belief based on the tea leaves. Officially then, these norms need some kind of “basing” condition. What you’re permitted or required to do in these cases is make judgments based on the relevant excellent evidence. What such a basing condition should look like is a matter of debate in epistemology (see Evans (2013) for a nice overview). Nothing in what’s to follow hangs on any particular articulation of the basing relation though so I’m going to try to just skirt this whole issue. The reader should take there to be implicit basing conditions in all the evidentialist permission and requirement claims discussed in this paper though.
or state-norms, and there is limited explicit discussion of the differences between these. For instance, talk of what it’s permissible “to believe” is ambiguous between talk of what beliefs it’s permissible to have and what beliefs it’s permissible to form. My own sense is that typically this ambiguity is the result of indifference rather than carelessness. That is, my sense is that most are happy to think of epistemic norms as telling us both about what judgments to make and about what beliefs to have. For now let’s assume that’s right. Let’s assume that when epistemologists are discussing epistemic requirements and permissions they are mostly happy to think of those as ranging over the making of certain kinds of judgments as well as the having of certain kinds of beliefs. Let’s call this the ‘neutrality assumption’. Given the neutrality assumption we can assume that the epistemic norms endorsed by contemporary epistemologist can be read as either act-norms or state-norms.

With the neutrality assumption in place, I think it’s difficult to overstate the centrality of a norm like $\text{EP}_a$ in epistemology. Not only do I not know of anyone who explicitly denies it in the literature, but it’s hard to think of anyone who might want to given their other commitments. I hope the norm strikes the reader as uncontentious. It says that if you have no opinion about $p$ but come to have excellent evidence for $p$, then you’re epistemically permitted to come to believe $p$. I find it hard to think about normative epistemology as we know it without a norm like $\text{EP}_a$.

$\text{EO}_a$ is a bit more controversial than $\text{EP}_a$ but is still fairly central to our theorizing about epistemic normativity. Many 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.

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\footnote{Here is a way to get at the centrality of a norm like $\text{EP}_a$ in the literature. Claim 1: one’s judgment that $p$ is justified at $t$ if it’s based in sufficient evidence for $p$ at $t$. Claim 2: if one’s $\phi$-ing at $t$ is justified, then one’s $\phi$-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 interaction between justification and permissibility. But these two claims can get us to $\text{EP}_a$.}

\footnote{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 (2007b), 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}
What about KPₐ and KOₐ? Although these may be less familiar than the evidentialist norms, I think that they are at least as plausible. Knowledge has all sorts of 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 any of those seem to entail that what you’ve done is permissible. And whatever thought motivates an evidentialist requirement to believe, can also motivate the thought that we should come to know when we’re in a position to.

Let’s assume then that CE, our set of contemporary epistemic norms, contains the four norms just articulated. I don’t mean to imply that it doesn’t contain any others; it surely does. But we’ll find the relationship between CE and Z fairly strained even if we just focus on these few core elements of CE.

3.1 Z AND CE: ZETETIC DILEMMAS

To start to see some of the tension let’s go back to our bear inquiry. Say you’re inquiring into LS² (‘Do grizzles take little sleeps when they aren’t hibernating?’). You find your trusty animal encyclopedia and take it off the shelf. But instead of flipping to ‘bear’ in the book, you open it to ‘C’ and start reading about caterpillars. And let’s just stipulate that the encyclopedia is reliable and you’re being a careful reader, learning all you can. All of the judgments you’re making about caterpillars are epistemically impeccable – they are based in excellent evidence and result in knowledge. This means that from the perspective of CE you are doing exactly as you ought as you look through the book: you’re following your excellent evidence and coming to know what you’re in a position to come to know.

Unfortunately, coming to know those things about caterpillars is clearly not the best means to coming to know LS². In fact, we can easily tell the story so that it’s not a means to your end at all, e.g., you don’t think that learning about caterpillars is going to help you with LS², there’s no weird worldly connection between learning about caterpillars and finding out about the sleeping habits of grizzly bears, and so on.

So, something other than learning about caterpillars is the best means to your end at the relevant time, t. In fact, let’s just say that the best means to your end at t is turning to ‘bear’ in the book (others would work too, but it’s conditionalizing on p or not; you are required to conditionalize on that new evidence.)
helpful to fix ideas). So at $t$ we have ZIP demanding you turn to ‘bear’ and CE demanding you learn a bunch of things about caterpillars. You can’t do both of those things at $t$: in order to come to know what you’re in a position to come to know about caterpillars at $t$, you can’t turn the page to some other animal. You are faced with a dilemma.

I want to be careful to distinguish this case from some nearby ones. For instance, say that as you open the book you remember how fascinating caterpillars are. You decide you want to learn more about them before figuring out how much bears sleep when they aren’t hibernating. So you switch which question you’re actively inquiring into: now it’s some question about caterpillars. The case that best brings out the tension between the epistemic and the zetetic should be filled in slightly differently: it should be a case in which you don’t/shouldn’t stop being actively focused on resolving $LS^T$. This way of fleshing out the case best brings out the dilemma. And this way of fleshing out the case most clearly gets us the result that there are cases in which conforming to the norms in CE requires violating norms in $Z$, and conforming to the norms in $Z$ requires violating norms in CE.

This sort of case is easily multiplied, and not much hangs on the very specific details of you and the grizzlies. For instance, imagine you’re at a busy restaurant, with lots to see and hear while you’re there. According to CE you should come to know everything you’re in a position to over that interval of restaurant time. But now say that the dinner bill arrives, and since you want to get home you have to pay. To do that, you have to figure out what your portion of the bill is. And to do that, you have to do some mental calculations. We can assume that according to ZIP you ought to do those calculations at the relevant time. 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 at that point. So according to CE you should take it, but according to Z you should do the math. Again, you can’t do both so you’re facing a dilemma. Or say your inquiry demands you talk to a witness and write down what they say. Again, this will require you to attend to some of your available evidence but also ignore some of it; you can’t follow what they are saying and write it down while also taking in all of the mundane
information available to you at that time. CE says you must learn all you can, but Z says you must focus on some other task. And we can easily come up with more cases.

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 – things about caterpillars or the details of the restaurant, for instance. In some of those cases, S’s acquiring that “irrelevant” knowledge is compatible with their doing as they zetetically ought, but in others it’s not. When it’s not, the norms of inquiry will demand that S φs at t while the norms in CE will demand that S ψs at t, and S won't be able to both φ and ψ at t. Let’s call these situations ‘zetetic dilemmas’. The sorts of zetetic dilemmas we’ve been thinking about are ones in which our epistemic norms say S should follow their excellent evidence and come to know some p at t, while our zetetic norms direct them to do something else, something not compatible with coming to know p at t. Inquirers faced with zetetic dilemmas are going to have to violate the norms of inquiry or the norms of epistemology (or both).

INTERLUDE: CLARIFICATIONS AND CONCERNS

I am going to take a small pause now to make a few remarks about the argument so far before extending it in various ways. Let’s start here. In the background of the argument is a picture according to which inquirers are often in a position to come to know a great deal. If I’m trying to figure out where I left my keys or who robbed the bank or where the nearest gas station is, I’m doing these things over some interval of time, T. But these inquiries don’t proceed in a bubble; they proceed out there in the world. Given this, there will typically be plenty I can come to know via perception (visual, auditory, etc.) throughout these T’s. This isn’t a special feature of inquiring throughout T, but merely a feature of moving through the world as a typical subject does over a typical interval of time. I take it that most of us are being presented with huge amounts of perceptual information at most (waking) times.

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 (knowledge they’ve acquired over their lifetimes). And we can assume that those bodies of total evidence are not closed under deduction. More generally, 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 at some time, but just a feature of being a typical human at that time. Altogether then, typical inquirers qua typical human people are in a position to come to know a great deal over the course of their inquiries.

Can we know everything we’re in a position to know at a time? And if not, does this mean we should reject EO$a$ and KO$a$? I’ll come back to this thought in a moment, but what I’ve been bringing out so far is one of the problematic ways in which this informational bounty/overload interacts with the demands of our inquiries. One thing I’ve tried to show is that it need not be possible for inquirers to learn all that CE would have them learn while conforming to the norms of inquiry. These are exactly the sorts of cases I’ve been describing: listening to your neighbours at the restaurant means that you won’t be able to calculate your share of the bill, and turning to section ‘B’ in your animal encyclopedia means you won’t be able to learn about caterpillars. Cases that have this sort of incompatibility are fairly easy to find. Sometimes learning – even easy learning – can distract us from other tasks.

Of course we can learn many things at once, and we can acquire knowledge while remaining focused on other tasks. I learn a lot about what songs are popular or what kinds of cars people are buying this year while driving to the desert; I can drive and learn. The argument so far does not require as a premise the claim that coming to know $p$ at $t$ always precludes doing anything else at $t$, whether that something else is also the making of some judgments or it’s some bodily action like walking or driving. The argument does need the claim that coming to know $p$ at $t$ is sometimes incompatible with doing some other things. The examples I’ve given bring out how this sort of incompatibility can emerge.

I hope it’s also clear that the argument so far does not rely on inquirers having unrealistically narrow epistemic goals. For instance, the claim that you should stop learning about caterpillars while you’re involved in your bear inquiry is perfectly compatible with your also wanting information about caterpillars at that time. If you can’t learn about bears and caterpillars at the same

22Think about how often you retreat to a quiet space to think or ask your interlocutor to stop talking so you can figure something out. It is well known that cognitive load negatively impacts learning.
time, then you're going to have to pick which to learn about first and which to put off learning about. In fact, let's imagine that you're not just a caterpillar lover, but that you want to know all you can about the animal world. You're struck by this question about the sleeping habits of grizzlies and so you pull the animal encyclopedia off the shelf. Now what should you do? There's so much of the book you want to read right now.

How exactly you should proceed once you take the book down is going to depend on how we make precise various features of the case: Which animal questions are most important to you? Which animal questions are most valuable? How much time do you have? And so on. Getting clear on how these sorts of features interact and help determine how you should proceed once the book is in hand is incredibly important for understanding the norms of inquiry, but is also largely beyond the scope of this paper. What should be clear though is this: you cannot answer all of your animal questions at once.\textsuperscript{23}

Nor would it make any sense with respect to your goal of answering all of those animals questions to just skip around the book mid-sentence or mid-paragraph. To make any progress on the set of questions you're going to have to focus on some first and move others to the periphery to be tackled later. If the grizzly question is the most pressing or important when you pull the book off the shelf, then plausibly that's where you should start. This will mean putting the other questions you want answers to aside for now. But this means that even if you want to know everything about the animal world when you pull the book off the shelf, it can still easily turn out that what you ought to do is turn to 'bear'. And if cannot do that while reading and learning about caterpillars, then even if you're a true animal lover, you can easily be faced with the very same zetetic dilemmas I've been describing.\textsuperscript{24}

That said, I certainly don't want to say or imply that once one fixes on a question in inquiry, the norms of inquiry make any distraction from that task

\textsuperscript{23}The point here is an instance of a general one about goal pursuit. Right now I may have all sorts of goals I’d like to achieve: write a novel, win a competitive eating contest, climb El Capitan, and more. Even though I have all of those goals right now, I cannot pursue all of them right now. Exactly how much normative weight these various ends should get at a given time and what that means for how I should act at that time is again both hugely important and hugely complex.

\textsuperscript{24}Take a subject who wants to know everything at \textit{t} – a maximally curious subject (insofar as we can make sense of such a subject). Given the sorts of considerations just adduced, it looks as though this subject too will not be able to conform to the norms of inquiry without violating the norms in CE. They might want to know everything, but they too will have to focus on some things at the expense of others at various times if they want figure things out.
impermissible. If you start looking at the bill to try to calculate what you owe but then realize that the people at the next table are FBI agents working on the Trump-Russia investigation, you might, without irrationality, decide to postpone doing those calculations and focus on your eavesdropping instead. It can be perfectly reasonable to switch from one project to another, and in general small distractions from tasks here and there are going to be fine. The point is only that sometimes inquirers will have to bear down on a question if they want to answer it, and then that sometimes that bearing down means or entails violating some central epistemic norms.

It is also worth pointing out that while the zetetic requirements I’m discussing here are “all zetetic things considered” requirements, they are not the final word on what subjects are required 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 $t$, just as the fact that practical rationality says that one should $\phi$ at $t$ does not entail that all things considered one should $\phi$ at $t$. You might really, really want to catch that movie this afternoon, but if you promised you’d help your friend move, then that’s what you should do instead. The norms of inquiry might tell you to find the witness and talk to them, but if on the way you see a hundred dollar bill down in a sidewalk vent, perhaps all things considered you should stop trying to find the witness and work on fishing the money out.

In Change in View, Gilbert Harman argues that a norm that demands that our beliefs be closed under deduction should be rejected on the grounds that such a norm would force us to clutter our minds with “trivialities” (e.g., all of the long, strange disjunctions that trivially follow from our beliefs). There are a number of shared themes running through my argument here and Harman’s famous “clutter avoidance” argument: concern about some accepted norms of belief revision, claims about some limitations of ours and their potential impact on normative epistemology, and discussion of what role our interests should have in our epistemic lives.\textsuperscript{25} It’s interesting to think about the various points of contact between Harman’s arguments and mine and how they play out, and I think the two arguments can be thought of as kindred spirits in many ways. I do want to be clear though: the argument I’ve given so far is not a Harman-style

\textsuperscript{25}For Harman’s discussion of clutter avoidance see Harman (1986), especially chapter 2, but also chapters 4 and 6. For a detailed discussion of the potentially dramatic impact Harman’s arguments can have on normative epistemology, see Friedman (2018).
clutter avoidance argument.

Harman’s argument crucially depends on the thought that believing and knowing can waste our cognitive resources. He was especially concerned that cognitive storage space was limited: if we used it up on trivialities we’d be wasting that space. My argument does not rely on any sort of claims about our storage capacity. The reason inquirers need to avoid certain kinds of information at certain times has nothing at all to do with the costs of storing that information. In fact, the argument so far hasn’t even been about states of belief or knowledge at all, but about the making of judgments at particular times. Storage hasn’t been relevant (nor have “costs”). I have, at times, assumed a certain kind of processing limitation: there are only so many cognitive tasks we can perform at once. Some, but not all, of the arguments work only if the focal subject is one with normal human processing power (rather than that of, say, a supercomputer). Still, nothing I’ve said relies on thoughts about wasting some limited cognitive resource.

Relatedly, I hope it’s clear that when the norms of inquiry direct S to do something incompatible with coming to know some p, that does not (at all) imply that p is somehow “trivial” for S. Although Harman is never entirely clear on how to think about what counts as a triviality, it looks as though the notion is closely tied to what subjects do and should care about. But as we just saw, the information that inquirers should ignore can be information they (do and should) want or need or care about (and those propositions obviously need not be trivial in the sense in which some propositions may “trivially follow” from others). Nothing needs to be wrong with the information the norms of inquiry would have inquirers avoid at specific times; it certainly needn’t be clutter. I don’t know if our minds can be cluttered nor what the possibility of a cluttered mind might tell us about epistemology, but nothing in the argument so far turns on those sorts of issues.26

One last comment before getting back to the main thread of the paper.

26It’s also worth pointing out that Harman proposed his clutter avoidance principle as a “meta-principle”: a principle that should constrain the first-order principles of belief revision. He thought that there shouldn’t be any norms of belief revision that encourage us to clutter our minds. I have proposed no meta-normative constraints here. What I have done is shown that the (first-order) norms of inquiry and the (first-order) norms of contemporary epistemology – all of which strike me as norms of belief revision – conflict in various ways. It’s unclear what the upshot of this conflict is, and on its own it doesn’t constrain the norms of belief revision in any particular way.
While I ran the argument so far using ZIP – a norm that demands we take the very best means to our ends in inquiry – a much weaker norm would have done nearly as well. For instance, as I said, it’s easy to fill in the details of the story about your inquiry into the sleep habits of grizzlies so that learning about caterpillars is not a means to settling $LS^2$ at all. If that’s right then even a very weak zetetic instrumental norm (e.g., take any means to your end in inquiry!) is going to tell you to do something other than, and plausibly incompatible with, learning about caterpillars. The same is going to be true in the other examples I gave.

BACK TO THE MAIN THREAD

So far I’ve brought out a tension between contemporary epistemic norms and central norms of inquiry. If epistemic norms demand we make judgments in light of our excellent evidence or know all we can, then inquirers will regularly end up in zetetic dilemmas – situations in which epistemic norms say to $\phi$ at $t$ and zetetic norms say to $\psi$ at $t$, and inquirers cannot both $\phi$ and $\psi$ at $t$.

I’ve tried to bring out not only the existence of these zetetic dilemmas but their frequency. It is regularly going to be the case that conforming to the norms of inquiry will mean violating epistemic norms, and conforming to epistemic norms will mean violating norms of inquiry.

One might think: so much the worse for norms like $EO_a$ and $KO_a$. Are we really epistemically required to come to know everything we can at a time or believe everything our evidence supports at a time? Part of what’s come out so far is that we are typically in a position to know quite a lot. But if that’s right then CE turns out to be a very demanding norm, maybe too demanding. There’s obviously something compelling about this thought. In the next section I am going to think about the interaction between $Z$ and a less demanding set of epistemic norms. Before that though I want to say just a tiny bit more about the demanding epistemic norms.

Even if CE strikes one as too demanding, one might still want to say that norms like $EO_a$ and $KO_a$ 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

27 For some very helpful discussion of the potential structural or formal upshots of dilemmas see van Fraassen (1973), Marcus (1980), and Brink (1994). While these discussions are largely focused on moral dilemmas, it’s very easy to apply them here as well.
of epistemic standard that, all things considered, it would be better to live up to. Doesn't the ideal epistemic subject come to know all they can?

If norms like \( \text{EO}_a \) and \( \text{KO}_a \) somehow 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 like \( \text{EO}_a \) and \( \text{KO}_a \), 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 it looks quite different from the zetetic ideal.

Here is one way to see this. Say you are inquiring into \( H^? \) – whether your neighbours' kids are home. You go over and knock at their door and they open it and you come to know that your neighbours are home. Given that you know that if they are home then their kids are home, you're now in a position to come to know the answer to your question. RES says that you ought to make that inference and come to know \( H^? \). But at the time at which you're poised to make that inference, you are in a position to know quite a lot, much more than just that your neighbours' kids are home (\( h \)). For instance, since your neighbours have opened their door you're being visually presented with all sorts of information about the inside of their home, so there's quite a lot you can come to know about that, and there are plenty of other (completely unrelated) inferences you could draw from your body of total evidence at that time. You're in a position to come know much more than just \( h \) at the time at which you're poised to infer \( h \) and resolve \( H^? \).

Say you come to know nearly everything you're in a position to when you see the parents, but you fail to make the zetetically mandated inference and so fail to come to know \( h \). You will have come to know a tremendous amount at the relevant time – nearly all you can – and so you will have been nearly ideal from the perspective of CE. But from the perspective of Z you seem to have failed fairly dramatically: you failed to come to know the one thing your inquiry demanded you come to know. And what about the case in which you come to know \( h \) but ignore virtually all of the other available information? Well, you will have been a complete zetetic success (at least from the perspective of \( H^? \)), but very far from epistemically ideal. This is all to say that if we think of \( \text{EO}_a \) and \( \text{KO}_a \) as setting epistemic ideals then an almost completely successful epistemic
subject can be an utter failure zetetically and a completely successful inquirer can be mostly a failure epistemically.

3.2 Z AND THE P-NORMS: INCONSISTENCY

The zetetic dilemmas and other tensions I brought out in the last section were due, at least in part, to the demandingness of CE. One strategy for avoiding the tension then is to reject the demanding norms in CE. This amounts to claiming that EO_a and KO_a (let’s call these the ‘O-norms’) are not genuine epistemic norms (i.e., they aren’t in E). While there are reasons to worry about the O-norms, I don’t think that dropping them is entirely straightforward: it’s completely natural to talk about what subjects ought to believe given their evidence or what they ought to have believed in some epistemic circumstances or other (and think about how many introductory texts in epistemology start with a characterization of epistemology as focused on the question, ‘What should I believe?’). On the other hand, given our concerns about demandingness, perhaps we really should be thinking of norms like EP_a and KP_a (let’s call these the ‘P-norms’) as closer to the true core of epistemic normativity. Even if this is right though it won’t help much to restore harmony between the epistemic and the zetetic: I think we’ll even find tension between the norms in Z and the (decidedly un-demanding) P-norms.

To start to see why Z doesn’t play nicely with the P-norms either I am going to assume that ‘ought’ and ‘permit’ are duals, i.e., that one ought to φ at t just in case one is not permitted to not-φ at t. Let’s also say that if a subject cannot both φ and ψ at t, then φ-ing and ψ-ing are ‘incompatible’ at t. And finally, if φ-ing and ψ-ing are incompatible at t, then we can say that φ-ing at t is a way

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28 Nelson (2010) argues that there are no purely epistemic requirements to believe based on something like demandingness considerations. And after that, he makes the sort of move I’m suggesting here: he claims that epistemic norms “concern what we are permitted to believe, given our epistemic circumstances – not what we are obligated to believe” (p.86). Cohen (2016a) and Dogramaci (2018) also both argue for the centrality of epistemic permissibility (rather than obligation).

29 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 it. That said, I don’t think we absolutely need the assumption. Although I’m starting with zetetic requirement norms and inferring various prohibitions from them, I could have simply started with the zetetic prohibitions (e.g., don’t fail to resolve!) which, although more cumbersome, are not less plausible. For ease of exposition I’ll sometimes say things like, ‘Z/ZIP/RES prohibits φ-ing’. Strictly speaking it’s Z/ZIP/RES plus this duality assumption getting us to the relevant prohibitions.
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 $\phi$, and $\psi$-ing is incompatible with $\phi$-ing, then you're not permitted to $\psi$.

But now we can go right back to our toy inquiries to find friction between $Z$ and the P-norms. If you ought to turn the page to 'bear' at $t$ then you're not permitted to do something incompatible with that at $t$, and so not permitted to come to know all of those things about caterpillars at $t$; and if you ought to do your bill calculations now then you're not permitted to come to know all about the conversation at the next table; and if you ought to pay attention to the witness and write down what they say then you're not permitted to spend that time memorizing the colours of all the cars passing by; and so on. In all of these cases we have $Z$ declaring some judgments impermissible. But those zetetically impermissible judgments would be based in excellent evidence and result in your knowing more. From the perspective of the P-norms, making those judgments is perfectly epistemically permissible. As before, we'll be able to find tension like this in most any inquiry: there will typically be some epistemically impeccable judgments that it won't be permissible to make from the perspective of one's inquiry.

One might wonder just how significant this tension is though. The P-norms permit us to make all sorts of judgments that the norms of inquiry declare impermissible. This isn't the sort of dilemma that we had in the last section. Crucially, while a rational inquirer cannot avoid violating the O-norms, they can avoid violating the P-norms. If you do your bill calculations and ignore the conversation at the next table, you'll be violating the O-norms, but you won't be violating the P-norms.

Is this really a tension then? I may be morally permitted to cross the street on a red light, but legally I am not. If I just wait at the corner until the light changes I won't have done anything immoral or illegal. Is there a tension between moral norms and legal norms given cases like this though? In a sense: one set of norms declares some action impermissible that the other declares permissible. Crucially though, this “tension” might not be particularly worrying given that there's a path forward that avoids violation.

But it's not clear to me that we should be thinking of the relationship between the epistemic and the zetetic on the model of that of the moral and the legal. There's a question that's been looming since the beginning of this pa-
per about the extent to which we can think of the epistemic and the zetetic as properly distinct “domains” of normativity. And this question seems important right now. Let’s say these aren’t distinct normative domains at all: let’s say that all epistemic norms are norms of inquiry and all the norms of inquiry are epistemic norms. If the epistemic and the zetetic are unified in this way and we assume that the P-norms are genuine epistemic norms (i.e., not just in CE but in E), then the tension being pointed to in this section is not a tension between two separate domains of normativity, but something more like an inconsistency or incoherence in a single domain, i.e., the norms of inquiry/epistemology declare some judgments both permissible and impermissible. This strikes me as a fairly troubling result. So something now hangs on the relationship between the epistemic and the zetetic. Should we think of these as distinct normative domains or not?

THE EPISTEMIC AND THE ZETETIC

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 in general all epistemic norms are norms of inquiry and all norms of inquiry are epistemic. In this section I want to make a case for the unity of the epistemic and the zetetic.

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. 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: (a) that epistemic norms are norms of inquiry and (b) that norms of inquiry are epistemic. This will make something of a case for the thought that Z = E, or at least for the thought that there is significant overlap between these two sets of norms. That will make it harder to think of the epistemic and zetetic as radically different in kind and, as a result, will make the tension between Z and the P-norms more problematic.

First, on (a). As I said at the very start of the paper, it’s very natural to think of epistemic norms as norms of inquiry. The alternative is to say that epistemic

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30 For some recent debate about the matter, see Cohen (2016b) and responses.
norms aren't norms that bind us qua inquirers. But isn't that exactly the point of epistemology? Or if not exactly the point, at least part of the point? Isn't it at least part of the business of normative epistemology to tell us about how we should conduct ourselves in inquiry, how we ought to go about properly acquiring and managing information? I've tried to get clear on a few key norms of inquiry and have argued that those norms are in tension with the epistemic norms we tend to focus on these days. But that doesn't on its own show or imply that epistemic norms aren't norms of inquiry (although it may well show or imply that we don't have a completely coherent account of how rational inquiry ought to proceed). 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). Should we think of ZIP and RES as epistemic norms? Certainly, we can form beliefs in violation of those norms and still end up with knowledge. I don't know that this is much evidence that they aren't epistemic though. I can fail epistemically in all sorts of ways and end up with knowledge, e.g., reason hastily, be closed-minded, etc. But norms that tell us to be epistemically virtuous in those sorts of ways are epistemic norms.\footnote{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.}

The sorts of considerations our zetetic norms circle around – considerations about how we should inquire – are highly relevant to whether a subject will come to know the answer to their focal question though, and not merely in some superficial sense. Norms like ZIP and RES assess a subject's judgments, beliefs, and knowledge (among other things) according to how well they serve their ends in inquiry. These ends are epistemic, and zetetic norms tell inquirers what to do given that they are in pursuit of these epistemic ends; they are norms that tell inquirers what to do if they want to get closer to knowing than they are. There is obviously good reason to think of norms like this as epistemic, even if they aren't our familiar sorts of epistemic norms. They are the sorts of norms that a rational subject trying to move themselves from ignorance to knowledge on some matter will conform to.

Moreover, this less restrictive conception of the epistemic is generally at-
tractive. First, if we conceive of the epistemic too narrowly, then we risk leaving key parts of a theory of inquiry outside of the purview of epistemology. While nothing needs to be wrong with splitting the work here, it's natural to think that we could look to epistemology to provide us with the rules of inquiry: as I just said, inquirers are subjects in pursuit of epistemic ends. Second, and more substantively, contemporary normative epistemology is somewhat myopic. Those epistemic norms tell subjects how to be doxastically at a time – how various aspects of their doxastic lives ought to be arranged; they also tell subjects what they should do with new information when it happens to come in – how their existing doxastic state should accommodate that new information. At their most demanding, these norms press subjects to expand on the knowledge they already have – they demand subjects make new judgments given the new evidence they get or that their beliefs be closed under various logical operations. While these sorts of epistemic norms tell subjects what to do with information when it happens to come in, they are silent on what new information should come in, whether that's the sort of information subjects should be seeking out, how subjects should get the sort of information they need, and more. These questions don't feel obviously different in kind from the more traditional sorts of epistemic questions.

I take it that the feeling that epistemology should be able to tell us how to proceed when we want certain kinds of information and not just how to deal with what happens to come our way is not misplaced. The zetetic norms I've been thinking about in this paper are part of that sort of project and so thinking of them as epistemic is not misplaced either. This is all to say that I think there's a good case for thinking of our zetetic norms as epistemic: they are norms regulating our pursuit of knowledge.

Altogether I think these considerations mean that we cannot think of the epistemic and the zetetic as too deeply distinct. Epistemic norms seem to be norms of inquiry and zetetic norms are norms that bind us in our knowledge acquisition efforts. Whatever names we give these different norms, it looks as though they are closely connected. This makes a case for the claim that $Z = E$. But with that, the tension between $Z$ and the $P$-norms is more troubling.

32In 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.
Assume $Z = E$. Let’s say that a set of norms is ‘fully consistent’ if there is no case in which it renders contradictory normative verdicts, e.g., that $S$ is permitted to $\phi$ at $t$ and that $S$ is not permitted to $\phi$ at $t$. And we can say that a set of norms is ‘fully inconsistent’ if it renders contradictory verdicts in every case. $Z/E$ is not fully inconsistent, but it is fairly far away from being fully consistent as well. It is regularly going to be the case that $Z/E$ declares making some judgments both permissible and impermissible. There will be judgments that have this property according to $Z/E$ at most times during most inquiries. So, given the close relationship between the epistemic and the zetetic, the tension between $Z$ and the $P$-norms is fairly pronounced.\footnote{Moreover, $Z/E$ is not to be thought of as any old set of norms, rather it’s meant to be a special set of norms: one we can think of as articulating (or maybe just being) a domain of normativity, like morality or the law. How inconsistent can a normative domain get? I don’t have a worked out theory here, but I am assuming that the further away from full consistency some set of norms is, the more we should worry about whether it’s a genuine domain of normativity. Sets of norms that articulate genuine normative domains should be close to fully consistent. I’ll say a bit more about normative consistency in section 5.}

4 Z AND EPISTEMIC STATE-NORMS

So far I’ve been investigating the interaction between the norms of inquiry and epistemic act-norms, but I want to say something about the interaction between the norms of inquiry and epistemic state-norms as well, e.g., epistemic norms that range over belief states, rather than acts of belief formation.

In addition to the epistemic norms we thought about in the last section, the following norms are also going to be in $CE$:

- **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 $t$.

Contemporary epistemology consists in norms like this as well as the sorts of act-focused norms we’ve been thinking about so far. Notice though, that, at
least in the first instance, there is not the same sort of conflict between norms like ZIP and RES and these state-focused epistemic norms (I’m going to call these ‘s-norms’ in what follows). These s-norms make no claims about the permissibility or obligatoriness of judging or coming to know, but only about the permissibility and obligatoriness of having certain beliefs and of having knowledge. The norms in Z we’ve been thinking about range over acts (in the first instance) while the s-norms range over states (in the first instance), and so we just don’t have the same sort of tension I’ve been exploring so far.

It’s not clear to me what the significance of this should be though. We do, after all, have direct conflict between Z and other central epistemic norms. Moreover, the fact that there is no direct or immediate tension between the s-norms and norms like ZIP and RES, doesn’t mean there’s no tension.

First, we should expect that the epistemic act-norms we thought about in the previous section (let’s call these the ‘a-norms’) and the s-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, the fact that one has 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 RES on the one hand and the s-norms on the other, 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.\textsuperscript{34}

Part of what’s meant to be worrying about the conflicts I brought out in the last section is that they dash our hope that epistemic and zetetic normative verdicts would largely align. But the normative verdicts issued by Z on the one hand and the s-norms on the other are also fairly incongruous.

Going back to our toy inquiries again, it looks as though it will regularly be the case that having some belief is perfectly permissible from the perspective of

\textsuperscript{34}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.
the s-norms, but making the judgment one would need to make to get into that belief state is impermissible from the perspective of Z. For instance, according to the s-norms it’s epistemically permissible for you to have those caterpillar beliefs at the relevant time in the course of your bear inquiry, but according to Z you’re not permitted to form those beliefs at that time. So according to the s-norms you’re allowed to have a belief that according to Z you’re not allowed to come to have. While there may be no act that’s both permissible and not now, this is at least an uncomfortable set of normative verdicts. And as before, these sorts of conflicts are going to be entirely commonplace.

One thing this tells us is that we really cannot read the norms of inquiry off of the s-norms: that having some belief is permissible (or justified or warranted or required) according to our familiar epistemic state-norms tells us very little about whether making the judgment that will get you to that belief is permissible from the perspective of your inquiry. That makes for a fairly serious normative gulf between the s-norms and the norms of inquiry.

And if we think that norms like EO\textsubscript{s} and KO\textsubscript{s} are genuine epistemic norms, then there will be all sorts of cases in which inquirers are required to have some belief according to the s-norms, but the norms of inquiry bar them from forming that belief. In these sorts of cases epistemology will demand we be in a state that our inquiries don’t even permit us (never mind require us) to get into. Given this, even if there is no “direct” conflict between Z and the s-norms, it looks as though conforming to norms like ZIP and RES can mean violating even s-norms like EO\textsubscript{s} and KO\textsubscript{s}.

In sum, while the relationship between the s-norms and Z might not be quite as fraught as the relationship between Z and the a-norms, these sets of norms are not operating harmoniously either\[35\]

5 GOING FORWARD

On the assumption that we’ll want to do something in response to the sorts of tensions between the epistemic and the zetetic that I’ve been illustrating, what should that something be? In this section I want to think a bit about the option

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\[35\] And as before, the closer the epistemic and the zetetic get, the worse these tensions are. If all the norms under discussion now are of the same kind then we’ll regularly have zetetic/epistemic norms telling us (say) that we must be in some state but that we must not get into that state; or that it’s perfectly permissible to be in some state, but impermissible to get into that state.
space, and at least record my own feelings about how to move forward.

One reaction I've had to these arguments is to insist that we just need to reject the various epistemic O-norms discussed. This tack means denying that the O-norms are genuine epistemic norms (denying that they are in $E$). What will normative epistemology look like without the O-norms? There are all sorts of options, but a picture that some have endorsed leaves the P-norms in place (in $E$). This leaves us with what I'll call an 'options-centric' normative epistemology. According to an options-centric epistemology, if you're in a position to come to know $p$ at $t$, then doing so is 'optional': it's permissible to come to know $p$ at $t$, but it's also permissible to not come to know $p$ at $t$ (no requirement either way). And analogously for following your excellent evidence. On this sort of picture, the O-norms are not in $E$, but the P-norms are. And it's easy to see the appeal of this sort of move: by making it we can avoid zetetic dilemmas leaving it, at least given just the considerations adduced here, that rational inquirers need not violate the norms of epistemology.

But as I hope I've already made clear, there is still friction between an options-centric epistemology and the norms of inquiry. According to an options-centric $E$, coming to know will always be permissible, but according to $Z$, coming to know can easily be impermissible. In general, I don't think that we should be satisfied with the picture of either epistemic or zetetic normativity that we'd be left with were we to just drop the O-norms and call it a day. That's in part because unless we insisted on a strict divide between these two kinds of normativity, we'd be left with troubling inconsistency. But it's hard for me to give up the idea that, in general, epistemic norms are norms of inquiry or the idea that norms of inquiry are epistemic in some sense. Others may be more satisfied with a certain kind of division of normative labour here, but I am not.

36From here on in when I talk about the 'O-norms' I mean that to refer to all of the epistemic requirement norms I've discussed so far, i.e., both $s$-norms and $a$-norms. And the same goes (mutatis mutandis) for the referent of 'P-norms' from here on in.

37As I mentioned in fn 28, Nelson (2010) endorses what he calls a 'permissivist epistemology', which is more or less the options-centric picture I'm describing: there are epistemic permissions to believe, but no epistemic requirements to believe. Cohen (2016a) and Dogramaci (2018) also endorse something like an options-centric epistemology, although they add to their versions in an important way: they claim that attention or interest can convert epistemic options into epistemic requirements. For instance, Cohen says, “One is required to believe $p$ if one is rationally permitted to believe $p$ on the basis of one's evidence, and one is considering whether $p$” (Cohen (2016a), 435).

38We might find one example of a division of labour like this in Kelly (2003). There Kelly argues
What can we do if we want to say that \( Z = E \) (or at least that the epistemic and the zetetic are closely connected)? We can assume that we’ll have to jettison the O-norms. But what more will we have to do? At least one of the following claims will have to be rejected: (a) \( Z/E \) is (largely) consistent; (b) the P-norms are genuine epistemic norms; (c) ZIP and RES are genuine norms of inquiry.

I wish I could say that I had a tidy path for reconciliation mapped out. Unfortunately, I do not. All paths leave something (and maybe many things) to be desired. I’m inclined to take the path that rejects just (b), although not without reservations. Rejecting (b) means turning away from some fairly core commitments of our current vision of normative epistemology, so let me explore the various paths a bit and say something about why this seems to be the best landing spot.

On rejecting (c). Can we deny that ZIP and RES are norms of inquiry? I’m just going to focus on ZIP here since it’s doing most of the work. I don’t see how to deny that there is some ZIP-like norm at work in inquiry. Recall, we got ZIP from two simple and compelling thoughts: that inquiry is a goal-directed activity and that goal-directed activities are bound by instrumental norms. Of course, ZIP itself is my specific articulation of an inquiry-theoretic instrumental principle. That said, I don’t think that the specifics of ZIP are much to blame for the tension that’s emerged.

As I’ve already pointed out, while ZIP is an optimizing norm, that feature of the norm is not essential to getting the sorts of tensions I’ve been bringing out. The actions performed over the course of the toy inquiries I’ve been discussing – listening to the conversation at the next table, learning about caterpillars or about your neighbours’ furniture – need not be means to your ends at all. But this means that even a very weak instrumental principle, one too weak to be plausible even, will generate the tensions. ZIP’s push to optimize is not the culprit here.\(^{39}\)

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\(^{39}\)It’s also worth saying that “subjectivizing” ZIP won’t help either. If ZIP said (e.g.) that inquirers should take what they think is the best means to their zetetic 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...
Early on I assumed that ZIP was 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 best means to resolving your inquiry or don’t be inquiring. When we think of ZIP this way it’s not obviously in tension in the same sorts of ways with our familiar epistemic norms since it doesn’t say straightforwardly that you should take the best means to resolving your inquiries. That said, I don’t think there is much relief along this path either.

If ZIP were a wide-scope norm then there would be cases in which, according to our epistemic norms, making some judgment $j$ was permissible, but according to ZIP it was impermissible to both be inquiring into 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. When one is inquiring into some question one can do what’s epistemically permissible and not violate any zetetic norms now by giving up on one’s inquiry. This hardly seems like a like a reason to be sanguine: we can avoid friction between the epistemic and the zetetic now so long as we don’t inquire.

Moreover, what should the wide-scoper say about cases in which subjects have excellent reason to inquire or in which subjects ought to be inquiring into some questions? Plausibly in these sorts of cases the relevant requirements “detach” – these subjects ought (full-stop) take the best means to their zetetic ends. And, again, this gets us right back into trouble. 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.\footnote{One last observation on the matter. If we assume a wide-scope ZIP, then the cases we’ve been thinking about all along are cases in which it is not permissible to both be inquiring into some question and make some judgments. But from the perspective of our epistemic norms, this combination looks perfectly permissible.}

On rejecting (a) and normative consistency. A set of norms that has ZIP, RES, and the P-norms as members is going to regularly make it both epistemically permissible and epistemically impermissible to judge $p$ at $t$. Perhaps someone with a different sort of meta-epistemic or meta-normative picture than mine about means and ends play a much more significant role in determining what they are required to do and prohibited from doing over the course of their inquiries.
has the stomach for this vision of normative epistemology and domains of normativity in general, but I do not. The result here isn't that there may be some epistemic dilemmas: maybe some strange fringe case in which we (say) epistemically ought to believe \( p \) and also ought not to believe \( p \). The result here is that epistemic normativity is inconsistent not just at the fringes, but virtually everywhere and always for a typical inquiring subject.

So we are left with the option of sending off the P-norms along with their O-norm counterparts (i.e., rejecting (b)). As I said earlier in the paper, these norms are so central to normative epistemology as we know it that rejecting them should force a fairly significant re-think of our current understanding of the epistemic. If we insist that the P-norms are not in \( E \), then we will have to say that it is not the case that subjects are always epistemically permitted to believe what they have excellent evidence for; nor would it always be epistemically permissible to come to know whatever one was in a position to.

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 here. For instance, do we want to maintain that there are epistemic constraints against, say judging \( p \) when one’s evidence for \( p \) is terrible? If so we’ll need to be careful: in order to avoid inconsistency, the absence of such a constraint at a time cannot entail an epistemic permission. This means that we’ll be left with cases in which there is no epistemic constraint against coming to know \( p \) at \( t \), but in which it’s also not epistemically permissible to come to know \( p \) at \( t \). Moreover, it’s fairly natural to cash out constraints against believing \( p \) at \( t \) in terms of the impermissibility of believing \( p \) at \( t \). But if that’s right then according to this picture believing \( p \) can easily be impermissible but it can never be permissible; and the fact that believing \( p \) is not impermissible never means it’s permissible. This is obviously not an entirely comfortable set of normative commitments.\(^{41}\)

More pressing is what to say about epistemic justification (and reasons, and warrant). Say we want to maintain our familiar notion of epistemic justification. If we deny that the P-norms are genuine norms, then we will have to say

\(^{41}\)If we say that there are epistemic constraints against believing but no epistemic permissions to believe then we have to endorse a position according to which normative epistemology is “gappy”, i.e., according to which there are some judgments or beliefs that are not epistemically prohibited, but not epistemically permissible either. See von Wright (1991) for some discussion of these sorts of normative gaps.
that there are no cases in which S is justified in believing \( p \) but so believing was epistemically permissible; and that there are no cases in which S knows \( p \), but that knowing or their coming to know is or was epistemically permissible. Of course this isn't because knowing or justifiably believing is always epistemically impermissible, but because these things are neither epistemically permissible nor impermissible. Still, can \( \phi \)-ing really be justified but not permissible?

While there are clearly details to be worked on the path that rejects not only the O-norms but the P-norms, and some difficult decisions to be made, I feel the most hopeful about this path. This is largely because although it's revisionary, those revisions are theoretically well-motivated and help to ground epistemic normativity in a satisfying way. One way to think of what's been revealed at this point is that all of 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.

There is much more to say about all of the various paths forward than I can here. I hope this gives at least a sense of where they might lead though, and in particular what will have to be given up or revised along the way.

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 I think that we have good reason for thinking 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.
As I’ve tried to bring out, I think many of the paths forward are somewhat bumpy. And I think there is much more to say about those various paths than space allows me to say here. But I hope to have made a start at least. To my mind a few things are clear: the epistemic and the zetetic are very closely connected and inquiry is a goal-directed 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. How would the case for such a separation go? And if epistemic norms are not norms of inquiry then what are they, and why should we conform to them?\footnote{Thanks very much to: Dave Chalmers, Daniela Dover, Katie Elliott, Josh Habgood-Coote, Harvey Lederman, Eric Mandelbaum, Jessie Munton, Susanna Siegel, Amia Srinivasan, Sam Scheffler, Stephen Schiffer, Michael Stevens, Crispin Wright, and two anonymous referees. Thanks also to audiences at: the Sedona Workshop on Pragmatic Encroachment, the NYU Mind & Language Seminar, Princeton University, Harvard University, UC Berkeley, the CUNY Grad Center, and the Northwestern Epistemology Graduate Conference.}
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