THE EPISTEMIC AND THE ZETETIC

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DRAFT. COMMENTS VERY MUCH APPRECIATED! †

0 INTRODUCTION

We are inquirers. Not just qua philosophers but qua humans and even qua animals. We are subjects in pursuit of knowledge, 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. Here's a simple and plausible hypothesis: our traditional epistemic norms are zetetic norms. While the zetetic may extended beyond the traditionally epistemic, those traditionally epistemic norms are norms of inquiry. Aren't they?

In this paper I want to make some trouble for this simple and plausible hypothesis. In general, I don't think that the relationship between the epistemic and the zetetic is at all straightforward. Like many close relationships it looks somewhat fraught, in fact. In particular I'll argue that traditionally epistemic norms are often in tension and even regularly conflict with some central zetetic norms.

Before we get to the main line of argument, here are some cases to warm the reader up to some tension between the epistemic and the zetetic. I think it's not hard, for example, to imagine cases in which resolving our inquiry demands we

†Please ask if you want to cite it though.
make a false or unjustified judgment. Say the detective wants to figure out who committed some murder, but knows she’ll be too distracted to succeed if she believed that her partner was stealing money from the boss. All the evidence says her partner is crooked. Nonetheless, plausibly, believing that he’s not stealing is the thing to do if she wants to figure out who committed that murder. Or say you want to know whether you can believe something completely unreasonable. Perhaps the best way to resolve your inquiry in this case then is to make a completely unreasonable judgment. Inquiry can also demand that we resist the demands of epistemology. For instance, all the evidence suggests you won’t solve the mind-body problem, but if that’s what you’re working on then plausibly your inquiry demands you don’t believe you won’t succeed.

I think these are all interesting cases; we’d obviously need to do more work to really make them stick. They feel a bit finicky to me though – in some strange sorts of circumstances we can get the epistemic and the zetetic to come into conflict. I don’t think we need to look to strange cases like these to see the tension between the epistemic and the zetetic though. My plan is to look to completely typical sorts of inquirers in completely typical sorts of situations. My thought is that in these types of cases our traditional 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. We don’t need fanciful cases to get there, everyday cases of inquiry will do.

To draw this out I want to start by picking out what seem to me some central zetetic norms. And with those in place I’ll be able to carefully bring out the tension between those norms and some of our familiar epistemic norms.

1 SOME KEY ZETETIC NORMS

In this section I want to suggest some key norms of inquiry. I’ll start by isolating what I take to be an absolutely central zetetic norm and then I’ll highlight some secondary “sub-norms” of that central norm.

We can give voice to the central zetetic 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 bound by instrumental norms. Roughly, a subject pursuing some end ought, other things equal, take the best means to that end.¹

From these two thoughts we get the further one that inquiries are bound by an instrumental norm. Let me make a couple of comments about (i) and (ii) before getting to the specific instrumental norm of inquiry. (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: inquiry has an aim where that aim is to get into some sort of doxastic or epistemic state appropriately related to the topic of inquiry. 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 moreover I'll also assume that what we aim to know is the answer to a question. In inquiry we ask and try to answer questions. 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 answer to \( Q \). In inquiry we aim to come to know the answers to questions. Or another way to say this: in inquiry we aim to resolve questions (where resolving is a matter of coming to know the answer).

My thought about (ii) is that there is a type of norm that governs all goal-directed activities: an instrumental norm that says broadly that a subject in pursuit of an end ought, other things equal, to take the means to their end. I'll flesh this out a bit more once our central zetetic norm is on the table.

¹Or a means as good as any other. I'm going to mostly talk about the 'best' means although of course I want to allow that ties are possible.
What should this instrumental norm on inquiry look like? Here is my suggestion:

**Zetetic Instrumental Principle (ZIP)** If one is inquiring into $Q^2$ at $t$ and actively focused on resolving $Q^2$ at $t$, then, other things equal, one ought to take the best means available to resolving $Q^2$ at $t$.

Let me make a few comments about ZIP. First, it demands that inquirers optimize with respect to the means they take in pursuit of the knowledge they’re after: they shouldn't merely take some available means, but they should take the best of the available means. I think this is the right way to think about the normative demands that are central to goal pursuit generally. But I want to point out quickly – and I'll comment on this again later – that the arguments to come don't require this demand to optimize. The arguments I make are tidiest with the demand in place, but versions of them can 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).

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 or has reason to think 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, a “wide-scope” ZIP says roughly that one ought to either take the best means to resolving $Q^2$ at $t$ or not be actively investigating $Q^2$ at $t$, while a “narrow-scope” ZIP says that one ought to take the best means to resolving $Q^2$ (when one is actively investigating). 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.\(^2\) 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.

\(^2\)See Way (2010) for a good overview of the debate in the practical case.
Finally, let me say something about ‘actively focused’. I take it that we can engage in long-term inquiries and during those long-term inquiries there will be periods of time during which we are engaged in other activities and without any irrationality. The detective might inquire into who committed the crime over months, but she surely will not be working to resolve her focal question during every minute of every day during those months. When she’s not actively working on the question it still seems right to say that her inquiry is ongoing and for her to report that she’s currently inquiring into who committed the crime. But it’s also perfectly permissible during this extended period of time for her to not take the best means to resolving the question of who committed the crime whenever she acts. This is to say that it’s not quite right that one should take the best available means to resolving \( Q^7 \) at any time during which one is inquiring into \( Q^7 \). It is only when \( Q^7 \) is an object of active investigation – when one is actively working on resolving \( Q^7 \) – that one ought to (other things equal) take the best available means to resolving \( Q^7 \). I’ll say more about active inquiry as we go.

To really get at the tension between the epistemic and the zetetic, I want to think about some “sub-norms” of ZIP – norms that follow from ZIP or at least follow with some additional plausible premises.

ZIP demands that we perform certain actions in certain circumstances. I take it that those can be bodily or mental actions. 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 (I’m assuming here and throughout that there is nothing more or less to judging than coming to believe).

Let’s call a judgment that resolves a question a ‘resolving judgment’. Since making a resolving judgment means coming to know something, we need to be in the right sorts of epistemic circumstances to make a resolving judgment. I think we should say that if someone actively inquiring into \( Q^7 \) at \( t \) is in the position to make a resolving judgment with respect to \( Q^7 \) at \( t \) then that’s the available action that is the best means to their end of resolving \( Q^7 \) at \( t \), and so that’s the thing they ought to do at \( t \). And so we have the following zetetic
norm:

**Resolve! (RES)** If one is actively focused on resolving \( Q \) at \( t \), then if a judgment \( j \) that resolves \( Q \) at \( t \) is an available judgment at \( t \), then (other things equal) one ought to make \( j \) at \( t \).

RES says that if you're actively investigating and are in the position to close your inquiry you ought to close. To get a grip on RES at work let's imagine you're inquiring into how many stripes the average zebra has \( (Z) \). Say you do a Google search about zebra stripes. The answer is on the screen with the other search results. RES says that you ought to come to know \( Z \) at this point in your inquiry. I hope this is a plausible result. Of course there are other things you could do at that time instead of coming to know \( Z \): you could make some other judgments instead, e.g., about the colours of the results, or you could get up and walk away making no judgment. RES tells you that you should resolve, and so given RES you shouldn't do these other things instead.\(^3\)

Or to take another example, say you want to know whether your neighbours' kids are home \( (H) \), 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 the position to come to know (by inference) that their kids are home. RES says that at that time you ought to make that judgment, you ought to come to know \( H \). Again, there are other things you could do at that time, but plausibly if you're actively aiming to resolve then you ought to draw the relevant inference when you're in the position to.

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\(^3\)The ‘instead’ here is important. Perhaps you can come to know \( Z \) and something about the colour of the results at the same time. I take it that RES doesn't mind if you do that. RES says that whatever else you do at the time you ought to come to know \( Z \). It's not coming to know \( Z \) and so doing things instead of that that RES prohibits.

\(^4\)Here and throughout I assume that if one ought to \( \varphi \) then one is not permitted to not \( \varphi \) or alternatively that one is prohibited from not \( \varphi \)-ing. This is (part of) the thought that 'ought' and 'permit' are duals. This assumption is fairly widely made although not entirely uncontroversial. I don't think too much hangs on the assumption though. 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 slightly less straightforward, don't seem less plausible to me.
If one ought to take the best available means to one's end in inquiry (i.e., if ZIP is true), then if resolving judgments – when available – are the best available means to one's ends in inquiry, then we ought to resolve when we're in the position to. ZIP plus the claim that when available a resolving judgment is the best available means to one's end in inquiry gets us to RES.

Here's another close relative of ZIP that I want to think about:

**Take a means! (MEANS)** If one is actively focused on resolving $Q^?$ at $t$ and one has the option of taking a means to resolving $Q^?$, then one ought (other things equal) to take some means resolving $Q^?$ at $t$ (rather than a non-means).

MEANS can be thought of as a weaker version of ZIP, one that demands only that inquirers take some available means rather than the best available means.

RES and MEANS can be thought of as extensions of ZIP. But they'll do important work for us in a moment. For now, let's put all of the norms from this section, ZIP included, into a set, $Z$. $Z$, and its primary norm ZIP, is a key set of zetetic norms. In the next section I want to think more about how $Z$ fits into traditional epistemology and bring out the normative tension between $Z$ and traditional epistemic norms.

Before that though I want to think briefly about what “kind” of norms the norms in $Z$ are. We know they’re zetetic norms, but should we also be thinking of them as epistemic or practical or something else? In one sense they are obviously practical – they range over actions. Are they practical in some other, deeper sense, one that’s in contrast to their being epistemic, for instance? I'll take up this question in more detail in a later section, but it's worth pointing out already that the mere fact that they are instrumental norms doesn't settle whether they are (say) practical or epistemic.

There are familiar cases in which the practical and the epistemic collide. I want to believe that everyone in the world is kind, but my evidence tells me otherwise. Here my practical goals pull me in one doxastic direction and epistemology in another. If I believe I won't win the match chances are I won't. But if all the evidence points to my losing, then again the practical and the epistemic can seem to be at odds. These sorts of cases have zetetic analogues (some of
these went by briefly in the introduction). The cases to come are not like these though. So even if we think that the norms in $Z$ are practical, the tension to come is not our familiar tension between the practical and the epistemic.

2 Z AND JUDGMENT-FOCUSED EPISTEMIC NORMS

There’s an important choice point now. Notice, the zetetic norms in $Z$ aren’t, in the first instance, aimed at states of belief but instead speak to inquirers’ actions including their judgments or acts of belief formation. Do traditional epistemic norms speak to our judgments? While I think they typically focus on our belief states rather than our acts of belief formation, they seem to me to range over our judgments as well. I take it that most will want to say that traditional epistemology says that coming to believe $p$ based on strong evidence for $p$ is perfectly permissible, and maybe even required, and that judging $p$ without evidence for $p$ is impermissible. For now then let’s say that traditional epistemology deals in these sorts of judgment-focused norms. In the next section I’ll think about the interaction between the epistemic and the zetetic if we don’t think that traditional epistemology speaks to our judgments.

Let’s say that $E$ is the set of traditional epistemic norms. On the assumption that $E$ speaks to our judgments what sorts of judgment-focused norms are in $E$? Here are some central candidates:

**EP**$_j$ If one’s evidence $e$ clearly and decisively supports $p$ at $t$ then one is permitted to judge $p$ based on $e$ at $t$.\(^5\)

**EO**$_j$ If one’s evidence $e$ clearly and decisively supports $p$ at $t$ then one ought to judge $p$ based on $e$ at $t$.

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

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\(^5\)On ‘clearly and decisively’. The thought here is that $e$ itself should be secure, perhaps known or something on analogously epistemically stable footing, and this should be clear to the subject. $e$ should also decisively support $p$, and this too should be clear to the subject. Of course believing may be permissible given much worse evidential circumstances as well, but the idea here is to get a largely uncontroversial version of this sort of key evidentialist norm.
KO\textsubscript{j} If one is in the 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. The first two of these norms are versions of evidentialist norms for judgments. The last two norms might be slightly less familiar, but I think they too are can be thought central to traditional normative epistemology. Perhaps they can be thought of as growing out of the following sorts of thoughts about epistemic normativity: first, if one's \( p \)-judgment results in knowledge then that judgment was epistemically impeccable and second, epistemic subjects are subjects in pursuit of knowledge.

I myself am very comfortable thinking of the merely permissive norms – \( \text{EP}_j \) and \( \text{KP}_j \) – as in \( E \), but less comfortable with the requirement norms. While I know that many will want to endorse norms that say that we should or must believe everything our evidence clearly and decisively supports or know everything we're in the position to know, I find that thought somewhat difficult to square with some of our basic evaluative practices.

We are typically in the position to know quite a lot. We are presented with a great deal of information in visual perception and it is rare that a subject's beliefs are deductively or inductively closed. That is, subjects can typically extend their knowledge by drawing inferences (deductive or inductive) from things they already know, or by coming to believe the various details of the perceptual scenes before them. We usually don't come to know all we're in the position to know at a time though. We fail to record the details of the scenes before our eyes – where things were placed exactly, how many of them there were, what colours the various items were, and so on. And we don't usually spend our time extending our current informational holdings as far as they can go by drawing further and further inferences. But it's not just that we regularly leave information on the table when it's easily available to us, but that we don't think there's anything epistemically untoward about this. It's not that I ought to spend my time extending my knowledge or memorizing all the details of the scenes before me, rather it seems perfectly epistemically acceptable to not do those things. We don't fault the subject who doesn't do those things in the least; it's perfectly normal and acceptable epistemic behaviour.
Still, we might think of norms like EO\textsubscript{j} and KO\textsubscript{j} as stating some ideal. We don’t fault subjects like us for failing to live up to them, but perhaps we do think of them as setting some sort of epistemic standard that, all things considered, it would be better to live up to. Perhaps this is a plausible thought, but I’m not sure that it’s right. Nonetheless, what I want to do now is think about how Z interacts with a merely permissive E and then I’ll think about how it interacts with a demanding E that has EO\textsubscript{j} and KO\textsubscript{j} setting some ideal standard.

2.1 Z AND A MERELY PERMISSIVE E

Let’s say then that a ‘merely permissive’ E contains EP\textsubscript{j} and KP\textsubscript{j} but doesn’t contain norms like EO\textsubscript{j} and KO\textsubscript{j}. I think there’s a tension between Z and a merely permissive E. Let’s say that two sets of norms conflict if there are cases in which they issue competing verdicts. One way they can issue competing normative verdicts is if one says that \( \varphi \)-ing is permissible and the other says that \( \varphi \)-ing is impermissible (another is if one says that \( \varphi \)-ing is required and the other says that \( \varphi \)-ing is impermissible). If E is merely permissive then E and Z conflict.

We can see this with either of RES or MEANS. Take RES. Say you are inquiring into \( H^2 \) – 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 your neighbours are home then their kids are home, you’re now in the position to come to know the answer to your question. RES says that you ought to make that inference and come to know \( H^2 \). But at the time that you’re poised to make that inference you are in the 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, e.g., that they have a Barcelona chair. Moreover, there are plenty of other inferences you could draw at that time from other things that you know, e.g., how many apples you ate or hours of sleep you got last week. These are all things you’re in the position to know at the time at which you’re poised to infer \( h \) and resolve \( H^2 \).

RES says you must come to know at least \( h \) at that time. As it stands it’s
neutral on whether you may come to know more than \( h \) – it doesn't demand it but doesn't prohibit it either. You violate RES at the relevant time if you fail to come to know \( h \). One way you can do this is if you make a set of judgments at the relevant time where none is an \( h \)-judgment. That is, if you come to know all sorts of things about your neighbours’ furniture, without also judging and coming to know \( h \), you've violated RES. But coming to know just those things about your neighbours’ furniture looks perfectly permissible from the perspective of a permissive E. Let me draw this out.

Let’s say that \( K \) is the set of all of the propositions you're in the position to know at the time at which you’re in the position to close \( H \). For any \( p \) in \( K \), \( EP_j \) and \( KP_j \) permit you to judge \( p \). Given that we're considering a merely permissive E now, while making those judgments is permissible from the perspective of E, it's not required. Given this I take it that E permits one to make the relevant judgments but also permits one not to. That’s to say, for any \( p \) in \( K \), judging \( p \) is permitted from the perspective of E, but so is failing to judge \( p \). But this also means that for any \( p \) in \( K \), just judging \( p \) (judging \( p \) and nothing else) is permissible from the perspective of a merely permissive E. If all of this is right though then we can see the conflict between E and Z. From the perspective of a merely permissive E it's perfectly permissible to just make judgments about the furniture in your neighbours' house at the relevant time, but from the perspective of our new zetetic norms, this is not permissible – RES says that whatever else you do you must judge \( h \). For instance, you violate RES if you just make the judgment that your neighbours have a Barcelona chair (\( b \)), but from the perspective of E just judging \( b \) is perfectly permissible. From the perspective of Z just judging \( b \) is not permissible but from the perspective of E that’s just fine. So we have Z and E rendering conflicting verdicts in these cases.²

We can see much the same with MEANS. Say you're inquiring into \( Z \) – how many stripes the average zebra has – and you start reading the encyclopedia from 'A' and learning about aardvarks. I take it that coming to know those

²Again, a duality assumption is doing some work here. Perhaps the clearest way for that to show itself is to assume that for each norm in Z, its “dual” is also in Z. For example not only is RES in Z, but so is a norm we can call RES-D. RES-D says roughly that if one is in the position to resolve a question that’s an object of active investigation then one is not permitted not to resolve. For what’s to come we can also assume that duals of ZIP and MEANS are in Z.
things about aardvarks is not a means to coming to know $Z^\ddagger$. Moreover, I take it that in this case you could take a means to resolving $Z^\ddagger$ at the time at which you are making those aardvark judgments, e.g., you could turn to 'zebra' in the book. Given that you are in the position to take a means to resolving $Z^\ddagger$ at the relevant time and you are actively investigating $Z^\ddagger$, MEANS says that you should take a means to resolving $Z^\ddagger$. But this means that you violate MEANS if you instead make some judgments about aardvarks. More generally then, from the perspective of $Z$ it's not permissible to make those judgments about aardvarks in this case. But those aardvark judgments can be epistemically flawless and so from the perspective of a permissive $E$ they are judgments it's perfectly permissible to make. So from the perspective of a permissive $E$ making those judgments is permissible but from the perspective of $Z$ it is prohibited. So again we can see that $E$ and $Z$ conflict.

My thought here is that at the relevant time you face a choice between making judgments about aardvarks and doing other things like turning the book to ‘zebra’. Even once you've looked at the section on aardvarks, learning what's on the page is an additional step. Making those judgments counts as a move you can make or fail to make at the relevant time in the course of your inquiry and so whether that move is the thing to do depends now on what else you could be doing at the time. In this case since you could turn to ‘zebra’ instead of learning about aardvarks – where the former is a means to your end and the latter is not – $Z$ says you shouldn't come to know those things about aardvarks.

There are ways of thinking about the cases I've just given such that you may not be doing anything wrong. For instance, say that you also care a great deal about your neighbours’ furniture or aardvarks. You also want to know more about those subject matters. And we can then imagine that once confronted with available information on these topics, you switch to actively inquiring into these matters. The cases that bring out the tension between the epistemic and the zetetic shouldn't be filled in this way though. Rather they should be cases in which you don't stop actively focusing on resolving $Z^\ddagger$ or $H^\ddagger$. It's from that perspective that the norms of inquiry bar you from making epistemically impeccable moves.\(^7\)

\(^7\)A complete picture of zetetic normativity would have to give us norms for switching between
I chose a few test inquires to bring out the tension between the epistemic and the zetetic. But I hope it's clear that these aren't special cases nor are they fringe cases. In general, the tension grows out of the fact that at a typical time a great deal of knowledge is available to us. A permissive E permits us to take as much of it as we'd like, but Z often bars us from coming to know a great deal of what's available to be known.8

2.2 Z AND A DEMANDING E

What if E demands more of us, i.e., what if EOj and KOj are in E (in addition to the permissive norms, say)? We are in a subtly but not radically different position given MEANS and RES.

The point in the previous section about the interaction between MEANS and EPj and KPj can be extended with only small changes. When you're reading about aardvarks a demanding E doesn't merely permit you do make all of those aardvark judgments but demands that you do. So now E demands you make some judgments and Z demands that you don't make those judgments, leaving inquirers in a dilemma. So we have a conflict between E and Z still, and one that seems worse than before even. Now we have epistemic norms demanding we make some judgments and zetetic norms demanding we not make those judgments.

The situation with RES is slightly different. Now E demands you come to know everything you're in the position to at a time. As I said this strikes me as an implausible normative demand, but perhaps we can think of it as an ideal to aspire to. Say again that your neighbours open the door and you come to know they're home. You're in the position to know your answer, h. But E now

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8Let me make good on some earlier promises here. Notice that the arguments in this section would hold with only small changes were ZIP and its relatives all “subjectivized” so that they said, e.g., make the judgment that you take to resolve your inquiry. In that case just making the other judgments would be impermissible. But those other judgments can be epistemically impeccable as before. Notice also that the demand to optimize in inquiry is not always necessary here. MEANS is a very weak norm that says only that one should take some means (rather than a non-means); it doesn't demand we take the best means, but it still can be used to bring out the tension between the epistemic and the zetetic. These thoughts apply to the arguments in the section to come as well.
demands that you come to know all that you can. This will include \( h \). \( Z \) also demands that you come to know \( h \) and so on that the epistemic and the zetetic agree now. Assuming that \( Z \) permits you to come to know whatever else you're in the position to come to know but also permits you to fail to come to know anything other than \( h \), we might still find something of a gap between the epistemic and the zetetic here, with \( E \) demanding you come to know everything in \( K \) and \( Z \) leaving it permissible to fail to come to know everything in \( K \) other than \( h \). This isn't much of a tension, but it shows that these still aren't perfectly in sync.

But I think there's more to say here about the interaction between a demanding \( E \) and RES. A demanding \( E \) insists we come to know everything we're in the position to at a time. In the cases in which inquirers are in the position to close, RES demands they do that. In theory then it is possible to do what both \( E \) and RES demand. In practice though it is less clear that we can satisfy both. In particular, the demand to come to know all we're in the position to seems like one we typically cannot meet. In coming to know some of what's available to us we'll have to ignore some as well. But RES (when it applies) demands we come to know some of the available information. Doing what RES demands then means that we'll have to ignore some of the information available to us. If this right then it looks as though, for subjects like us, doing what RES demands forces us to fail to come to know some of what we're in the position to come to know at the relevant time.

The thought now is that in many cases conforming to RES will mean ignoring some available information. So while we may not have the same sort of conflict between a demanding \( E \) and RES as we did with RES and a merely permissive \( E \), practically they pull in different directions. In particular, given our cognitive limitations, doing what RES demands will force us to violate some norms in \( E \) since it will force us to ignore some of the information available to us in many cases; for subjects like us, RES effectively demands we violate norms like \( EO_j \) and \( KO_j \). And it plausibly asks us to badly violate those norms. Given our cognitive limitations doesn't the best chance we have of succeeding in resolving our inquiries involve ignoring any information not relevant to those tasks? Doesn't expertise in one area often come at the cost of knowledge in
And things seem to me worse than this. If we think of norms like $EO_j$ and $KO_j$ as ideals then we should also want to be able to talk about how close or far epistemic subjects are from those ideals. That's to say, once we think of norms like these in ideal terms we should also want to say that the more one approximates the ideal the better. While we don't want to have to count propositions, this means that roughly, when it comes to $EO_j$ and $KO_j$, the more you know the better. When it comes to RES though there's only one kind of knowledge that matters – knowing the answer. But then take an inquirer into $H^7$ who came to know everything in $K$ other than $h$ at the relevant time. This person will have come to know a tremendous amount at that time – nearly all they can and so this subject would be nearly ideal from the perspective of a demanding $E$. But from the perspective of $Z$ this subject could be a complete failure – they failed to come to know the one thing their inquiry demanded they come to know. And the inquirer into $H^7$ who just came to know $h$ and ignored all of the other available information would be a complete zetetic success, but could be very far away from the epistemic ideal. So again, it looks as though a demanding $E$ and $Z$ are at still at odds normatively. An almost completely successful epistemic subject can be an utter failure zetetically and a completely successful inquirer can be mostly a failure epistemically.\(^9\)

### 3 Z AND STATE-FOCUSED EPISTEMIC NORMS

My claim in the last section was that $E$ contains some judgment norms – that traditional epistemic norms speak to our judgments. This is contestable. That is, some might argue that traditional epistemic norms are largely or even wholly state focused, that they only speak to our states of mind, and are mostly silent when it comes to the routes we take to those states. While this doesn’t seem right to me, it is certainly right that we are typically more focused on states than judgments in epistemology, and so it’s worth exploring how our zetetic norms

\(^9\)Kitcher (1990) might be thought of as making a case for the claim that a good scientific inquirer should sometimes violate the norms of epistemology. His cases isn’t quite like mine, but nonetheless might give us even more reason for thinking that the epistemic and the zetetic are going to come apart in key ways.
sit with these sorts of state-focused norms. On this way of thinking about E, it
doesn’t contain norms like EP and EO, but norms like this instead:

\[ \text{EP}_b \text{ If one’s evidence } e \text{ clearly and decisively supports } p \text{ at } t \text{ then one is permitted to have a } p\text{-belief at } t \text{ (based on } e). \]

\[ \text{EO}_b \text{ If one’s evidence } e \text{ clearly and decisively supports } p \text{ at } t \text{ then one ought to have a } p\text{-belief at } t \text{ (based on } e). \]

\[ \text{KP}_b \text{ If one is in the position to know } p \text{ at } t \text{, then one is permitted to know } p \text{ at } t. \]

\[ \text{KO}_b \text{ If one is in the position to know } p \text{ at } t \text{, then one ought to know } p \text{ at } t. \]

These norms, at least in the first instance, make no claims about the per-
missibility or obligatoriness of judging or coming to know, but only about the per-
missibility and obligatoriness of believing or knowing. So far we don’t have
the same conflict we had in the last section then. Say our inquirer recognizes
their clear and decisive evidence that aardvarks eat ants and comes to know
that. At the relevant time they have a belief (and knowledge) based in clear
and decisive evidence. Given this, from the perspective of \text{EP}_b \text{ and } \text{KP}_b, \text{ their}
belief/knowledge is permissible and from the perspective of \text{EO}_b \text{ and } \text{KO}_b, \text{ they}
ought to have that belief/knowledge. According to our zetetic norms though,
making that judgment, coming to believe or know that aardvarks eat ants in the
course of their inquiry, was not permissible. In this case, according to E, having
some belief is permissible or required, but according to Z coming to have that
belief was impermissible. While we’re left in a strange position now we don’t
have the conflict I drew out in the last section.

What I want to do then is think about where the relationship between the
epistemic and the zetetic is if one is largely focused on evaluating judgments
and the other largely focused on evaluating belief states.

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10I haven’t mentioned justification here. I’m not quite as comfortable with justification talk as
I am with requirement and permission talk in epistemology. This much seem right to me: if some
belief is justified then it’s permitted. I’m not sure about the claim that all permitted beliefs are
justified. Perhaps some permissible beliefs are merely excusable rather than justified.
First, if we want to avoid the conflict I drew out in the last section we’ll have to reject the following principle bridging the normative evaluation of judgments with that of the beliefs that result from those judgments:

(1) Necessarily, if judging $p$ at $t$ is impermissible$_x$ then the resulting $p$-belief is impermissible$_x$ at $t$.\textsuperscript{11}

The subscript on ‘impermissible’ here is meant to indicate that both of these impermissibilities are of the same type or kind, e.g., epistemic, practical, zetetic. (1) ties the normative status of judgments and the states that are their outputs together in a general way. It says that whenever some judgment is impermissible$_x$, the belief that results from that judgment is also impermissible$_x$. If we want to avoid the conflict from the last section then we’ll have to reject (1) (along with some more general principles that entail it).

To see this: if we accepted (1) then we could move from the claim that some judgment is zetetically impermissible at a time to the claim that the belief formed by way of that judgment is; or from the claim that some belief is epistemically permissible at a time to the claim that the judgment that led to that belief and ended at that time was also epistemically permissible. With either inference we get back to a conflict between E and Z.

I think there’s a lot going for (1). If (1) is false, then there are cases in which its antecedent is true and consequent false. Most interesting for our purposes are cases in which judging $p$ is zetetically impermissible, but in which the resulting $p$-belief is zetetically permissible; and cases in which some $p$-belief is epistemically permissible, but the judgment that delivered the belief was epistemically impermissible. These are fairly uncomfortable cases.

In these cases it’s not merely that being in some state is permissible$_x$ and some route to the state is an impermissible$_x$ route to take to that state, but that being in some state is permissible$_x$ and any route to the state is impermissible$_x$. On the way we’re thinking about judging now it’s just the act or process of coming to believe. There is no way to enter the state of believing without coming

\textsuperscript{11}Judgments take place over time. If some judgment takes place throughout $[t_1, t_2]$ then the subject has the relevant belief at $t_2$. Rather than having to keep making that clear, we can think of $t$ here and throughout as the endpoint of the relevant judgment interval.
to believe. And so this way of denying (1) means saying that there are cases in which being in some state is perfectly permissible\textsubscript{\textit{x}}, but getting into the state – by any route at all – is forbidden\textsubscript{\textit{x}}. This is a strange combination of normative properties. One might think that the best explanation as to why there is no permissible\textsubscript{\textit{x}} route into some state is that being in the state is itself forbidden\textsubscript{\textit{x}}. All of this speaks in favour of (1).

If one wanted to deny (1) without having to say that some impermissible\textsubscript{\textit{x}} judgments lead to permissible\textsubscript{\textit{x}} beliefs one might try to insist that (1) is false because there is a more strict divide between the epistemic and the zetetic and in particular that the former only speaks to beliefs and issues no normative verdicts about judgments at all, and the latter speaks only to judgments issuing no normative verdicts about beliefs at all. Going this sort of route involves saying that it is never the case that some judgment is epistemically permissible or impermissible and that it is never the case that a belief is zetetically permissible or impermissible. The epistemic is simply silent when it comes to our judgments and the zetetic silent when it comes to our beliefs. As I’ve already said, this seems to me badly implausible, but let me say a little bit about the relationship between the epistemic and the zetetic for those who insist on this sort of division.

Even if our traditional epistemic norms and our new zetetic norms have different focal objects, we might have hoped that their various normative verdicts would largely align. In particular, we might have hoped that the normative statuses of beliefs and judgments would have marched in lockstep, and even more specifically that zetetic norms would respect our familiar epistemic verdicts in the following sense:

$(2)$ Necessarily, if believing $p$ at $t$ is permissible according to our familiar epistemic norms then judging $p$ at $t$ is permissible according to our zetetic norms.

But this sort of bridge principle connecting the epistemic assessments of beliefs and zetetic assessments of judgments can’t hold now. As we’ve just seen, we’ll have cases in which some state of belief is perfectly permissible at a time according to $E$, but judging $p$ at that time is impermissible from the perspective
of Z.

The failure of (2) means that there's a normative gulf between our traditional epistemic norms and the zetetic norms we've looked at. We can't just read the norms of inquiry off of our traditional epistemic norms. We simply cannot tell whether some judgment is permissible in inquiry by looking only to our traditional notion of epistemic permissibility of the resulting states.

Moreover we've even seen that there may be cases in which judging \( p \) at a time will be zetetically prohibited, but having the belief that results from that judgment is epistemically required. This means that that we'll also have to deny the following plausible bridge principle:

\[
(3) \quad \text{Necessarily, if believing } p \text{ at } t \text{ is required according to our familiar epistemic norms then judging } p \text{ at } t \text{ is at least permissible according to our zetetic norms.}
\]

With the denial of (2) and (3) inquirers are left in what we can think of as zetetic dilemmas. As inquirers they are bound by our new zetetic norms, but as epistemic subjects (inquirers?) they are bound by our familiar epistemic norms. When you're trying to figure out how many stripes the average zebra has and are in the position to come to know all sorts of things about aardvarks, what should you do? Zetetic norms tell you not to make the judgments, but then how can you have the beliefs epistemology demands?

Finally, this last point means that conforming to the norms in Z can make it that we won't be able to conform to the norms in E. If you conform to MEANS and don't make those aardvark judgments then you won't have the beliefs E demands you have at that time. This same sort of point comes out in another place as well. I argued earlier that given our cognitive limitations doing what we ought to do according to Z forces us to violate some of the norms in E. That claim was about judgment-focused norms in E but I think a similar point can be made if we insist that E is wholly state-focused. Say RES demands that you judge \( p \) at \( t \). Given your cognitive limitations, this means you'll be forced to fail to make some other judgments you could have made, which itself means that you'll fail to have some beliefs at the relevant time that you could have had. So just as conforming to RES forces violations of (demanding) judgment-focused
epistemic norms, it seems to force violations of (demanding) state-focused epistemic norms as well. All of this means that we'll also have to deny the following plausible principle:

(4) It is never the case that conforming to the norms of inquiry forces us to violate the norms of epistemology.

Even if we insist that the zetetic is largely or wholly judgment focused and the epistemic largely or wholly state focused I think we should have hoped that some of the connections between the epistemic and the zetetic articulated in (1) through (4) would hold. They don't though. And so even if there may not be a conflict on this way of thinking about the epistemic and the zetetic, their relationship seems to me fairly strained nonetheless.

4 THE EPISTEMIC AND THE ZETETIC

So I think that there is at least a tension and plausibly a conflict between the traditionally epistemic and the zetetic. While traditional normative epistemology issues verdicts about belief states in the first instance, it is not silent on our judgments, rendering normative verdicts on those as well. If this is right then while some judgments are permissible and even required from the perspective of traditional epistemology, they are impermissible from the perspective of our inquiries. Further, conforming to the zetetic norms plausibly forces us to behave badly epistemically in some sense given our cognitive limitations. Moreover, even if we relegate traditional epistemology to the evaluation of states only, inquirers are left regularly facing zetetic dilemmas.

Should we be worried about these conclusions? I think so. These conclusions are, at their mildest, that the norms of inquiry are in tension with what we think of as central norms in epistemology, and plausibly that these norms conflict with each other. And these conflicts aren't just arising at the fringes, but will be present in most typical inquiries. We'll often have to decide whether to be good inquirers or good epistemic subjects. I don't think this is a good result. I think we should have been hoping that epistemic and zetetic norms would interact happily, guiding and instructing subjects like us who are in constant pursuit of knowledge. This is not at all what's materialized.
One thought might be that we can avoid some of the pain of the result here by making more of the distinction between the epistemic and the zetetic. If these are really two distinct perspectives from which to evaluate our judgments, beliefs, knowledge, and more, then perhaps the conflict is to be expected. From some other, non-epistemic perspective perhaps it’s no surprise that there are some things that we ought not believe despite impeccable evidence and even ought not know.

My plan is not to make the borders of each of the epistemic and the zetetic absolutely clear; I don’t know how to do that. In general, the objection now is that the norms I’ve been thinking about here are somehow different in kind and that this somehow lessens the impact of the tension I’ve been bringing out. What I want to do then is argue that norms of epistemology and norms of inquiry are closely related. I’ll argue that there’s reason both to think that the zetetic norms we’ve looked at are epistemic and that our traditional epistemic norms are zetetic. This makes it harder to think of the epistemic and zetetic as radically different in kind.

First, as I’ve already said, it seems to me that we should be thinking of our traditional epistemic norms as norms of inquiry or zetetic norms. The alternative is to say that our traditional epistemic norms aren’t norms that bind us in our inquiries. But isn’t that exactly the point of epistemology? Isn’t it part of a story about how we should conduct ourselves in inquiry, how we ought to go about the project of properly collecting and managing information? What I’ve pointed out is that as we push further into a theory of inquiry we’ll find that the norms we have so far focused on in epistemology don’t fit as comfortably as we might have liked into a more complete account of the zetetic. This doesn’t mean that these traditional epistemic norms aren’t norms of inquiry though, just that panning out on the norms of inquiry reveals that perhaps we don’t have a completely coherent account of how the practice ought to proceed.

But if this is right then it gives the arguments in this paper some extra weight, I think. Shouldn’t we have hoped that the set of zetetic norms spoke with one voice, that that set of norms were consistent? If we’re inquiring, what should we do?

Second, I think there’s even a case to be made for thinking of the zetetic
norms we’ve looked at as epistemic, although perhaps it’s somewhat more controversial. We can start by thinking about ZIP. Should we think of ZIP an epistemic norm? ZIP does not seem to play a role in helping to determine whether some beliefs amount to knowledge. If only those sorts of considerations are in the domain of the epistemic, then ZIP may well be extra-epistemic. I don’t know that the epistemic is or should be constrained in that way though.

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 are norms that 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 the zetetic norms tell inquirers what to do given that they are in pursuit of these epistemic ends. As we’ve seen 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, if we think of these norms as extra-epistemic and so outside of the purview of epistemology, then we should also think of some of the central parts of a normative theory of inquiry as outside of the purview of epistemology. While perhaps nothing needs to be wrong with splitting the work, it does at least prima facie seem as though epistemology is the place to look for a theory of inquiry: as I just said, inquirers are subjects in pursuit of epistemic ends. And as it stands traditional normative epistemology deals with a strangely narrow range of epistemic questions. Traditional 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 the sorts of epistemic norms just de-
scribed tell a subject 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 a subject 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 questions we traditionally deal with.

I take it that the feeling that epistemology might want 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 seems to me not misplaced either.

One thought might be that our zetetic norms are practical rather than epistemic. They are instrumental to be sure, but as I said earlier this doesn’t settle the question of whether they are epistemic or practical or something else.\(^\text{12}\) As to the question of whether these norms are practical, it’s worth pointing out that the ends inquirers are pursuing may be practically worthless or even harmful. And this might be something of which an inquirer is fully aware. There are many things we seek to know knowing full well that knowing them may cause us great despair. If practical norms are norms that tell us how to achieve ends we value practically, the zetetic norms we’ve looked at don’t seem to be practical (or at least they won’t all be).\(^\text{13}\)

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. But, again, if we do think of them as epistemic then the sorts of conflicts I brought out earlier seem even more troubling. If all of these norms are epistemic then the norms of epistemology generate dilemmas or are even inconsistent in some sense.

Altogether I think these considerations mean that we cannot think of our traditional epistemic norms and our new zetetic norms as too deeply distinct.

\(^{\text{12}}\)As evidence of this: there is debate about whether we should think of our traditional epistemic norms as instrumental norms or not. I take that this isn’t a debate about whether we should be thinking of epistemic norms as practical. For some of this debate see, Kelly (2003) and Leite (2007).

\(^{\text{13}}\)As I mentioned before, there is some broad sense in which zetetic norms are practical: they range over actions. In this sense though moral norms are practical and even epistemic norms (if they range over judgements) come out practical in part.
Our traditional epistemic norms seem to be norms of inquiry and the new zetetic norms I’ve picked out 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. What I’ve argued then is that these closely connected norms are also in tension.

5 CONCLUDING REMARKS

Early in the paper I assumed that ZIP was a narrow-scope norm (and the others, too). Some prefer to think of instrumental principles or norms as wide-scope. If we were to think of ZIP as a wide-scope norm, we should think of it as issuing in a disjunctive demand: to either take the best means to resolving one’s inquiry or to not be inquiring.\(^{14}\) When we think of ZIP this way it’s not quite in tension in the same sorts of ways with traditional epistemic norms since it doesn’t say straightforwardly that one ought to take the best means to resolving one’s inquiries.

But what should we say about the cases at issue on this sort of wide-scope reading of the norms in \(Z\)? If those norms are wide-scope then there will be cases in which according to our traditional epistemic norms making some judgment \(j\) is permissible or even required, but according to the wide-scope norms in \(Z\) it is impermissible to both be inquiring into some question and to make \(j\) (or just 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 (say) required and not violate any zetetic norms now by stopping inquiring. This hardly seems like a like a reason to be sanguine: we can keep the epistemic and the zetetic in sync now so long as we don’t inquire. Moreover, even if we don’t have the same conflict as we do when the zetetic norms are taken to be narrow-scope, we do have something of a conflict still. According to our zetetic norms there will be all sorts of cases in which it won’t be permissible to both be inquiring into some question and make some judgments, but from the perspective of

\(^{14}\)The idea is that the norm should say that it ought to be the case that if one is inquiring into some question that one take the best means to resolving it. But then we can think of that conditional norm as a disjunctive demand to either take the best means or not inquire.
our epistemic norms this combination seems perfectly permissible.

There's a feeling that the project we're engaged in when thinking about normative epistemology is the project of coming up with a picture of rational inquiry. 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 zetetic and the epistemic as we currently think about it is far from harmonious. While I think that we have good reason for thinking of the epistemic and the zetetic as 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 in impeccable epistemic standing is not a reliable guide to whether it's an acceptable judgment to make in inquiry.

What should we do about this tension? That topic deserves its own paper. If nothing else I think we should want to think more carefully about our traditional epistemic norms. If these norms are in conflict with some of the central norms of inquiry can we continue to think of them as norms of inquiry as well? I find it harder to now. But if they aren't norms of inquiry then what are they, why should we conform to them, and what should we do when they come into conflict with the demands of inquiry?\textsuperscript{15}

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