



# Friedman on suspended judgment

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## Abstract

In a recent series of papers, Jane Friedman argues that suspended judgment is a *sui generis* first-order attitude, with a question (rather than a proposition) as its content. In this paper, I offer a critique of Friedman’s project. I begin by responding to her arguments against reductive higher-order propositional accounts of suspended judgment, and thus undercut the negative case for her own view. Further, I raise worries about the details of her positive account, and in particular about her claim that one suspends judgment about some matter if and only if one inquires into this matter. Subsequently, I use conclusions drawn from the preceding discussion to offer a tentative account: S suspends judgment about p iff (i) S believes that she neither believes nor disbelieves that p, (ii) S neither believes nor disbelieves that p, and (iii) S intends to judge that p or not-p.

**Keywords** Friedman · Suspension of judgment · Suspended judgment · Agnosticism · Inquiry · Belief · Interrogative attitude

## 1 Introduction

What is the nature of the mental state picked out in ascriptions such as “Ada is agnostic about the existence of God” or “Adam suspends judgment about when the bus will arrive”? Plausibly, this mental state is often present when an agent searches for knowledge. Suspending on some matter seems also in some way at odds with having beliefs about that matter. But the details are elusive.

In a recent series of papers, Jane Friedman argues that suspended judgment is a *sui generis, first-order, question-directed attitude*. This proposal is yet to be properly addressed in the literature.

To understand Friedman’s position, we need to appreciate the entirety of her project because her later papers build on the upshots of the previous ones. In “Suspended Judgment

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ment” (2013a), Friedman is most concerned with what suspended judgment is *not*. In particular, she argues against a range of ‘non-belief *plus*’ accounts, where the term *non-belief* refers to a mental state of neither believing nor disbelieving some proposition. These accounts include mere non-belief, non-belief plus having considered the matter, and non-belief for epistemic reasons. She concludes that suspended judgment cannot just be a matter of absence of some mental states, but must be a *genuine attitude*.

In “Question-Directed Attitudes” (2013b), Friedman argues against a range of first-order and higher-order propositional accounts of this mental state. Their alleged failure, in addition to linguistic considerations, leads her to conclude that suspended judgment is a *sui generis first-order question-directed attitude*, and hence belongs to a class of *Interrogative Attitudes* (IAs). The difference between interrogative and propositional attitudes is that the former have questions, not propositions, as their contents. Curiosity, wondering, investigating, and inquiring are also said to be IAs.

In “Why Suspend Judging?” (2017), Friedman argues that two Interrogative Attitudes are particularly deeply related: one suspends judgment on some matter if and only if one inquires into this matter. Finally, in “Inquiry and Belief” (forthcoming), Friedman explores the link between inquiry and belief, arguing for a norm connecting these two mental states.

To appreciate the originality of Friedman’s position, it is worth considering it in the context of other accounts offered in the literature. Notably, most of them have been developed with the aim of solving epistemological problems such as Kaplan’s Puzzle or peer disagreement, rather than with the aim of investigating the nature of suspended judgment itself.<sup>1</sup>

Views defended in the literature differ from each other across three dimensions: (1) whether suspension is reducible to familiar attitudes like beliefs and desires, (2) whether attitudes in question have first-order or higher-order contents, and (3) whether the attitudes are proposition-directed or question-directed. Accounts with the following combinations of these features have been defended in the literature.

First, Salmon (1986, 1989), Wedgwood (2002), Sturgeon (2010) and Moon (2018) all defend *reductive, first-order content, proposition-directed attitude* accounts of suspended judgment. That is, suspension is reduced to beliefs and facts about them. Second, Atkins (2017) defends a *non-reductive, first-order content, proposition-directed attitude* account. That is, suspension is treated as a *sui generis* propositional attitude. Third, Friedman (2013a, b, 2017, forthcoming) defends a *non-reductive, first-order content, question-directed attitude* account. That is, suspension is considered to be a *sui generis* attitude with a question as its content. Fourth, Russell (1997) and Crawford (2004) defend *reductive, higher-order content, proposition-directed* accounts, where suspension involves beliefs about one’s epistemic position. In particular, Russell can be read as claiming that subject S suspends judgment about proposition *p* iff S believes that she does not know whether *p*. And Crawford thinks that S suspends judgment about *p* iff S believes that she neither believes nor disbelieves that *p* and S in fact neither believes nor disbelieves that *p*.

<sup>1</sup> For treatments of Kaplan’s Puzzle see Kaplan (1968, 2013), Salmon (1986, 1989), Crawford (2004), Tillman (2005) and Atkins (2017). For recent treatments of the peer disagreement problem, see Christensen (2009), Kornblith (2010), Christensen (2011) and King (2012).

In what follows, I focus on the key arguments that Friedman uses to draw the conclusion that suspended judgment is a non-reductive, first-order, question-directed attitude. I begin, in Sect. 2, by criticizing her case in (2013b) against rival reductive, higher-order, proposition-directed attitude accounts of suspended judgment. In Sect. 3, I argue against her positive claim in (2017) that one suspends judgment on some matter if and only if one inquires into the matter. In Sect. 4, I consider how the lessons learnt from the preceding discussion can guide us in theorising about suspended judgment and put forward a candidate higher-order propositional account that builds on Crawford's proposal.

## 2 Propositional attitudes with higher-order contents

### 2.1 Preliminaries

In (2013b), Friedman argues that suspended judgment (and other IAs such as curiosity, wondering, inquiring, and investigating) cannot be reduced to propositional attitudes with either first-order or else higher-order contents. In this section, I focus on her case against the latter type of views (which she labels Higher-Order Propositionalism).

The primary target of Friedman's arguments and counter-examples is the aforementioned interpretation of Russell's (1997) view: S suspends judgment on  $p$  iff S believes that she does not know whether  $p$ . However, Friedman uses these considerations to draw a general conclusion that suspended judgment cannot be accounted for in terms of propositional attitudes with higher-order contents.

My aim in this section is to refute Friedman's arguments for this general conclusion. This would be an important result for two reasons. Firstly, it would restore the viability of what I take to be the most promising approach to understanding suspended judgment. Secondly, it would undercut support for Friedman's own view, for she explicitly acknowledges that the alleged failure of rival approaches provides key motivation for her own revisionary account.<sup>2</sup>

### 2.2 Suspension and belief

The first of Friedman's arguments against Russell's view is based on the following case:

*Everest Summit*: I may believe that Norgay reached the summit of Everest but recognise that my evidence for that belief isn't quite as good as it should be and so also believe that I don't know whether Norgay made it to the top. But I am not agnostic about whether he got to the top in this case, I believe that he made it (2013b, p. 155).

This case is supposed to be a counter-example to Russell's view—the subject believes that she does not know whether  $p$ , and yet does not suspend judgment on  $p$ . It is, I

<sup>2</sup> See, e.g., Friedman (2013b, p. 165).

think, plausible that a subject could simultaneously believe that  $p$  and also believe that she does not know that  $p$ .<sup>3</sup> But other aspects of this argument are more controversial.

To begin with, Friedman offers no rationale for the apparent assumption that believing that  $p$  is metaphysically incompatible with suspending judgment on  $p$ . And it is difficult to see whether she could at all provide rationale for this assumption within her framework. After all, she argues for a non-reductive account of suspended judgment. But if suspended judgment and belief are independent attitudes, then it is difficult to see how they could be so metaphysically connected that one could never have both at the same time.

In fact, this apparent assumption would directly contradict Friedman's claim elsewhere that suspending and believing are metaphysically compatible, but normatively inappropriate:

Just as subject can be conflicted with respect to her beliefs on some matter, she should also be able to be conflicted with respect to her beliefs and suspendings on some matter (2017, p. 305).

Consequently, the Everest Summit counter-example appears worryingly ad hoc.

At this point one might reply that Friedman does not need the *stronger* assumption that suspending judgment entails non-belief. Instead, to make a step from 'believes that  $p$ ' to 'does not suspend judgment on  $p$ ', she could endorse a pair of *weaker* claims that suspending judgment on  $p$  and believing that  $p$  is possible only in a normatively defective state, and that the agent in the Everest Summit case is not in such a state. Neither of these weaker claims is inconsistent with Friedman's wider framework. In fact, in (2017, p. 305) she claims precisely that being conflicted with respect to one's beliefs and suspendings is possible when an agent is in a normatively defective state.<sup>4</sup>

Admittedly, if that move is viable or if suspending judgment in fact entails non-belief (both alternatives have some plausibility), then the Everest Summit case is a counter-example to Russell's view. However, note that Friedman uses this and other arguments to draw a further-reaching conclusion about reductive, higher-order content, propositional attitude accounts of suspended judgment in general. The Everest Summit case cannot take us to this conclusion because it leaves no scratch on the structurally similar, aforementioned view by Crawford (2004) that  $S$  suspends judgment iff (i)  $S$  believes that she neither believes nor disbelieves that  $p$ , and (ii)  $S$  neither believes nor disbelieves that  $p$ .<sup>5</sup>

Ultimately, although Friedman's argument could take down Russell's view, it provides very little basis for concluding anything about reductive, higher-order, propositional content accounts of suspended judgment in general.

### 2.3 Epistemic cautiousness

Friedman's second argument, also primarily targeting Russell's view, is based on the following case:

<sup>3</sup> For a comprehensive defence of this claim, see Chapter 2 of McGlynn (2014).

<sup>4</sup> Thanks to an anonymous referee for raising this point.

<sup>5</sup> This is a surprising omission since Friedman references Crawford's paper in other places (2013a, b).

*Epistemic Cautiousness*: [I]magine a subject convinced by the evidence that introspection is less reliable than we might have thought. This S — as much as possible — refuses to have beliefs about her first-order epistemic standing ... She refuses to judge either that she knows what time the train to Paris departs or that she doesn't know this (2013b, p. 155).<sup>6</sup>

Friedman wants to suggest that an epistemically cautious subject could suspend judgment about what time the train to Paris departs despite not having any beliefs about whether she knows what time the train to Paris departs. If correct, this result would directly contradict Russell's view. More generally, Friedman wants to conclude that suspending judgment does not require having higher-order mental states about one's epistemic standing.

For what it is worth, I do not happen to share Friedman's intuition that a subject could suspend judgment while exhibiting extreme epistemic cautiousness.

But even if Friedman's intuition turned out to be correct, the Epistemic Cautiousness case (as presented) would be insufficient to invalidate Russell's view. Note that according to Friedman's description the epistemically cautious subject "*refuses to have* beliefs about her first-order epistemic standing". This does not straightforwardly imply that the subject *does not have* beliefs about her first-order epistemic standing. The gap between the two could be bridged only by the truth of a highly controversial position: *direct doxastic voluntarism*. This is the view that subjects have direct voluntary control over what beliefs they form and retain. I cannot hope to settle the debate about this position in this essay, but let me just note one classic counter-example due to Bernard Williams (1970): could a father mourning his son stop believing that the son is dead simply in virtue of not wanting to believe that?<sup>7</sup> Analogously, whether the epistemically cautious subject has beliefs about her first-order epistemic standing is unlikely to be entirely up to her.

At this point one might reply that Friedman could amend the phrasing of the Epistemic Cautiousness case to avoid the worries about doxastic voluntarism. Friedman could claim that an epistemically cautious subject *does not have* beliefs about her epistemic standing, not that the subject *successfully refuses to have* them. The former is already entailed by the latter. Thus amended, the Epistemic Cautiousness case could be a counter-example to Russell's view.<sup>8</sup>

However, this move would be ad hoc. We often have beliefs about our own epistemic standing. For instance, I believe that I do not know how tall is the world's tallest tree. According to Friedman, a subject who is convinced that introspection is unreliable would *not* have such belief in the same circumstances. But it is difficult to see what mechanism, process, or ability—other than some form of doxastic voluntarism—could make that possible. In the absence of an account of such mechanism, the Epistemic Cautiousness case cannot be regarded as a counter-example to Russell's view.

Further, even if the Epistemic Cautiousness case is a counter-example to Russell's view, it does not straightforwardly generalize to Crawford's view and other possible

<sup>6</sup> Tillman (2005) considers a similar case of Massively Unreflective Ralph.

<sup>7</sup> Williams's treatment of this problem is of course much more comprehensive. For some influential critiques of his position see: Winters (1979), Scott-Kakures (1994) and Johnston (1995).

<sup>8</sup> Thanks to an anonymous referee for raising this point.

reductive, higher-order, propositional accounts. As suggested earlier, something needs to be said in support of the idea that the conviction that introspection is unreliable would be sufficient to make possible that one does not have beliefs about what they *know*. Even more needs to be said in support of the idea that this conviction would be sufficient to make possible that one does not have beliefs about what they *believe*. The latter is necessary to regard Friedman's case as a counter-example to Crawford's view.

Moreover, for Friedman's counter-example to work, justification is needed for its second component, too. This is the claim that failing to have higher-order mental states about one's epistemic or doxastic standing is compatible with suspending judgment about some matter. One could perhaps think that such justification comes from the claim that suspended judgment is a *sui generis*, question-directed attitude, as Friedman suggests, and hence metaphysically independent from any higher-order, proposition-directed attitudes. But this approach is not promising. This is because it treats as a premise the very conclusion that Friedman wants to draw by showing that rival accounts, including higher-order content accounts, are inadequate. To do that would be to argue in a circle.

## 2.4 Simple creatures

Friedman's third argument aims to rule out any higher-order content account of suspended judgment (and IAs more generally). She argues that such views imply that "only creatures capable of representing their own epistemic standings could have IAs" (2013b, p. 155). According to Friedman this implication is implausible because "very simple creatures—creatures not thought to have the relevant sort of meta-representational capacities—can have at least some of the IAs under discussion, e.g., curiosity, wondering" (2013b, p. 155).<sup>9</sup>

This argument, too, is ridden with problems. First, Friedman claims without hesitation that cognitively unsophisticated creatures, such as young children and animals, can have "at least some of the IAs". One would expect an empirical claim to be supported by empirical evidence, but Friedman does no such thing. She references a paper by Whitcomb (2010), but this paper does not address relevant empirical evidence. Perhaps Friedman relies here on the fact that we commonly ascribe to children the attitude of curiosity or wondering. But the evidential force of our everyday ascriptions is limited. For instance, it is common to ascribe intentions or emotions to robots and mechanical devices, and yet for all we know they presently lack these mental states.<sup>10</sup>

Second, even if what Friedman says about the capacities of young children is true, her subsequent inference is unjustified. From the claim that cognitively unsophisticated creatures can have *at least some* IAs such as curiosity, it does not follow that higher-order attitudes are not necessary for *any* IA. Friedman has yet to offer a reason for thinking that simple creatures can suspend judgment. Here, Friedman cannot appeal to

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<sup>9</sup> A similar argument is advanced by Tillman (2005) against Crawford's (2004) account of suspended judgment as involving a higher-order propositional attitude.

<sup>10</sup> See Friedman et al. (2003) and Sung et al. (2007).

our everyday ascriptions, for we don't typically ascribe the mental state of suspended judgment or agnosticism to young children and other simple creatures.

Third, and most importantly, Friedman is unjustified in making the empirical claim that simple creatures such as young children and animals do not have the capacity to represent their own mental states. There is little consensus on these things among cognitive scientists. Much of the empirical evidence comes from studies using false belief tasks to measure subjects' abilities to predict others' behaviour on the supposed basis of ascribed mental states.

With respect to humans, these studies have traditionally been taken to suggest that children cannot represent beliefs until the age of roughly 4.5 years (Wellman et al. 2001). However, Onishi and Baillargeon (2005) found that 15-month-olds look longer at an agent searching for an object where it actually was, when the agent should have a false belief about the object's location. Similar findings are reported for 7-month-olds by Kovacs et al. (2010). This is taken to suggest that the subjects find the agent's behaviour surprising, so they might be tracking *others'* beliefs after all.

With respect to animals, most recent studies report that crows (Bugnyar 2011) and chimpanzees (Krupenye et al. 2016) pass false belief tasks, and this is taken to suggest that some animals have meta-representational capacities.

Thus, there is considerable empirical evidence against Friedman's claim that one cannot simply ignore. It is also noteworthy that these studies focus on subjects' abilities to represent *others'* mental states and we are primarily interested in subjects' abilities to represent *their own* mental states. It is possible that abilities to represent one's own mental states are developed earlier and are simply masked by cognitively demanding false belief tasks targeting social cognition capacities.<sup>11</sup> Ultimately, given how much weight Friedman places on an empirical claim that is far from universally accepted, her argument cannot be treated as a convincing objection against higher-order propositional content accounts of suspended judgment.<sup>12</sup>

### 3 Suspension and inquiry

#### 3.1 Preliminaries

In Sect. 2 I argued that Friedman's case in (2013b) is not convincing. There, she argues that suspended judgment cannot be captured in terms of higher-order, propositional attitudes, and concludes that it must be rather understood as a *sui generis*, question-directed attitude. In "Why Suspend Judging?" (2017) Friedman assumes this earlier conclusion, and makes further positive claims about suspension of judgment. To assess these further positive claims at their strongest, I am going to assume that earlier conclusion. Even then, I argue, Friedman's account faces significant problems, and hence we should look elsewhere for an adequate account of suspended judgment.

<sup>11</sup> Unfortunately, it is difficult to study directly subject's abilities to represent their own mental states. For one attempt, see Gopnik and Astington (1988).

<sup>12</sup> Thanks to Sam Clarke for guiding me through the recent findings in this area.

Let me first simply state Friedman’s key claim in “Why Suspend Judging?”. The explanations follow shortly after. She writes:

I want to argue that one is inquiring into the matter if and only if one is suspended on the matter (2017, p. 302).

For clarity, we can represent it in the following way:

- (1) If S inquires into  $Q$ , S suspends judgment about  $Q$ .
- (2) If S suspends judgment about  $Q$ , S inquires into  $Q$ .

In fact, Friedman also argues for a pair of further-reaching claims about Interrogative Attitudes (IAs) in general:

- (3) If S has an IA towards  $Q$ , S suspends judgment about  $Q$ .
- (4) If S has an IA towards  $Q$ , S inquires into  $Q$ .

Notably, one set of considerations is supposed to support both (1) and (3), and another set of considerations is supposed to support both (2) and (4).

How should we understand Friedman’s claims? First, note the idiosyncratic expressions “inquires into  $Q$ ” and “suspends judgment about  $Q$ ”. Friedman thinks that suspension, inquiry, and other IAs have questions as their contents. ‘ $Q$ ’ stands for ‘question’. Part of her motivation for this claim is that “suspension reports are most naturally made with interrogative complements”.<sup>13</sup> In some cases, a question can be straightforwardly substituted for  $Q$ : S suspends judgment about *when the plane will take off*. In other cases, ‘whether’ must be added: S suspends judgment about *whether the plane will take off*. It works analogously for the other IAs.

Second, Friedman uses the notion of ‘inquiry’ in a somewhat idiosyncratic way. She distinguishes between *actively inquiring* on one hand, and *genuinely inquiring* or *being in an inquiring state of mind* on the other hand; she is concerned exclusively with the latter. Active inquiry involves activities like “picking up items at the crime scene or talking to witnesses” (2017, p. 307). Friedman thinks that these activities are neither sufficient nor necessary for genuine inquiry.

Genuine inquiry, or being in an inquiring state of mind, is marked by two related features. One is *aim-directedness*:

When the detective does these things [talking to witnesses etc.] they count as part of her inquiry because they are done with the aim of finding out who committed the crime (2017, p. 307).

The other feature is *sensitivity*:

A subject aiming to resolve a question is one aiming to get new information that will lead to this resolution, and as such she will be at least minimally sensitive to or oriented towards information that will bear on the question and so help answer it (2017, p. 308).

<sup>13</sup> However, as Friedman herself repeatedly acknowledges, the force of syntactic considerations is limited: “While I don’t think that considerations of syntax alone could push us to this shift in our thinking about the contents of our ‘suspendings’, they certainly should be taken seriously” (2017, p. 304).



So, in Friedman’s terms one inquires into some question only if one has the aim of resolving that question and (in virtue of that) remains sensitive to relevant information.

Third, it is important to note the scope of Friedman’s claims. She is not merely making a normative claim that one *ought to* suspend judgment about  $Q$  if and only if one *ought to* inquire into  $Q$  (though she is making that claim too). She is also not saying that suspending judgment about  $Q$  *just is* inquiring into  $Q$ . That is, she is not saying that this is just one attitude referred to with different terms. Rather, she is saying that whenever  $S$  has one attitude,  $S$  also has the other attitude.

### 3.2 Inquiry and other IAs imply suspension of judgment

Let me begin with the first pair of claims: (1) and (3). Friedman offers one elaborate argument in their support.

She begins by considering ascriptions like ‘Ada knows that Bob went to a party, but she inquires into whether he went to the party’. Friedman claims that inquiring into  $Q$  (or having any other IA towards  $Q$ ) and knowing an answer to  $Q$  at the same time is possible, but epistemically inappropriate:

[W]e should say that there is a sort of incompatibility between knowing  $Q$  and having an IA toward  $Q$ , but that incompatibility is not impossibility, but normative incompatibility. There is something epistemically inappropriate about having that sort of combination of attitudes (2017, p. 310).

The compossibility claim is controversial, but let’s grant it. The normative incompatibility claim is captured with the following norm:

*Ignorance Norm for IAs:* Necessarily, if one knows  $Q$  at  $t$ , then one ought not have an IA toward  $Q$  at  $t$  (2017, p. 311).

Subsequently Friedman asks what makes it the case that these attitudes are normatively incompatible in the way described. The answer has to do with suspension of judgment:

My thought here is that inquiring (and having any IA whatever) involves a certain kind of epistemic stance or commitment or attitude that is in conflict with or fails to cohere with knowing  $Q$ , and that the most straightforward candidate for this ... just is suspension of judgment. ... One has an interrogative attitude towards a question only if one is suspended about that question. (2017, p. 311).

Friedman further acknowledges that “this argument trades on the thought that knowing and suspending are a conflicting pair of attitudes” (p. 311), but finds this uncontroversial.

Ultimately, Friedman’s argument for (1) and (3) is to be understood as follows: Inquiry and other interrogative attitudes are in normative conflict with knowing. This is best explained by the claim that inquiry and other interrogative attitudes entail a further attitude—suspending judgment. So, whenever one inquires into or has some other IA towards a question, they also suspend judgment about that question.

There are several worries regarding this argument. First, it is controversial whether the Ignorance Norm is true. In a recent paper, Avery Archer (2018) argues that won-

dering (which Friedman takes to be a paradigmatic IA) is not in normative conflict with knowing. Archer discusses Friedman's case of Beth who knows that her keys are in her bag but forgets it, and this leads her to wonder where she put her keys (p. 598; cf. Friedman 2017, p. 310). Archer claims that Beth's mental states are not normatively conflicted: "it is easy to imagine cases in which wondering is the only strategy available for jogging one's memory... and given that I have the goal of recalling what I have forgotten, wondering appears to be a rationally appropriate thing to do" (p. 602). I find this plausible.

Second, even if we grant the claim that inquiry and other IAs are in normative conflict with knowing, Friedman's further claim that they are in such conflict *because* they entail a *further* attitude is dubious.

One issue is that Friedman never explains why we need to postulate that the conflict arises because of some *further* attitude. There are many attitudes that are in normative conflict with knowing and yet this is not *because* they entail some further attitude (or suspension of judgment in particular). For instance, intending to run a marathon in under 1 h while knowing that the world record is 2:01:39 is normatively inappropriate. Analogously for desiring to meet your grandfather for lunch when you know that he is dead.

Another issue is this. To explain why interrogative attitudes are in normative conflict with knowing, Friedman refers to a *further* attitude that is itself an interrogative attitude. Even if there is some implicit reason to refer to this further attitude at this point, Friedman would also need to explain why it is unnecessary to refer to an even further attitude to explain why this interrogative attitude (suspended judgment) is in normative conflict with knowing.

Considering these difficulties, it is more plausible to suppose that it is *not* because these attitudes involve suspended judgment that they are in normative conflict with knowing. Perhaps there is some other feature that they all have in common. Or perhaps there is no such feature, but rather there is something distinctive about each of these attitudes that makes them normatively conflicted with knowing, just as intending and desiring (in the above examples) are. Unified explanations are philosophically attractive, but they have higher requirements for justification.

Third, even if we grant the claim that inquiry and other IAs are in normative conflict with knowing *because* they entail a further attitude, Friedman's further claim that this attitude is suspended judgment (rather than some other IA) is dubious.

Friedman claims that suspended judgment is "the most straightforward" candidate and that this "trades on the thought that knowing and suspending are a conflicting pair of attitudes" (2017, p. 311). They are supposed to be conflicted because knowing entails believing, and believing is in normative conflict with suspending judgment. This is exemplified in:

(5) Ada believes that her flight will be delayed *and* suspends judgment about whether her flight will be delayed.

However, this line of argument is either unsatisfactory or even undermines Friedman's claim that interrogative attitudes entail suspended judgment. Compare (5) with the following cases in which suspending is replaced with other IAs:

- (6) Ada believes that her flight will be delayed *and* wonders about whether her flight will be delayed.
- (7) Ada believes that her flight will be delayed *and* investigates whether her flight will be delayed.
- (8) Ada believes that her flight will be delayed *and* is curious about whether her flight will be delayed.
- (9) Ada believes that her flight will be delayed *and* inquires into whether her flight will be delayed.

The question is whether cases (6)–(9), and similar ones, also involve normative conflicts.

One option is to say that, at least sometimes, attitudes of wondering, investigating, being curious, and inquiring *are not* normatively conflicted with believing. This is the option that I find more plausible. In comparison with (5), statements (6)–(9) sound significantly less problematic.<sup>14</sup> But if there is always normative conflict between suspending and believing, and sometimes there is no normative conflict between other IAs and believing, then Friedman's claim that these other IAs entail suspension of judgment cannot be true.

The other option is to insist that attitudes of wondering, investigating, being curious, and inquiring *are* normatively conflicted with believing, just as suspended judgment is.

Instead of supporting Friedman's case for the claim that inquiry and other interrogative attitudes entail suspended judgment, this latter option undermines it. If all interrogative attitudes are conflicted with believing, and if they also share all of the same key properties (they have questions as their contents, involve aiming to answer the question, and require minimal sensitivity), it is ad hoc to attribute a central, explanatory role to one of them—suspended judgment. The argument offered by Friedman suggests equally well that any of the interrogative attitudes could occupy that central, explanatory role. That is, they imply not only:

- (1) If S inquires into  $Q$ , S suspends judgment about  $Q$ .

They also imply the following:

- (10) If S inquires into  $Q$ , S is curious about  $Q$ .
- (11) If S inquires into  $Q$ , S is wondering about  $Q$ .
- (12) If S inquires into  $Q$ , S is investigating  $Q$ .
- ⋮
- (13) If S inquires into  $Q$ , S has *all* IAs towards  $Q$ .

Each of the claims (10)–(13) has some antecedent plausibility comparable to (1).

But if these claims are true, then we can perform the following chain of inferences. Suppose that S has some IA towards  $Q$ . Thus, S suspends judgment about  $Q$  (by (3)). Thus, S inquires into  $Q$  (by (2)). Thus, S has all IAs towards  $Q$  (by (13)). It follows that:

- (14) If S has some IA towards  $Q$ , S has *all* IAs towards  $Q$ .

<sup>14</sup> Archer (2018, p. 5) makes a similar observation.

That is, Friedman's arguments appear to support a further-reaching conclusion that whenever a subject has some interrogative attitude, she has all other interrogative attitudes as well.

I find (14) untenable for a number of reasons. The first reason is that if S had all IAs whenever S had one IA, it would be difficult to justify the claim that IAs are distinct attitudes. Ascriptions of these attitudes would have the same truth conditions. In these circumstances it would be more natural to think that we just have a number of terms of refer to a single attitude.

The second reason is that there appear to be straightforward counter-examples to (14). Consider the following case:

*Apathetic Detective:* Adam has been working as a police detective for thirty years and suffers from mild depression. When he is assigned a case of bike theft, he is inquiring into who the offender is: collecting evidence, interviewing witnesses, contemplating links between the dots. He is an honest man and aims to do the job he is paid for as well as he can. But, because he has already seen so many cases like this and because he is mildly depressed, he is not at all curious about who the perpetrator is.

In this case, Adam is inquiring into some matter without being curious about this matter.

At this point one could respond on Friedman's behalf in the following way. The Apathetic Detective case is a counter-example to (14) if and only if Adam genuinely inquires into who the perpetrator is and yet is not curious about who the perpetrator is. Now, since Adam is collecting evidence etc., he is inquiring into the matter in the *active* sense. But he isn't *genuinely* inquiring into this matter. If he was genuinely inquiring, the response goes, he would also be curious.<sup>15</sup>

This response is unsatisfactory. Recall from Sect. 3.1, that Friedman thinks that *active* inquiry differs from *genuine* inquiry in terms of two features. The first is *aim-directedness*: to be genuinely inquiring into who the bike thief is, the detective must have the aim of finding out who is the bike thief. The second is *minimal sensitivity*: to be genuinely inquiring, the detective must be sensitive to relevant information. That presumably involves revising one's epistemic position when presented with evidence that bears on the question.

Now, the detective plausibly meets both of these conditions even if he is not curious about the perpetrator's identity. The aim of finding out who is the bike thief plausibly follows from the detective's aim to do his job as well as he can. And minimal sensitivity follows from the aim of finding out who is the perpetrator. So, there is no principled basis for denying that Adam is genuinely inquiring into who is the perpetrator. And, with high plausibility, Adam is in fact genuinely inquiring into this matter. It is also highly plausible that Adam is not curious into who is the perpetrator because he has already seen so many cases and because he is mildly depressed. So, Apathetic Detective is a counterexample to (14) after all.

Another response could be offered on Friedman's behalf. If curiosity and inquiry do in fact come apart, and if it is not as straightforward as I suggest to find counter-

<sup>15</sup> Thanks to an anonymous referee for raising this point.

examples to other pairs of attitudes, why not simply scratch curiosity off the list of IAs?

I do not think that this approach is promising. To begin with, I doubt that Friedman would be prepared to do that because she thinks that curiosity is a paradigmatic IA.<sup>16</sup> Moreover, this would not address the first reason that (14) is untenable. If having one IA entails having all other IAs, then it is difficult to make sense of the claim that they are distinct attitudes rather than a single attitude referred to with different terms.

### 3.3 Suspension of judgment and other IAs imply inquiry

Let me turn to the second pair of claims:

- (2) If S suspends judgment about  $Q$ , S inquires into  $Q$ .
- (4) If S has an IA towards  $Q$ , S inquires into  $Q$ .

Friedman's key argument for these claims is captured in the following passage:

[T]here are some cases in which suspension of judgment becomes epistemically inappropriate exactly when further inquiry does. The view being proposed here can give a straightforward explanation of those cases. For instance, say that ... S realizes that  $Q$  has some false presupposition or is similarly unsound, e.g.,  $Q$ =*What colour was Thomas Jefferson's Ferrari?* (2017, p. 315).

Friedman claims that in this case it would be equally inappropriate for the subject to suspend judgment, to inquire, and indeed have any IA whatsoever. Having these attitudes is supposed to be inappropriate because having an IA towards some question involves some sort of epistemic *openness* towards that question, whereas discovering that a question contains a false presupposition makes the question *closed*. That suspended judgment and other IAs entail inquiry is supposed to be the *best explanation* of this normative symmetry.<sup>17</sup> Call this *the normative symmetry argument*.

Notably, this argument makes use of the same general idea as the one used in the argument for (1) and (3). The idea is the following: some attitude  $A_1$  becomes epistemically inappropriate in the same kinds of cases as some other attitude  $A_2$ , and this is best explained by the idea that  $A_1$  entails  $A_2$ . In the argument for (1) and (3) the considered cases involve the subject knowing the answer to the question. In the argument for (2) and (4) the considered cases involve the subject becoming aware that the question contains a false presupposition or otherwise cannot be answered.

The same three problems as identified in Sect. 3.2 emerge here. First, Friedman does not explain why we need to refer to some *further attitude*, inquiry in this case,

<sup>16</sup> See e.g., (2017, p. 309): "I will focus the discussion largely on wondering and curiosity, as well as, of course, inquiry and suspension, taking them as representative of the class [of IAs] as a whole".

<sup>17</sup> This is not the only consideration offered by Friedman (2017) in support of claims (2) and (4). However, as Friedman acknowledges, the force of these other considerations is limited. For instance, she makes a point about historical treatments of suspended judgment: "there is a sense in which the view tracks the treatment of suspended judgment through the history of philosophy in that it is plausibly closely aligned with the Cartesian and the Pyrrhonian accounts of that state" (p. 316). She also makes a point based on linguistic considerations "Suspending judgment then seems to imply putting off or delaying making that judgment. And this seems to imply that one is intending or aiming to judge ... But someone 'aiming to judge' is plausibly someone who is in the sort of inquiring frame of mind at issue here" (p. 317).

to explain why interrogative attitudes become epistemically inappropriate when a question contains a false presupposition. Second, Friedman also needs to explain why inquiry is *the best candidate* for that further attitude. It seems that, if convincing, the normative symmetry argument could support an entailment relation between any pair of interrogative attitudes. Third, if the second worry stands, the argument would also support claim (14) that whenever S has some IA towards *Q*, S has all other IAs, too. And (14) is open to counter-examples of the type presented in Sect. 3.2.

There is another potential worry that Friedman recognises and addresses. There seem to be cases of normative *asymmetry*, where it is appropriate to have one attitude and not the other:

For instance, cases in which subjects come to know or believe that they should stop inquiring because they think that continued inquiry will be too difficult or that there is no further evidence to find seem to be ones in which continued inquiry is out of place, but suspending judgment is appropriate (2017, p. 318).

In response, Friedman straightforwardly denies that this is an instance of normative asymmetry. She considers an example of a detective and her team who “have searched for evidence in every way they knew how and pursued every avenue of inquiry they could conceive of” over a long period of time (2017, p. 318). She claims that even in such case suspending judgment, maintaining an inquiring state of mind, being curious, or having other IAs would be epistemically appropriate (2017, pp. 318–319). So, according to Friedman there are no cases of asymmetry. Either all IAs are inappropriate (e.g., when a question contains a false presupposition) or all IAs are appropriate (e.g., when the subject knows that it will be difficult or practically impossible to proceed).

I think that Friedman is wrong to claim that suspending judgment is epistemically appropriate when the subject is aware that it is practically impossible to answer the question at hand. After all, Friedman repeatedly claims that suspending judgment involves ‘intending or aiming to judge’ (cf. 2017, p. 317). I think she is right about this feature. The problem is that it is generally inappropriate to intend or aim to do something that is impossible or one believes to be impossible. For instance, it would not be appropriate to intend to jump across the English Channel. Analogously, it would not be appropriate to retain an intention to answer a question that one believes is too difficult or practically impossible to answer. I will get back to this remark in Sect. 4, for I think that it tells us something interesting about the nature of suspended judgment. In any case, it turns out that there is another tension in the account of suspended judgment that Friedman puts forward, and thus another reason to attempt to find a more adequate account of suspended judgment.

Incidentally, Friedman may also be wrong to claim that having IAs other than suspension is epistemically appropriate when the subject is aware that it is practically impossible to answer the question at hand and thus right to claim that IAs are normatively symmetrical in this respect. That would give Friedman one premise of the normative symmetry argument discussed earlier in this section. But, as we have seen, this argument for the claim that suspension and other IAs entail inquiry is otherwise unsuccessful.

## 4 Towards a novel account of suspended judgment

There are four important lessons to be learned about the mental state of suspended judgment from the preceding discussion.

First, it is too early to dismiss the possibility of developing a reductive, higher-order account of suspended judgment. Friedman's arguments in (2013b) are not fully convincing and have no firm footing in the findings of cognitive science. Even if we accept that the Everest Summit case (Sect. 2.2) is a counter-example to Russell's view, the general approach remains viable and at least one specific proposal still stands. This proposal is Crawford's (2004) view that *S* suspends judgment about *p* if and only if (1) *S* believes that she neither believes nor disbelieves that *p*, and (2) *S* neither believes nor disbelieves that *p*.

Second, there is no need to think about suspended judgment as question-directed rather than proposition-directed. Friedman's primary motivation for introducing the revisionary postulate that this attitude has a question as its content was the alleged failure of rival, propositional accounts. But, I argued in Sect. 2, at least one of these accounts does not fail after all. Of course, Friedman also appeals to syntactic considerations such as the observation that suspension reports are most naturally made with interrogative, question-expressing complements. However, while these considerations may give us some guidance or direction for investigating the nature of suspended judgment, they cannot alone lead us to conclude that this attitude has a question as its content.<sup>18</sup>

Third, theorising about suspended judgment need not be directly constrained by theorising about inquiry. I have not taken a stance on whether Friedman's claim that these attitudes have similar normative epistemic profiles is correct. Perhaps it is correct. I argued that even if suspension of judgment and inquiry become epistemically inappropriate in the same kinds of cases, Friedman's argument does not justify the inference that *S* suspends judgment about *Q* iff *S* inquires into *Q*.

Fourth, I think that Friedman is right to claim that suspending judgment about some matter involves 'intending or aiming to judge' on this matter. This may well turn out to be a crucial component of an adequate account of suspended judgment.

However, it does not seem to be captured by Crawford's original view. Consider:

*Delayed Flight*: Initially, Ada truly believes that she neither believes nor disbelieves that her flight will be delayed. She claims to suspend judgment about this matter. She knows that the plane is scheduled to depart in 5 min. Shortly after, Ada hears an official announcement that the plane will undergo an hour-long repair. Ada does not come to believe that her flight will be delayed. In fact, she continues to claim that she suspends judgment about it.

Intuitively, if a subject is suspending judgment on some matter and is subsequently presented with decisive evidence, then she should stop suspending and form an appropriate belief. Suspending judgment about some proposition seems to involve special concern for the truth of that proposition, so one should respond to evidence that bears

<sup>18</sup> Friedman acknowledges that. See (2013b, p. 147) and (2017, p. 304).

on it. However, this is not what happens in the Delayed Flight case. It is therefore worth asking why Ada does not form the belief that her flight will be delayed.

There are two obvious candidate answers. The first is that, despite meeting Crawford's criteria, Ada is *not* initially suspending judgment; she merely claims that she is. But if Ada is not suspending judgment despite meeting Crawford's criteria, then the Delayed Flight case is a counter-example to Crawford's view.

The second candidate answer is that Ada *is* initially suspending judgment, but her subsequent failure to come to believe that her flight will be delayed is normatively defective. This answer is not straightforwardly available to a proponent of Crawford's view either. Something internal to suspension of judgment—some component of its correct account—should generate a reason to form a belief about the matter at hand. But on Crawford's view suspension amounts to having true beliefs about one's lack of beliefs about some matter. This alone cannot rationally compel Ada to respond to relevant evidence in any way. There are lots of things that we are aware that we do not have beliefs about (how tall is the world's tallest tree?), but not in all such cases we are compelled to judge on the matter should the opportunity arise.

So, the Delayed Flight case exposes a shortcoming in Crawford's account. An adequate account should be able to explain why there is something faulty about claiming to suspend judgment about some matter and failing to respond to evidence that bears on it. This can be done by introducing a further, explicit condition to Crawford's original view. This is the condition of intending to judge on the matter:

*Crawford Plus*: S suspends judgment about  $p$  iff (i) S believes that she neither believes nor disbelieves that  $p$ , (ii) S neither believes nor disbelieves that  $p$ , (iii) S intends to judge that  $p$  or not- $p$ .

Unlike a subject who merely truly believes that she neither believes nor disbelieves that  $p$ , a subject who also intends to judge that  $p$  or not- $p$  is rationally compelled to respond to relevant evidence.

Admittedly, the considerations presented above in support of Crawford Plus are not decisive. Although nothing *internal* to Crawford's account of suspended judgment rationally compels Ada respond to relevant evidence in the Delayed Flight case, perhaps things *external* to an account of suspended judgment could. For instance, some are inclined to think that if one has any doxastic attitude towards some proposition, then one epistemically ought to have the attitude towards that proposition supported by one's current evidence (Feldman 2000). Evaluating this alternative explanation, and Feldman's proposal in particular, is beyond the scope of this paper. But note that the condition of intending to judge in the Crawford Plus account of suspended judgment has virtues beyond accounting for the inappropriateness of failing to revise one's epistemic position when presented with relevant evidence. For instance, it explains why it is inappropriate to suspend judgment on a matter that is or one believes to be impossible to determine, as suggested earlier in Sect. 3.3. More work is needed to establish the validity of Crawford Plus, but I hope to have shown that is worthy of further consideration.



## 5 Concluding remarks

This essay started as a critique of Friedman’s ingenious treatment of the mental state of suspended judgment. In Sect. 2, my primary aim was to refute her arguments against candidate accounts of suspended judgment and thereby undercut the support for her own revisionary account. In Sect. 3, I also questioned her claim that there is a deep relationship between suspended judgment and inquiry (as well as other interrogative attitudes). I concluded that we should take a step back and reconsider the reductive, higher-order, propositional accounts, such as the one offered by Crawford (2004). I subsequently suggested that Crawford’s account would fare better when supplemented with a further condition of the subject’s intending to judge on the matter at hand.

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