

Inquiry and the epistemic

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Abstract

The zetetic turn in epistemology raises three questions about epistemic and zetetic norms. First, there is the *relationship question*: what is the relationship between epistemic and zetetic norms? Are some epistemic norms zetetic norms, or are epistemic and zetetic norms distinct? Second, there is the *tension question*: are traditional epistemic norms in tension with plausible zetetic norms? Third, there is the *reaction question*: how should theorists react to a tension between epistemic and zetetic norms? Drawing on an analogy to practical philosophy, I develop a *focal point view* to resolve these motivating questions. On the focal point view, traditional epistemic norms and zetetic norms answer different types of normative questions. There is nevertheless a familiar type of evaluative tension between traditional epistemic norms and zetetic norms, but this tension is an unavoidable feature of the normative landscape and not a sign that traditional epistemic norms need revision. But if traditional epistemic norms are not zetetic norms, then in what sense is zetetic epistemology a project for epistemologists? I conclude by articulating a sense in which some nontraditional epistemic norms are zetetic norms, and in which zetetic epistemology is an important part of the study of theoretical rationality.

1 Introduction

Epistemology has taken a zetetic turn. Alongside traditional epistemic norms governing belief, we now study *zetetic norms* governing inquiry. For example, we ask how rational agents should gather evidence (Hall and Johnson 1998, Smith 2014), and whether there is anything wrong with inquiring into trivialities (Harman 1986) or incessantly double-checking our beliefs (Friedman 2019a).

The zetetic turn raises three questions about epistemic and zetetic norms. First, there is the *relationship question*: what is the relationship between epistemic and zetetic norms? Are some or all zetetic norms epistemic norms? Or are epistemic and zetetic norms distinct? Second, there is the *tension question*: is there a tension between epistemic and zetetic norms? Recent work in zetetic epistemology suggests that plausible zetetic norms are outright inconsistent with traditional epistemic norms (Friedman 2019b, forthcoming a-b). This raises a third *reaction question*: how should we as theorists respond to a tension between epistemic and zetetic norms?

My aim is to answer these questions about epistemic and zetetic norms. In Section 2, I review a prominent *unity view* and draw out its implications for our three motivating questions. In Section 3, I argue that these implications are unduly revisionary and re-descriptive, prompting the search for a new theory. In Sections 4-5, I develop a new *focal point view* inspired by an analogy to practical philosophy. In Section 6, I show how the focal point view gives plausible answers to our three motivating questions. This solution raises a new question: in what sense is the study of zetetic norms a task for epistemologists? I answer that question in Section 7.

2 The unity view

On a traditional view, epistemic norms are one thing and zetetic norms another. Epistemic norms tell us what to believe and zetetic norms tell us how to inquire.¹ But it may seem strange to separate epistemic and zetetic norms in this way. What could be the point of having two separate sets of norms, one governing inquiry and another governing the beliefs that result? The *unity view* blocks this result by holding that norms are epistemic just in case they are zetetic. My presentation of the unity view follows Jane Friedman (Friedman forthcoming a).

The unity view answers the relationship question by giving a maximally tight relationship between epistemic and zetetic norms: these norms are one and the same.² Cashing out this answer involves redescribing traditional epistemic norms as zetetic norms. For example, Friedman takes traditional epistemic norms such as evidentialism and reliabilism as masked statements of zetetic norms such as the following:

Weak evidentialist norm (WEN): If one's total evidence clearly and decisively supports p at t , then believing p at t based on that evidence is permissible.

Weak reliabilist norm (WRN): Forming a belief p by way of a reliable belief-forming process is permissible. (Friedman 2019b, p. 678).

Note that WEN, like WRN is intended to state a zetetic norm. For Friedman, to say that believing p at t is permissible is to say that it is permissible to form the belief that p at t if this belief is not already held, and forming beliefs is a matter of inquiry.

Turn next to the tension question. Friedman argues that traditional epistemic norms like WEN and WRN are in tension with plausible zetetic norms in a strong sense: they are jointly inconsistent. To draw out the problem, Friedman argues for a variety of zetetic norms. For example, suppose you want to figure out the answer to some question Q ?. Then in many cases, you should undertake the inquiries necessary to answer this question. Friedman takes this insight to ground zetetic norms such as the following.

Zetetic Instrumental Principle (ZIP): If one wants to figure out Q ?, then one ought to take the necessary means to figuring out Q ?. (Friedman forthcoming a).

Friedman argues that zetetic norms such as ZIP come into tension with traditional epistemic norms in at least two ways.

First, consider a busy detective deciding where to allocate her attention during inquiry:

(Holmes) Holmes is a detective investigating Smith's murder. While interviewing a witness, Holmes notices a bird flying strangely outside the window. As an amateur ornithologist, Holmes is curious about the cause of the bird's flight pattern.

¹While I accept that many traditional epistemic norms govern belief, I do not hold that all epistemic norms govern belief. See Section 7 for discussion.

²See Podgorski (2017) for a related view. The unity view is also one way to unpack the turn from substantive to procedural rationality in theories of bounded rationality (Simon 1976), although it is not the only unpacking.

May Holmes attend to the bird and ignore the witness? No, says ZIP: by ignoring the witness, Holmes deprives himself of testimony necessary to figure out who killed Smith. Yes, say WEN and WRN: Holmes may ignore the witness if Holmes will form a reliable and evidentially supported belief about the bird as a result. In this way, zetetic and epistemic norms appear to be inconsistent.

Second, consider a Firth-style case in which the accuracy of one belief trades off against the accuracy of many others:

(Boss) Boss runs a large research laboratory. Boss is rude and abusive towards her employees. As a result, Boss's employees provide Boss with abundant evidence that they do not love her. But if Boss forms the belief that she is unloved, she will be much less productive and as a result will fail to resolve many important questions at work. To avoid this, Boss ignores evidence about her employees' dislike and does not form the belief that she is unloved.

Would it have been permissible for Boss to heed evidence of her employees' dislike and form the belief that she is unloved instead? No, says ZIP: ignoring evidence that she is disliked is a necessary means for Boss to resolve many other questions at work. Yes, say WEN and WRN: Boss may form the belief that she is disliked, since this belief would be evidentially supported and reliably formed. Again, zetetic and epistemic norms look to be inconsistent.

If traditional epistemic norms are in tension with plausible zetetic norms, this raises the reaction question of how theorists should respond. For Friedman, the tension between epistemic and zetetic norms is a form of inconsistency, so we need to respond by revising some of the relevant norms. Friedman suggests that the best response will probably be to revise our traditional epistemic norms. Moreover, Friedman notes, the tension between epistemic and zetetic norms is quite general: examples like the above can be used to argue that most traditional epistemic norms are inconsistent with zetetic norms such as ZIP. As a result, the right reaction may well be to reject most traditional epistemic norms.

Summing up, the unity view holds that epistemic and zetetic norms are one and the same; that traditional epistemic norms are inconsistent with plausible zetetic norms; and that the best way forward is probably to revise most traditional epistemic norms. How should we evaluate the unity view's answers to our motivating questions?

3 Evaluating the unity view

You can't always get what you want. We come to theorizing with many incompatible demands and learn to compromise on a theory which preserves our most important demands as well as possible. But let us be greedy. Suppose we were to hold out for a theory which gives exactly the right answers to each of our three questions. Which of the unity view's three answers would we be satisfied with, and which answers would we want to revise?

Begin with the relationship question. The unity view holds that epistemic and zetetic norms are one and the same, and in particular that traditional epistemic norms should be recast as zetetic norms. This is a highly redescriptive thing to say. Canonical statements of traditional epistemic norms such as evidentialism and reliabilism do not seem like

attempts to express zetetic norms. For example, here is Conee and Feldman's original statement of evidentialism:

Doxastic attitude D toward proposition p is epistemically justified for S at t if and only if having D toward p fits the evidence S has at t . (Feldman and Conee 1985, p. 15).

This statement of evidentialism is a norm governing belief states and not the inquiries that produced them. Conee, Feldman and other leading evidentialists have been abundantly clear that they do not take evidentialism to be a norm governing inquiry. Feldman writes:

Evidentialism is best seen as a theory about synchronic rationality. . . . *It doesn't address questions of how to conduct inquiry over periods of time.* (Feldman 2000, p. 689, emphasis added).

This is, quite simply, an emphatic denial that evidentialism is a zetetic norm. Similar stories can be told for reliabilism and other traditional epistemic norms.

If this is right, then the unity view's answer to the relationship question looks to be unduly redescriptive. It falsifies traditional epistemic norms by redescribing them, against their proponents' express wishes, as zetetic norms. Now redescription is not always a bad thing. Sometimes a philosophical claim is utterly false or badly confused, in which case the most charitable thing to do is to redescribe the claim in a way that saves as much of the original claim as possible. But it should take a good deal of evidence to convince us that a half-century of epistemological theorizing rested on the false presupposition that some epistemic norms are not zetetic norms. We would do better to understand the relationship between epistemic and zetetic norms in a way that honors traditional epistemologists' wish to state norms governing belief rather than inquiry.

By contrast, I think we should be much more satisfied with the unity view's answer to the tension question. Friedman argues persuasively that there is a tension between zetetic norms and traditional epistemic norms. To say, for example, that some belief is supported by our present evidence is not to say that we ought to inquire in a way that will lead us to form that belief; and conversely, to say that a process of inquiry is rational is not to guarantee that every belief which results will be evidentially supported. The challenge going forward will be to capture this tension without redescribing or revising traditional epistemic norms.

Finally, consider the unity view's answer to the reaction question. Friedman holds that if there is a tension between zetetic norms and traditional epistemic norms, then the right response is probably to revise most traditional epistemic norms. For example, evidentialism, reliabilism and other prominent epistemic theories will all turn out to be false. This response is, I think, unduly revisionary. It may turn out that epistemologists have been profoundly deceived for the past half-century and the zetetic turn requires a fresh start. But we should try, whenever possible, to develop a story on which the past half-century of epistemological theorizing has not been badly wrong. It would require an enormous preponderance of evidence to overturn so much epistemological theorizing, and that evidence has yet to materialize.

We now know what we want. We want an alternative to the unity view which concedes that Friedman has found a lasting tension between zetetic norms and traditional

epistemic norms, but which does not respond by revising or redescribing traditional epistemic norms. It would be better still if we could find a theory that is friendly to the zetetic turn: that is, a theory which counts many recently proposed norms of inquiry as true and important. But can we get what we want? Today is our lucky day. An analogy to practical inquiry shows us how to get everything that we want.

4 The focal point view

We began with three questions about the relationship between theoretical inquiry and belief. We saw that the unity view successfully answers one of these questions, but gives unduly revisionary or redescriptive answers to the other two questions. This gives us good reason to search for an alternative view.

A promising way forward begins with the observation that our motivating questions have practical analogs. Instead of asking about the relationship between theoretical inquiry and belief, we could have posed the same three questions about the relationship between practical inquiry and intention.

Relationship question: What is the relationship between norms for practical inquiry and norms for intention?

Tension question: Is there a tension between norms for practical inquiry and intention?

Reaction question: How should we as theorists respond to a tension between norms for practical inquiry and intention?

In this section and the next, I develop a *focal point view* and show how it answers each question about practical inquiry and intention. Then in Section 6 I extend the view to account for our original questions about theoretical inquiry and belief.

It is standard in practical philosophy to distinguish between the normative status of an intention and the normative status of the decision procedure which produced it. This is not a new type of normative evaluation, but rather a distinction between two objects about which familiar types of normative questions can be asked. We can ask, for example, what an agent ought to intend, whether her intention is praiseworthy, virtuous, fitting, or rational. And likewise we can ask of the process of practical inquiry, more familiarly called a decision procedure, whether an agent ought to use this procedure, or whether her using this procedure is praiseworthy, virtuous, fitting or rational.

Some normative categories give rise to *level tension*, in which the normative valence of an agent's decision procedure and the resulting intention come apart. For example, consider 'ought'. There are familiar cases in which agents inquire as they ought not, but still form the intentions they ought to hold. One such case is the following:

(Lake) Mudge passes a child drowning in a lake. She decides to flip a coin and save the child just in case the coin lands heads. The coin lands heads, so Mudge saves the child.

Here Mudge forms and acts on the intention that she ought to hold: to save the child. But Mudge does not inquire as she ought. It is wrong to leave the fate of a drowning child to the flip of a coin. Here we have an agent who does not inquire as she ought, but nonetheless forms the intention that she ought to hold.

In the other direction, some agents inquire as they ought, but their inquiry produces an intention they ought not hold. Consider for example:

(Beach) Guard is the lone lifeguard on a crowded beach. She sees a dozen swimmers suddenly caught in a rip tide. Guard quickly scans the water, finds the closest swimmer, and resolves without further ado to save this swimmer.

Now let us suppose that the perceptual evidence available to Guard tells in favor of saving another swimmer first. Perhaps the closest swimmer was swimming strongly and was rather overweight. Here Guard ought not have intended to save the closest swimmer. Guard ought to have intended to save another swimmer first, someone lighter or more in danger of drowning. That is because Guard had more reason to save another swimmer first, and these reasons were perceptually available to Guard.

But Guard may nevertheless have inquired as she ought. Guard's decision procedure was this one: identify the nearest drowning swimmer and close inquiry with the intention to save them. Because speed is of the essence, Guard would be wrong to employ a lengthier decision procedure which would produce costly delays and only a marginal improvement in decision quality. Guard inquires well because her decision procedure strikes the best balance between speed and accuracy. Therefore, Guard inquires as she ought, but as a result she forms an intention she ought not hold.

It will help at this point to extend some terminology due to Shelly Kagan (2000). There are various *evaluative focal points* which can be normatively assessed: an agent's beliefs, intentions, practical or theoretical inquiries, motives, standing dispositions, and the like. At each focal point we can apply normative terms such as 'ought', 'praiseworthy', or 'fitting'. Some focal points, such as practical inquiry and intention, are locked in a *governing relationship*: members of a governed class (intention) are typically produced and altered by members of the governing class (practical inquiry). For some normative terms, such as 'ought', and some governing pairs of focal points, such as practical inquiry and intention, level tension can arise. The normative status of a governing item, such as Mudge's decision procedure, can come apart from the normative status of the governed item that results, such as Mudge's intention.

Cases such as Lake and Beach were brought to prominence by consequentialists, who developed the framework of evaluative focal points to capture an unfortunate consequence of their view, namely the possibility of level tension. Mudge forms an optimific intention on the basis of non-optimific inquiry, and Guard forms a non-optimific intention on the basis of optimific inquiry. Consequentialists have done a good deal of work to show that this level tension is a regrettable, but not inconsistent feature of their view (Parfit 1984, Pettit and Smith 2000, Railton 1984). And as our examples show, level tension arises quite generally for a variety of non-consequentialist views. We did not use consequentialism to show that Lake and Beach give rise to level tension. Moreover, there are theoretical advantages to allowing level tension. For example, level tension explains the evaluative tension we feel towards agents such as Mudge (Driver 2001). We feel at once compelled to say that Mudge has done well in intending to save the child and also poorly in flipping

a coin. Level tension preserves both verdicts in the natural way: Mudge intended as she ought, but did not inquire as she ought.

What happens if we take level tension seriously as a feature of the normative landscape, rather than a problem to be solved? One thing to note is that level tension is less severe for some normative terms than for others. Consider praise and blame. There are strong connections between the praiseworthiness and blameworthiness of inquiries and the resulting intentions. For example, we have:

(Praiseworthy inquiry exculpates) If S forms the intention to ϕ through a praiseworthy process of inquiry, then in typical cases her intention to ϕ is not blameworthy.

(Blameworthy inquiry incriminates) If S forms the intention to ϕ through a blameworthy process of inquiry, then in typical cases her intention to ϕ is not praiseworthy.

Some degree of level tension remains. For example, Mudge's inquiry is blameworthy, but her intention is not blameworthy. It merely fails to be praiseworthy. But sharp divergences such as praiseworthy inquiry leading to blameworthy intention are harder to find.

For some normative terms, there may be no level tension. Consider virtue. Early virtue theorists were driven by a desire to block what they saw as a schizophrenic level tension endemic to most competing normative theories (Stocker 1976). These theorists often denied that it makes sense to even ask questions about virtue at different focal points. We do not separately ask whether Mudge inquired virtuously and whether she intended virtuously, but instead whether Mudge, as an agent, is virtuous. This move rules out level tension from the start by making the driving normative questions ill-formed. Contemporary virtue theorists sometimes allow questions about the virtues possessed or exercised by agents to inform the rightness of their actions or intentions (Hursthouse 2001, Swanton 2001). But these assessments are closely tied to virtues of the agent in a way designed to minimize level tension

As a final example, consider rationality. Here the extent of level tension is quite sensitive to our views about rationality. In this paper, I will adopt a reason-responsiveness conception of rationality as responding correctly to the totality of relevant normative reasons (Kiesewetter 2017, Lord 2018). I will remain neutral on key issues, for example whether these reasons must be possessed or unpossessed, and objective or subjective. Readers with different views are encouraged to repeat my analysis using their favorite view of rationality.

A bit more precisely, the reason-responsiveness conception says that for all agents S , times t and actions or states ϕ , S 's ϕ -ing at t is rational just in case in ϕ -ing, S responds correctly to the totality of relevant normative reasons at t . Because these reasons also determine what S ought to do, an equivalent formulation says that S 's ϕ -ing at t is rational just in case S ought at t to ϕ , and S ϕ 's at t in response to the reasons for which S ought at t to ϕ .³ In approximate slogan form, rationality is doing what we ought in response to the reasons for which we ought to do it.

³This point may require an argument depending on how the relevant reasons are specified. See for example Kiesewetter (2017).

A reason-responsiveness conception eliminates some, but not all cases of level tension. For example, consider Mudge. Mudge inquires irrationally because she ought to use a different decision procedure. And Mudge's intention is also irrational, because although it is the intention she ought to hold, she forms this intention in response to the flip of a coin. Hence there is no tension between the rational status of Mudge's intention and decision procedure. But things are not so rosy for Guard. Guard's inquiry may be rational if she adopts this procedure because she knows that it strikes a good balance between speed and decision quality. But Guard's resulting intention cannot be rational, since she has more reason to hold a different intention.

In this section, we have developed a focal point view on which normative terms apply at different evaluative focal points. Many normative terms allow some degree of level tension, in which the normative status of governing focal points comes apart from the normative status of the governed points. Some normative terms, such as 'ought', allow a good deal of level tension, and others such as 'praiseworthy' or 'virtuous' allow less or perhaps none at all. This level tension is an unavoidable, if regrettable feature of the normative landscape. What does this focal point view say about our three questions?

5 Three practical questions

We began Section 4 with three questions about the relationship between practical inquiry and intention.

Relationship question: What is the relationship between norms for practical inquiry and norms for intention?

Tension question: Is there a tension between norms for practical inquiry and intention?

Reaction question: How should we as theorists respond to a tension between norms for practical inquiry and intention?

What does the focal point view say about each of these questions?

On the relationship question, the focal point view says that norms for practical inquiry and intention apply at different evaluative focal points. As a result, they answer different normative questions. For example, it is one question whether an agent has inquired rationally and another whether the resulting intentions are rational. Norms of inquiry and norms of intention are separate objects which should be kept apart.

On the tension question, the focal point view says that many normative terms give rise to level tension across governing focal points. In particular, normative terms such as 'ought', 'rational' and 'praiseworthy' come apart, to some degree, between practical inquiry and intention. The focal point view urges us to see this evaluative tension as a consistent, if regrettable feature of the normative landscape.

On the reaction question, the focal point view urges us to make peace with level tension. Level tension arises on many of the most plausible normative views, so the right reaction to level tension is not to change our norms of inquiry or intention, but instead to learn to accept level tension as an interesting normative fact. But this is not to say

that nothing can be done in response to level tension. The focal point view suggests two theoretical responses to level tension. First, because level tension is less severe for normative categories such as praiseworthiness and virtue, the focal point view suggests that we should pay sufficient attention to these normative categories in theorizing in order to capture the intuition that there should be something similar about the normative status of inquiry and intention. Second, because level tension is an unavoidable fact, the focal point view urges us to pay attention to focal points beyond intention. In particular, since the rationality of an agent's intentions is not enough to settle whether she has inquired rationally, then we should not only ask questions about rational intention. We should also study the rationality of practical inquiry directly.

That is what the focal point view says about practical inquiry. Now it is time to return to theoretical inquiry. In the next section, we will see that the focal point view delivers analogous answers to our original questions, and that these answers meet all of the desiderata set out in Section 3.

6 Three theoretical questions

The focal point view is not only a view about practical inquiry and intention. It is a view about all evaluative focal points, including theoretical inquiry and belief. As a result, the focal point view answers our motivating questions in the same way as it answers their practical analogs. In this section I develop these answers, arguing that they are plausible and give us all that we wanted.

Begin with the relationship question: what is the relationship between norms of inquiry and norms of belief? The unity view holds that norms of belief are disguised norms of inquiry. As a result, the unity view wrongly redescribes traditional epistemic norms as norms of inquiry against their proponents' wishes. For example, the unity view reads the weak evidentialist norm in the following way:

Weak evidentialist norm for inquiry (WEN_I): For every S, p, t , if S 's evidence at t decisively supports p , then S is rationally permitted to initiate some process of inquiry at t leading S to form the belief that p .

By contrast, the focal point view takes traditional epistemologists at their word. Traditional epistemic norms govern rational belief, not rational inquiry. The focal point view reads the weak evidentialist norm as follows:

Weak evidentialist norm for belief (WEN_B): For every S, p, t , if S 's evidence at t decisively supports p , then S is rationally permitted to believe that p at t .

Norms for belief such as WEN_B do not say anything about rational inquiry. Norms of belief and inquiry apply at separate focal points.

This answer to the relationship question is non-revisionary and gives plausible verdicts in Friedman's examples. Consider Holmes who is rationally required to focus on the witness and ignore the bird outside the window. The focal point view captures this rational requirement in terms of the norm of inquiry ZIP exactly as Friedman suggests. Because Holmes wants to figure out who killed Smith and because attending to the witness

is a necessary means to figuring out who killed Smith, Holmes is rationally required to attend to Smith and pay no attention to the bird outside. Although WEN_I might permit Holmes to attend to the bird, the focal point view rejects WEN_I in such cases precisely because WEN_I conflicts with ZIP. But if Holmes were to attend to the bird and form beliefs about the bird that were supported by decisive evidence, these beliefs would be rational by the lights of the correct reading WEN_B .

Similarly, consider Boss who resists forming the belief that she is unloved so she will be motivated to discover many new truths at work. If Boss believes that she is loved, that belief will be irrational by the lights of evidentialist norms such as the following.

Negative evidentialist norm for belief (NEN_B): For every S, p, t , if S 's evidence at t decisively supports $\neg p$, then S is not rationally permitted to believe that p at t .

But as a strategy for inquiry, shutting herself off from evidence that she is unloved and distracting herself may be a rational way for Boss to ensure that she forms a large number of important true beliefs by the lights of norms of inquiry such as ZIP.⁴ Again, questions about rational belief and inquiry come apart.

Turn to the tension question: is there a tension between norms of inquiry and norms of belief? The focal point view says that there is indeed a tension here. If Holmes were to observe the bird, he would inquire irrationally but form rational beliefs as a result. And if Boss causes herself to believe that she is loved, she may inquire rationally but she forms an irrational belief as a result. Each of these cases illustrates level tension, but that tension stops short of outright contradiction. It is perfectly consistent to say that in observing the bird Holmes would be inquiring irrationally but that his resulting belief would be rational. We have not made the contradictory claim that one and the same state or action is at once rational and irrational. The same dynamic repeats as we shift our normative terms. For example, Holmes' bird-watching inquiry would be blameworthy, but his belief about the bird would not.

Finally, turn to the reaction question: how should we, as theorists, react to tension between norms of inquiry and norms of belief? The unity view was wrongly revisionary. Because the unity view holds that the tension between norms of inquiry and belief is an outright contradiction, the unity view suggests revising many or most norms of belief. By contrast, the focal point view holds that level tension is not a contradiction, but rather an important theoretical observation that we should learn to live with. Traditional epistemic norms do not need to be revised in order to accommodate zetetic norms.

As before, the focal point view suggests two productive ways to react to level tension. First, we should emphasize normative terms like praiseworthiness and virtue to do justice to intuitions that level tension is minimal or nonexistent. This move raises interesting and difficult questions about our normative examples. Could Boss be praiseworthy for neglecting evidence? Does Holmes display a virtue of inquiry or attention in focusing on the witness? These questions deserve further study.

⁴This is no longer obvious once ZIP is weakened to take into account the totality of an agent's epistemic goals. Forming the false belief that she is loved may lead Boss to form a large number of related false beliefs at work, and throughout her life.

Second and mostly importantly, as the unity view urges, epistemology should take a zetetic turn. Because the rationality of an agent's beliefs does not settle the rationality of her inquiries, we need to theorize directly about the process of inquiry through which beliefs are produced and modified. On the focal point view, the zetetic turn is not a critique of traditional epistemology. Rather, the zetetic turn is an interesting new project opened up by the realization that norms of inquiry are distinct from norms of belief.

7 The epistemic and the zetetic

This characterization of the zetetic turn raises a problem. Suppose it is right that traditional epistemic norms are norms of belief, zetetic norms are norms of inquiry, and the zetetic turn involves studying zetetic norms alongside traditional epistemic norms. Then the zetetic turn begins to look less like a turn within epistemology, and more like the creation of a new subject.

My goal in this section is to set that worry to rest. First, I will articulate a sense in which many zetetic norms are epistemic norms. And second, I will argue that there is a fruitful project within epistemology which studies zetetic norms, both epistemic and non-epistemic together.

I said before that traditional epistemic norms such as evidentialism and reliabilism are norms of belief. But this does not mean that all epistemic norms are norms of belief. Nowadays epistemic norms are commonly proposed to govern activities such as testimony (Lackey and Sosa 2006), evidence gathering (Hall and Johnson 1998), and allocation of attention (Siegel 2017). What does it mean to say that an activity is governed by epistemic norms?

Recent discussions have revealed a number of different things that can be meant by saying that a norm is epistemic.⁵ In this section, I will be concerned with a *value-based* conception of the epistemic on which epistemic norms derive from the value of epistemic goods such as true belief, knowledge, or understanding. Value-based conceptions underly a number of contemporary approaches such as epistemic consequentialism, and have figured prominently in recent work on zetetic epistemology (Friedman 2019b).⁶ Although I will adopt a value-based conception of the epistemic in this paper, I do not mean to suggest that this is the only viable conception of epistemic norms. It would be an interesting project to repeat the analysis of this section using other conceptions of epistemic normativity.

On a value-based approach, it is clear that some zetetic norms are epistemic. For example, we have epistemic duties to gather evidence in order to promote the acquisition of true beliefs (Hall and Johnson 1998). Other norms are at most partially epistemic. ZIP derives its force not only from the value of truth, but also from an agent's desire to figure out Q . Still other zetetic norms are wholly non-epistemic. Jane Friedman proposes that agents should not form beliefs about subjects which they have no interest or desire served by having beliefs about (Friedman 2018). It is an agent's interests and desires rather than the value of truth which grounds this norm.

⁵See Cohen (2016a-b), Conee (2016), Dotson (2019), Lyons (2016), and McGrath (2016) among others.

⁶Value-based approaches can also be adopted by nonconsequentialists (Sylvan 2020).

Should epistemologists study all zetetic norms, or only the subset of these norms which are also epistemic? Current practice in epistemology suggests that we should focus on epistemic norms. With regard to belief, most epistemologists are *epistemic prioritarians*:

(Epistemic prioritarianism for belief) Many of the most interesting normative claims about belief are, in a special sense, epistemic. The most pressing project for epistemologists studying norms of belief is to characterize the epistemic norms governing belief.

Epistemic prioritarianism is compatible with the view that there are non-epistemic reasons for belief. For example, we may have non-epistemic reasons for faith in God (Plantinga 1983) and humanity (Preston-Roedder 2013), or to think the best of our friends (Keller 2004, Stroud 2006) and ourselves (McKay and Dennett 2009, Rinard 2019). The epistemic prioritarian thinks that non-epistemic reasons for belief are at most occasional, unsystematic, and mostly unrelated to the normative data which drive us to theorizing about rational belief. As a result, prioritarians hold that epistemologists should focus on questions about epistemically rational belief.

Epistemic prioritarianism may well be the correct stance towards norms of belief. But should we also be epistemic prioritarians about inquiry?

(Epistemic prioritarianism for inquiry) Many of the most interesting normative claims about inquiry are, in a special sense, epistemic. The most pressing project for epistemologists studying norms of inquiry is to characterize the epistemic norms governing inquiry.

My aim in the rest of this paper is to reject epistemic prioritarianism for inquiry and propose an alternative.

The trouble with epistemic prioritarianism for inquiry is that many of the most prominent motivations for epistemic prioritarianism about belief tell strongly against epistemic prioritarianism for inquiry. For example, a common argument for epistemic prioritarianism about belief invokes the distinction between normative and motivating reasons. If R is a normative reason to believe that ϕ , then it is not enough for R to play a motivational role in producing my belief that ϕ . R must also be a reason for which I believe that ϕ , a reason on which my belief that ϕ is based. Thomas Kelly (2002, 2003) argues that only epistemic reasons can serve as bases for belief, and hence only epistemic reasons are normative reasons for belief.⁷ Defenders of non-epistemic reasons for belief, Kelly holds, commit the *consequentialist mistake* of assuming that since the consequences of actions bear on their rationality, the consequences of beliefs bear on their rationality as well. In doing so, they ignore the fact that consequences can serve as normative reasons for action, but only as motivating reasons for belief.

⁷Similarly, Nishi Shah (2003, 2006) argues that only epistemic reasons can be reasons for belief because the question of whether to believe p is transparent to whether p . But the question of whether and how to inquire into p is not transparent to whether p . Another prominent motivation for epistemic prioritarianism about belief is the claim that seeming non-epistemic reasons to believe that p are actually reasons to get oneself to believe that p (Way 2012). But this commits us to accepting many non-epistemic reasons for inquiry, insofar as the typical way in which we get ourselves to believe something is through inquiry.

But Kelly's argument poses no threat to the existence of non-epistemic normative reasons for inquiry, since inquiry is an activity. Our inquiries can be, and typically are based on a wide variety of reasons. We can inquire to assuage our curiosity, plan for retirement, or settle a bet. To deny that inquiry is governed by non-epistemic reasons would be to commit the *reverse consequentialist mistake* of assuming that since the consequences of beliefs do not bear on their rationality, the consequences of inquiries which produce belief do not bear on the rationality of those inquiries either.

Kelly himself is quite friendly to this conclusion. Kelly holds that theoretical rationality is a hybrid virtue. While the purely synchronic question of what agents are rationally required to believe at any given moment is answered on epistemic grounds, questions about rational evidence-gathering, question-selection, and other types of inquiry are properly answered by a combination of epistemic and non-epistemic reasons. For example, we have epistemic reason to gather evidence about tomorrow's weather in order to form true beliefs about the weather, and non-epistemic reason to gather this evidence so we can prepare for the weather. On Kelly's view, epistemic rationality and theoretical rationality are to be sharply distinguished. Because inquiry and other theoretical activities answer to epistemic and non-epistemic reasons alike, an epistemic account of theoretical rationality would be unmotivated and incomplete.

If that is right, then the fate of epistemic prioritarianism for inquiry depends on what epistemology aims to do. If epistemology aims by its nature to characterize a class of specifically epistemic norms, then the study of theoretical rationality is not a task within epistemology. But epistemologists often take questions about theoretical rationality to be within their purview. And if the study of theoretical rationality is not a task for epistemologists, then who is it for? Theoretical rationality is certainly not a part of practical philosophy.

Insofar as epistemology aims to characterize theoretical rationality, then epistemic prioritarianism for inquiry has to go. Theoretical rationality is a lively mixture of epistemic norms for belief, and both epistemic and non-epistemic norms for inquiry. Because all of these norms are central to theoretical rationality, epistemologists should study all of them. In this sense, the zetetic turn is a reminder to epistemologists that there is more to theoretical rationality than rational belief. A full picture of theoretical rationality incorporates zetetic norms of all types alongside traditional epistemic norms for belief.

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