

Session 5. Suspended judgement I: Friedman

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1 Clarifications and set up

Friedman's account centres around **suspension of judgement** and **propositional attitudes** and **interrogative attitudes**.

The former are attitudes to **propositions** (belief, disbelief, etc.).

The latter are attitudes to **questions** (e.g. wondering, being curious about, ...).

Set up: In her 2013 paper "Suspended judgment", Jane Friedman kicks to the kerb various versions of suspended judgement as non-belief plus x .

e.g. **Non-belief plus nothing**.

Violated by any sort of b -predicament (e.g. Aristotle wasn't suspended about whether there were faster than light neutrinos).

Or just not having thought about a matter (even if not in a b -predicament).

Note: Friedman clearly has some sort of "absolute background" of propositions implicit, it's unclear how strong an assumption she needs.

Non-belief plus some sort of cognitive act.

Easily refuted by forgotten stance with respect to p .

Need some sort of sustained attitude.

Friedman's question. What is the nature of this attitude?

Claim from her 2017 "Why suspend judging?"

One is **inquiring** into a question Q iff one is **suspended about** Q .

2 Suspension of judgement and the soundness of questions

Before we get going, I want to raise a question about **soundness**.

Friedman assumes that we may drop suspension because we learn that a question is **un-sound**.

(e.g. What colour was Jefferson's Ferrari, and then I learn when Jefferson lived.)

But this is an example of **trivial unsoundness** again!

What about:

Example. I have encased a Sorites tube in a black box. I suspend about whether the tube is orange or red.

Again any **truth-value gap** can result in this kind of phenomenon.

Example. I suspend about whether the continuum hypothesis is true or false, partly because I'm worried that the ontology might make the question unsound.

Question. Other examples of this kind?

Question. Can we not suspend because we are suspicious that a question might be unsound?

Question. Should we **modify** the idea of soundness? (e.g. true, false, or it's complicated?)

3 Inquiring into Q entails suspension

Ignorance Norm for Interrogative Attitudes. Necessarily, if one knows Q at t , then one ought not have an IA towards Q at t .

e.g. I know where my keys are (in my tennis bag), but I can't recall. This is coherent (!) but violates the **Ignorance Norm**.

However the utterance "I know where my keys are, but I'm wondering where they are" seems infelicitous.

Contrast Moore's paradox "It's raining but I don't believe that it's raining"

Question. What do we think of this kind of example?

Question. Is the set up coherent?

Question. Are the utterances really so infelicitous?

Question. What do we think about the **Ignorance Norm**? Isn't inquiring into what you know good epistemic practice?

Structure of argument.

1. The **Ignorance Norm** is then used to argue that **any** IA involves suspending.
2. IAs conflict with knowledge.
3. Suspension conflicts with knowledge.
4. The simplest explanation of this is that IAs involve suspension (suspension seems to be the "core" IA).
5. So we get an implication, if suspension is the "narrowest" IA, then inquiry implies suspension.

Question. Is there more to the argument than this? (It all felt a bit fast to me.)

Question. Might I not inquire into something without being suspended?

Possible counterexample. Known propositions and inquiry.

Example 1. Lisbeth is inquiring into who did x . But she knows who did it, she's just building a case.

Example 2. Mathematical examples. An agent is trying to prove some proposition they strongly believe (e.g. $P \neq NP$). Aren't they inquiring without being suspended?

Possible response 1. "Feigning" suspension.

Possible response 2. Reformulate question, not inquiring into question, but rather "Whether there is a proof/good evidence showing what I already believe."

Question. Suppose I am performing an open-ended inquiry, e.g. James-Webb example, studying an area of math/science. Suppose p an answer to a the cluster of questions that might get answered by my open-ended inquiry. Aren't I inquiring into whether p , without being suspended on p (I may not even have considered p)?

Response? I am inquiring into a **cluster of questions** C containing p , but inquiry is non-distributive over the p in C .

4 Suspension entails inquiring

Friedman acknowledges that this part of her argument is more speculative.

Roughly it seems to depend on the intuition that if you're **suspended** about Q , then you'd like to know whether Q .

This is substantiated with the following points about the similarity of suspension and inquiry:

1. Suspension can be inappropriate exactly when further inquiry is, e.g. question is realised to be unsound. (e.g. What colour was Thomas Jefferson's ferrari?)
2. Suspension is **self-destructive**.
3. Suspension "open's a question in thought" (part of the explanation as to why it's the central IA?).
4. Suspension seems to delay making a judgement (e.g. suspending the match?)

Question. Is there something stronger to say here?

Counterexamples. It seems like suspension can be inquiry closing?

Example 1. The Sorites black-box. Let's suppose that if you open it, the test tube will be destroyed. I close the inquiry with my suspension.

Example 2. (Modified from Friedman) I have good evidence that all evidence for a crime has been destroyed. I suspend and close my investigation.

Example 3. *Chess*. Chess has a perfect strategy. But this strategy is also highly intractable, despite the existence of very good bots (for the cognoscenti, it's EXP-complete). So I suspend about what the perfect move in a given position is: It's completely intractable.

Example 4. *The continuum hypothesis.* A person can suspend and close because they think it's shown (by the independence results) to be completely intractable.

Note: For some mathematicians, they close here because these results make the question **boring** for them.

Note: Friedman discusses this with "frustrated inquiry".

Let's say that an inquiry into Q is frustrated at t just in case the inquiring subject comes to think (or if one prefers: know) that it is unlikely that she will be able to answer Q at t or going forward for some reasonable amount of time. It seems clear enough that there are many cases in which suspension is appropriate even when inquiry is frustrated. (p. 319)

Possible response. Is there some sort of idealised inquiry remaining?

It at least seems like I can be suspended as to whether p whilst being uninterested in an answer to p (e.g. the disillusioned constructive mathematician).

Question. Is there not a distinction between (mild) **curiosity** and **inquiring**?

Question. To I have to **care** to be inquiring/suspended?

5 Further questions from forum

Question. Is suspension the same as conscious ignorance? (Cognitive laziness can allow conscious ignorance without the corresponding attitude?)

Question. What are the practical implications of suspension?

Question. How are doubt and suspension linked?