

# Session 6. Suspended judgement II: Masny and Avnur

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## 1 Clarification

### Recap:

**Propositional attitudes** (PAs) are attitudes that have **propositions** as contents.

**Interrogative attitudes** (IAs) are attitudes with **questions** as contents.

Friedman's account of suspension of judgement argues that suspension is an IA.

We're going to see a PA-account of suspension.

We'll do this by:

1. Examining some problems Masny sees for Friedman.
2. Examining Masny's positive account.
3. Exploring some further options.

First (though we'll return to these questions):

**Question.** Is the distinction between PAs and IAs totally clear?

**Question.** Do we have to settle on **one** or the other?

**Question.** Might we be IA-suspension / PA-suspension pluralists?

**Question.** e.g. Might there just be different kinds of phenomena / cognition at play here?

## 2 Inquiry implies suspension

Masny identifies:

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

(3) If S has an IA towards Q, S suspends judgment about Q

Masny identifies some problems with the **Ignorance Norm**. Recall:

**Ignorance Norm for IAs.** Necessarily, if one knows Q at t, then one ought not have an IA toward Q at t.

**Note:** Whoever suggested that the **Ignorance Norm** is false in virtue of IAs being the only strategy available (e.g. in the keys example), you were onto something, and this has been discussed by Avery Archer.

The argument is then that all IAs exhibit the **Ignorance Norm**, and since suspension does too, the best explanation is that suspension is common to every IA (including inquiry).

## 2.1 Attacking the argument directly

Masny worries that we shouldn't buy this argument (even if we accept the **Ignorance Norm**):

1. Perhaps the **Ignorance Norm** is grounded by some other feature shared by the IAs?
2. Perhaps there **isn't even a single feature** that is responsible for all violations of the **Ignorance Norm**.

**Question.** Is this abductive inference convincing?

**Question.** Would it be more natural to just be pluralists here?

**Question.** Is there a feature they all share that explains **Ignorance Norm** violation?

## 2.2 Regress

There is a Bradley-style regress lurking.

We explain the unity of the IAs with a further IA, I1. But then we have a new class of IAs, IA1, that contains this new I1. What explains this similarity, some further attitude I2, etc...

Contrast **Bradley's Regress** and the **Third Man Argument** from the *Parmenidies*.

**Question.** Do we think this issue is problematic?

**Question.** Is there a possibility for self-explanation?

## 2.3 Attacking the Ignorance Norm

Masny considers some examples that are more "intuitive" counterexamples to the **Ignorance Norm**. e.g.

Ada believes that her flight will be delayed and is curious about whether her flight will be delayed
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Doesn't seem obviously infelicitous.

**Response.** Maybe this is rather an instance of the **ideal** vs. **practical** senses of the terms.

**Question.** Is this plausible?

## 2.4 Overgeneralisation

Another criticism is **overgeneralisation**.

We discussed this a bit last time (**hurrah** for us!).

Masny views this as problematic, intuitively speaking there are counterexamples, e.g.:

**Apathetic Detective:** Adam has been working as a police detective for thirty years and suffers from mild depression. 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.

**Question.** Perhaps there is a sense of "idealised knowing" on which all IAs are the same?

(On this interpretation, **Apathetic Detective** shows that you can be **actively inquiring** without being **genuinely inquiring**.)

**Question.** *Must* Friedman accept that some IAs are not-coextensive in this idealised sense.

**Question.** How much would this diminish the value of the project?

**Question.** Would it be correct to say that apathetic detective's inquiry is (in some sense **frustrated**)? (I think no, but I'm interested to hear what others think...)

## 3 Inquiry and other IAs implies suspension

Correspondingly we have:

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

(4) If S has an IA towards Q, S inquires into Q.

The argument in Friedman proceeds from epistemic inappropriateness appears at exactly the same time for suspension as other IAs.

But the same problems recur:

1. Why a **further** attitude?
2. Why is **inquiry** the central IA?
3. Why doesn't this overgeneralise?

**Note:** Masny contends that Friedman is wrong to say that it would be appropriate to intend to judge in the face of practical impossibility of inquiry (let's discuss this later).

**Questions on this arm of the argument? Any additional subtleties?**

## 4 Masny's account

Masny prefers a **PA**-based account.

**Russell's View.**  $S$  suspends on  $p$  iff  $S$  believes that they do not know whether  $p$ .

**Friedman's counterexample. Everest Summit.** I believe that Norgay reached the summit of Everest but recognise that my evidence for that belief isn't that good and 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.

Friedman thinks that this shows one can have belief in the absence of suspension.

(**Note:** Friedman also has some examples that she takes think refute PA-based accounts in general, drawing on some work from cognitive science. We can return to this if people like.)

**Crawford's Account.** 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  $p$ .

**Masny's Counterexample: 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.

**Unattractive answer.** Ada is not initially suspending.

**Attractive answer.** Ada is suspending but is **normatively defective**.

**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  $\neg p$ .

**Question.** *Must* I intend to judge in order to suspend?

**Question.** What about where I don't aim to judge?

**Example.** Totally frustrated questions (e.g. Tube-in-a-box, CH, Chess, How many grains of sand in Sahara desert?).

**Example.** Transcendental questions (Avnur) such as the existence of the divine.

**Example.** Morally/ethically impermissible to judge (e.g. smallpox virus).

### Different kinds of suspension?

We've talked a little bit about how there might be **pluralism** here.

Perhaps the right answer is that there are **different kinds** of suspension?

(**Note:** This relates to the Avnur paper, where he looks at different kinds of "suspension", e.g. ones where one is open vs. not.)

This can be with respect to (1.) IA vs PA. (Though probably those are related, (2.) Intended vs. non-intended, (3.) First-order vs. higher-order?)

**Question.** Others?

**Question.** How plausible is pluralism here?