

# FIT-RELATED REASONS TO INQUIRE

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## Abstract:

Recent philosophical work on inquiry yields important results about when it is appropriate to inquire and to what extent norms on inquiry are compatible with other epistemic norms. However, philosophers have been remarkably silent on the matter of what questions we ought to take up in the first place. In this paper, I take up this question, and argue that moral considerations constitute *fit-related, right-kind* reasons to adopt interrogative attitudes towards, and so inquire about, particular questions. This is a conclusion of more general interest, because – as I explain – we might think that moral considerations are at best *wrong-kind* reasons for attitudes. If my contentions are right, then there is at least one kind of attitude – namely interrogative attitudes – of which this is not true.

Keywords: fittingness, inquiry, reasons

## 1. Introduction

Recent philosophical work on inquiry has primarily been concerned with when it is appropriate to inquire and to what extent norms on inquiry are compatible with other epistemic norms.<sup>1</sup> These norms include, among other things, that I ought to inquire about questions when I want to figure out their answers, that I ought not to inquire further into questions to which I already have answers, and that we ought to inquire about a matter only when suspending judgment on it. There is then debate about whether these norms are distinctly epistemic, distinctly practical, or challenge the divide between epistemic and practical normativity by fitting neatly into neither camp.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> See Friedman (2017, 2019, 2020, forthcoming), Kelp (2014), and Whitcomb (2017). See Habgood-Coote (2019, 2022) for an interesting discussion of these issues with respect to collective inquiry.

<sup>2</sup> See Friedman (2020) for an argument to the effect that zetetic norms, while practical, are not practical in a way that is incompatible with their also being epistemic.

While the aforementioned norms concern what we ought to do with the questions we already have, philosophers have been comparatively quiet on the matter of what questions we ought to take up in the first place. Nevertheless, the idea that certain questions merit our inquiry over others is *prima facie* plausible. If there are protests of notable size in Iran, then it is presumably more important for me to ask about their status than it is to ask about how many pennies minted in 1985 remain. The project of developing a theory of normativity should thus include identifying norms that tell us what to inquire about while taking a stance on whether those norms are practical, epistemic, or some hybrid of the two.

In this paper, I argue that moral considerations constitute fit-related reasons to adopt interrogative attitudes, and thereby to inquire, about particular questions. First, I illustrate how, contrary to my proposal, we might think that moral considerations cannot provide fit-related reasons because the latter are right-kind reasons (RKR) for attitudes while the former are wrong-kind reasons (WKR) for attitudes. I then introduce the relationship between inquiry and certain types of interrogative attitudes and argue that moral considerations constitute fit-related reasons for the latter, and thus for the former. In particular, I argue that morality demands that we be other regarding in our ‘zetetic’ (that is, inquiry-related) practices and that those moral demands make it fitting to inquire about particular questions. This conclusion yields two further implications: first, that if moral reasons are RKR in favor of interrogative attitudes, then they may turn out to be RKR against belief; and second, that the kinds of considerations which constitute RKR for attitudes might depend significantly on how those attitudes are connected to certain activities.

## 2. Right-Kind Reasons and Fittingness

It is *prima facie* plausible that we should value the valuable, admire the admirable, despise the despicable, and dread the dreadful. Plausibly, this is because valuable objects merit our valuing them, admirable objects merit our admiring them, and so on. A natural way of explaining why this is the

case is that certain of our responses are merited by or fitting with respect to certain objects.

This relation between our responses and the objects that merit them is normative. It is not merely that there is a set of objects that I do or could value, admire, despise, etc., but rather that there are objects that are *worthy* of those respective responses. Alternatively put, there is a set of objects towards which certain attitude responses are normatively fitting. Let us, following McHugh and Way (2016), Howard (2019), and Rowland (2019) (among others)<sup>3</sup> call this normative relation between attitudes and their objects *the fittingness relation* and call the facts about objects and attitude responses in virtue of which this relation obtains *fit-making facts*.

Fit-making facts plausibly constitute reasons in favor of attitude responses. Suppose that my mother is generous and the fact that she is generous makes her admirable and so makes it fitting to admire her. The fact that my mother is generous is a fit-making fact, because it is in virtue of that fact that she is worthy of (or merits) admiration. Given that the fact that my mother is generous plays this role in making her admirable, it is thereby also a *reason* to admire her. Again, following Howard (2019), let us call reasons which are so constituted *fit-related reasons*.

Fit-related reasons are commonly regarded as reasons ‘of the right kind’ (RKR) for attitude-responses and contrast with reasons ‘of the wrong kind’ (WKR) for those responses.<sup>4</sup> The terminology of ‘right kind’ and ‘wrong kind’ reasons originally arose in the context of accounts of evaluative properties in terms of reasons; RKR were reasons of the ‘right kind’ to feature in such accounts, while WKR were of the ‘wrong kind’ to so feature. However, the distinction has since taken on a life of its own and there is widespread consensus that these reasons are of the right and

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<sup>3</sup> The idea that there is a fittingness relation between attitude responses and evaluative properties dates back to Brentano (1889), Broad (1930) and Ewing (1939). Importantly, all three are neutral about whether the fittingness relation constitutes a metaphysical explanation of the evaluative properties in question. This stronger metaphysical thesis has emerged more recently, and its most vocal proponent is Chris Howard (2019). Discussions of that thesis are outside the scope of this paper, and nothing in this paper depends on its acceptance. While I claim that there are facts about objects and attitude responses which make it the case that fittingness relations obtain, I do not take a stance on whether these facts constitute any kind of metaphysical explanation of the evaluative properties of those objects.

<sup>4</sup> See, for example, Schroeder (2021).

wrong kinds, respectively, in other senses or contexts.<sup>5</sup> These other senses or contexts may include analyses of epistemic rationality, bases for attitude-formation, or even characterizations of which (would-be) reasons are genuinely normative and which are not.<sup>6</sup>

### 3. Moral Reasons

While there are open questions about which facts constitute fit-related reasons for attitudes, we might initially think that the facts that constitute moral reasons are not among the eligible contenders.<sup>7</sup> To see why, call reasons in favor of attitudes *moral* in case they are constituted by facts that contribute towards making it the case that we morally ought to adopt those attitudes.<sup>8</sup> For instance, consider a demanding version of utilitarianism on which there is a Principle of Utility that demands not only that we take certain actions, but also that we adopt certain attitudes, in order to maximize the amount of goodness in the world.<sup>9</sup> Now suppose that I know that admiring my brother will make him happy. If the demanding Principle of Utility is true, then the fact that admiring my brother will make him happy might make it the case that I morally ought to admire him. Per our definition then, the fact that admiring my brother will make him happy is a moral reason in favor of admiring him. It is plausible that other moral traditions will place similar demands on our attitudes.<sup>10</sup> Whatever the moral norms turn out to be, it is at least plausible that there will be

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<sup>5</sup> See Gertken and Kiesewetter (2017) for an overview.

<sup>6</sup> To illustrate just one of these further senses in which RKR's are right-kind and WKR's are not, consider again the fact that my mother is generous and contrast it with the fact that admiring my mother will garner me some large fortune. Plausibly, the former fact strikes us as being 'of the right kind' to constitute an appropriate basis for admiring my mother, while the latter does not.

<sup>7</sup> It's critical to note that the moral reasons about which I am concerned here are moral reasons for *attitudes*. Moral reasons for action are an entirely different matter and it is controversial whether the RKR/WKR distinction is even applicable to reasons for actions. Nevertheless, if it were so applicable, it is highly plausible to think that moral reasons would be RKR's for actions.

<sup>8</sup> Such facts will often be (morally relevant) descriptive facts. However, see Darwall (2010) and Johnson King (2019) for reasons to think that moral reasons are at least sometimes constituted by the moral facts themselves.

<sup>9</sup> This is stronger than the most basic kind of utilitarianism, which governs only *actions* rather than attitudes. However, the idea that there is a Principle of Utility that requires that we adopt particular attitudes in order to increase utility is not outlandish. Mill (1863) famously argues that intellectual pleasures are of a higher, better sort than bodily pleasures and, it's plausible to think that cultivating intellectual pleasures requires adopting certain attitudes.

<sup>10</sup> For instance, we might think that Kantian respect for persons requires adopting certain attitudes (for example, regard) towards other persons, and that cultivating ethical virtues has a similar requirement (for example, adopting attitudes conducive to altruism).

descriptive facts which, given those moral norms, make it the case that there are attitudes which we morally ought to adopt – and hence, constitute moral reasons for those attitudes.

At least at first glance, these moral reasons seem to be paradigmatic *wrong*-kind reasons for the attitudes that they are reasons for, rather than fit-related or right-kind reasons. For example, the fact that admiring my brother will make him happy seems to have no bearing at all on whether it is *fitting* to admire him. This is because the latter is a matter of whether he is *admirable*, and the fact that admiring him will make him happy has no bearing on this. Generalizing, the thought would be that if we have a moral reason for a given attitude, then this reason is a WKR for that attitude.<sup>11</sup>

In the remainder of this paper, I reject this generalized conclusion by arguing that moral reasons are fit-related reasons in favor of interrogative attitudes in certain cases. If I am right, then there are at least some cases in which moral reasons for attitudes are fit-related reasons for adopting those attitudes.

#### 4. Interrogative Attitudes and Inquiry

To understand why moral reasons can be fit-related reasons for interrogative attitudes, it is necessary to get clear about the cases of interrogative attitudes with which we are concerned. Doing so will also elucidate the close relationship between those attitudes and the activity of inquiry. Let us, following Jane Friedman (2019), characterize interrogative attitudes as those which take questions as their objects. Paradigm cases of such attitudes include being curious, wondering, and questioning, and there are myriad reasons for which we may adopt them. While there may be fit-related reasons to adopt various of the interrogative attitudes for a variety of purposes, we will chiefly be concerned

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<sup>11</sup> It's important to note that this is perfectly compatible with the claim that facts which constitute moral, wrong-kind reasons in favor of certain attitudes might constitute fit-related (but non-moral) reasons in favor of *other* attitudes. For instance, the fact that my admiring my brother will make him happy may constitute a fit-related reason to *want* to admire him.

with what makes it fitting to adopt interrogative attitudes about questions in cases where we do so to figure out the answers to those questions.

Figuring out the answer to a question is an activity, which is to say it is something that we do. In particular, it is a form of the activity that philosophers typically call *inquiry*.<sup>12</sup> Our project of identifying fit-related reasons to adopt interrogative attitudes about questions to figure out their answers is thus a project of identifying fit-related reasons to adopt interrogative attitudes about questions in order to inquire about them. As a result, we will henceforth be concerned with the relationship between interrogative attitudes and inquiry.

In what follows, I will, following Friedman, adopt a view on which interrogative attitudes are necessary but not sufficient for inquiry. According to Friedman, typical inquiry takes place over a finite interval of time  $[t^0-t^n]$ , beginning when an inquirer adopts an interrogative attitude towards a question, continuing when she actively investigates that question, and ending when she figures out its answer. Importantly, however, ‘inquiring over some interval of time is not just a matter of performing some sequence of [investigative] actions over that interval’ (Friedman 2019, 4).

To see why, compare two people who knock on the doors of their respective next-door neighbors. Suppose that one of them is a detective who wants to talk to a suspect in a murder case, while the other merely wants to give her neighbor a lemon from her tree. Though both of the individuals perform the same action, the detective seems to be inquiring while the neighbor appears not to be. This indicates that what divides inquirers from non-inquirers cannot be any particular investigative action (or combination thereof) but must rather be that the former ‘aims to figure

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<sup>12</sup> While there are other forms of inquiry like double-checking and increasing confidence in our pre-existing beliefs that do not involve figuring out the answers to questions (cf. Falbo 2023; Woodard forthcoming), I will solely be concerned with those that do, and so for my purposes, inquiring about a question will be equivalent to going about figuring out its answer. Thanks to [redacted] for pushing me to clarify this.

things out' while the latter does not (2019, 5). After all, the detective wants to figure out who the culprit is but the neighbor merely wants to be neighborly.

Crucially for our purposes, Friedman argues that the feature which makes it the case that the former group 'aims to figure things out' is that they hold an interrogative attitude towards a particular question. The detective holds an interrogative attitude towards (among other questions) the question of whether the neighbor committed the murder while the neighbor holds no such interrogative attitude, and *this* is what makes the detective an inquirer even though both she and the friendly neighbor perform the exact same door-knocking action. The cases of interrogative attitudes with which we are concerned are thus intimately connected with inquiry, for without holding an interrogative attitude towards a particular question in order to figure out (that is, inquire about) its answer, no amount of investigation will make it the case that we are genuine inquirers. In fact, because holding an interrogative attitude towards a particular question (in order to figure out its answer) is what *makes it the case* that we count as inquirers under certain conditions, it follows that identifying fit-related reasons for adopting interrogative attitudes towards questions to inquire about them will generate results about the conditions under which it is fitting to inquire.

When we adopt an interrogative attitude about a question in order to inquire about it, we often do so with the aim of gaining something epistemically. Let's call this thing our *epistemic gain* and say that when we adopt interrogative attitudes about questions to inquire about them, we do so because we take the epistemic gains to be acquired from doing so to be worth acquiring. Just as there is a distinction between things that we take to be worth valuing and things that are in fact worth valuing, there is plausibly an analogous distinction between epistemic gains that we take to be worth acquiring and those that are in fact worth acquiring. It's natural to think that if there are protests of notable size taking place in Iran, then epistemic gains about the protests seem to be in fact worth acquiring, regardless of whether I take them to be worth acquiring. And, all else being equal,

epistemic gains about how many pennies minted in 1985 remain do not seem worth acquiring, regardless of whether I take them to be worth acquiring.

While I will take it as a datum *that* there are some epistemic gains which merit our acquisition over others, it is not at all obvious *why* this is the case. Put differently, even if it is plausible that epistemic gains about the protests in Iran merit our acquisition over epistemic gains about pennies minted in 1985, it is not clear what facts make this so and so not clear what facts make it fitting to adopt interrogative attitudes towards questions whose answers will yield the former epistemic gains rather than the latter. In the remainder of this paper, I argue that facts that constitute moral reasons in favor of interrogative attitudes are among them.

#### 5. Towards Which Questions is it Fitting to Adopt Interrogative Attitudes?

At first glance, the idea that our inquiring practices are apt objects of moral assessment should strike us as commonplace. Cases like the following make this clear:

##### **Unfriendly Ursula:**

Since childhood, Emily has always been best friends with Ursula. However, recently, Ursula has seemed to not care about Emily. While Emily always makes a point to ask about how Ursula's classes went, what her favorite bands are, who she wants to ask to prom etc., Ursula does not reciprocate. In fact, Ursula has not even asked Emily about how she is liking her classes this year. Emily begins to resent Ursula for being a mediocre friend.

##### **Clueless Clyde:**

Though Clyde is fairly knowledgeable about domestic politics, he knows little to nothing about international affairs. One day, Clyde's co-worker, Bobby, confesses that he is distracted because he is deeply worried about the recent floods in Pakistan. Clyde responds by saying that he didn't even know that there were floods in Pakistan. When Bobby asks him why not, he responds by saying that he just does not care to learn about what happens so far away from him in the world. Bobby finds Clyde's answer objectionable.

Neither Unfriendly Ursula nor Clueless Clyde should strike us as out of the ordinary. It is common practice to expect one another to inquire about certain matters, and to resent each other or find each other objectionable when those expectations fail to be met. For instance, it is familiar to expect our friends to ask us about how our lives are going and to be curious about our values and



preferences. As a result, we would plausibly not find it out of the ordinary for Emily tell Ursula, ‘You should ask me about my life!’ or for Bobby to reprimand Clyde using the oft-used phrase ‘You should educate yourself about that!’

Following Audre Lorde (1984), we ought to take seriously the idea that our feelings are sources of evidence and information. This means that if we feel resentment or find others objectionable when certain ‘zetetic’<sup>13</sup> behavior fails to meet our expectations, we should take those feelings as *pro tanto* evidence that there is something worthy of resentment or objectionable about that zetetic behavior.<sup>14</sup> In what follows, I argue that these feelings are indeed justified, for they track, among other things, the idea that we are open to moral assessment on account of the questions towards which we adopt interrogative attitudes in order to inquire about them.

### 5.1. Unfriendly Ursula

Let’s start with **Unfriendly Ursula**. One promising way to vindicate Emily’s resentment of Ursula is to appeal to the idea that friendship (and significant interpersonal relationships more generally) requires acquiring certain epistemic gains. This line of reasoning finds its earliest support from Aristotle, who picks out friendships of virtue, in which we love our friends for their own sake and share in our friends’ enjoyments and distresses as if they were our own, as the choice worthy friendships (*NE*, 1171a). Importantly for our purposes, friends of virtue relate to one another by sharing conversation and thought (*NE*, 1170b15). And it is highly compelling that sharing conversation and thought with our friends is supposed to yield crucial epistemic gains, the idea being that virtuous friends share each other’s enjoyments and distresses as if they were their

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<sup>13</sup> Following Friedman (2019), I use the term ‘zetetic’ (derived from a Greek word that means ‘devoted to inquiry’ or ‘disposed to inquire’) to mean ‘related to inquiry.’

<sup>14</sup> My appeal to Lorde here intentionally mimics a similar move by Rima Basu (2019). P.F. Strawson (1963) also famously advances a line of reasoning according to which our feeling resentment towards something or finding something objectionable is evidence that some moral demand has failed to be met.

own because they have acquired epistemic gains about, among other things, each other's projects, values, and preferences.

Contemporary accounts of friendship provide reason to think that friendship comes with doxastic obligations, the most prominent line of thought in the literature being that friendship constrains us doxastically by requiring us to believe the best of our friends. For instance, Stroud (2006) argues that friendship places 'distinctive demands on our beliefs and our belief-forming procedures (502-503).' In particular, being friends with someone obliges us to continue to believe well of our friends even when we are presented with evidence that they have behaved badly.<sup>15</sup> Similarly, Rioux (2023) argues that exemplary friends, when presented with potentially incriminating information about their friends, 'leave the question of their [friends'] behavior open so as to avoid a specific closure [namely, the conclusion that their friend behaved badly] (18).'

Though Stroud and Rioux are concerned with the doxastic demands of friendship, it's a short step to see how their accounts can be leveraged to support the claim that friendship sometimes makes 'zetetic' demands as well. First, Stroud holds (and Rioux agrees) that friendship not only requires suspending judgment about our friends in certain situations, but defending their reputations against others (Stroud 2006: 503). However, defending a friend's reputation requires not only believing well of them, but also requires acquiring certain epistemic gains about them. A good defense of one's friends often involves appeal not only to 'external' facts about their projects, pursuits, and hobbies, but also to facts about their 'internal' lives – perhaps about the intentions with which they pursue those projects or their affective responses to events, accomplishments, failures

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<sup>15</sup> These constraints are defeasible. The idea is just that being friends with someone gives us *pro tanto* moral reasons to believe well of them in the face of incriminating evidence, but of course these *pro tanto* reasons can be defeated if the evidence is completely damning. As Stroud notes, being a good friend does not entail being totally impervious to one's evidence.

and relationships – the latter of which we often take to be indicative of their character or quality of will.

All of these considerations generate a framework within which to critique Ursula's treatment of Emily. If Ursula does even not know what Emily's projects are (let alone which of Emily's projects matter to her), then she can hardly share in Emily's joy about their achievement (or distress about their failure) as if it were her own. Ursula thus lacks the epistemic preconditions for having the appropriate reactions to what Emily does or to what happens to her. Moreover, Ursula could hardly mount a good defense of Emily's reputation against critics – such a defense plausibly requires saying something not only about Emily's redeeming projects and qualities but also about how Emily herself conceives of those projects or about those qualities, neither of which Ursula knows about. Lastly, it's true by stipulation that Ursula fails to attend to Emily's successes and virtues.

Let's conclude from this that just as friendship demands in favor of believing well, so too does it plausibly demand in favor of acquiring certain epistemic gains. The next step is to see that because friendship requires us to acquire certain epistemic gains, questions whose answers yield epistemic gains on those topics are worthy of our interrogative attitudes. The idea is that which epistemic gains are worth acquiring will be, at least in large part, determined by what morality demands of us, such that if acquiring certain epistemic gains is necessary for meeting certain moral demands, those gains will be worthy of our acquisition. To see why, recall that in §3 we saw that acquiring epistemic gains amounts to figuring out the questions to which those gains are answers. We figure out the answers to questions, at least in large part, to get around in the world, which involves relating to others in accordance with moral demands and (other) practical norms. So, if moral or practical features do not (at least in large part) determine which questions are worthy of

figuring out (and thereby, which epistemic gains are worth acquiring), then it is not clear what would.<sup>16</sup>

We can conclude from this that if moral demands make certain epistemic gains worthy of acquiring then certain questions – by virtue of yielding those epistemic gains as answers– are worthy of figuring out. Equivalently put, those questions are worthy of inquiry. Given the close relationship between inquiry and interrogative attitudes, we can conclude that it is fitting to adopt interrogative attitudes about the relevant questions in order to inquire about them.

Despite what I have argued, a critic of my view might suggest that we need not acquire the relevant epistemic gains via *inquiring* in particular, and that we might instead attain them via other ways of acquiring evidence (for example, via getting direct [unprompted] testimony from our friends).<sup>17</sup> However, even if acquiring evidence suffices for acquiring the relevant epistemic gains *simpliciter*, it does not suffice for doing so *in a way that fulfills the demands of friendship*. To see why, recall that we can acquire evidence in a ‘disinterested’ or ‘uninvested’ way, or even in ways that are neither intentional nor deliberate. The detective’s assistant who knocks on a door merely because she is told to is acquiring evidence, as does the disinterested research assistant who unintentionally acquires evidence for certain claims when she reads dozens of sources just to please her supervisor. In both cases, the individuals involved are acquiring evidence, but both are, by stipulation, ‘uninvested’ in the hypotheses about which they are doing so. However, it’s highly plausible that being a good friend requires not only acquiring evidence about our friends, but at least some of the time, doing so because we care about sharing in their enjoyments and distresses as if they were our own, because we care about learning about their character (to the extent that we could defend it if need be) or

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<sup>16</sup> Notably, Feldman (2000) thinks that what topics you ought to investigate just depends on, what investigations can help you make your own life or the lives of others better. On such a line of reasoning, there are *only* moral (and instrumental) reasons for inquiry. Though I think that there are moral reasons for inquiry, I am neutral about whether these (along with perhaps instrumental reasons) are the only ones.

<sup>17</sup> Thanks to an anonymous referee for raising this objection.

because we want to attend to their virtues and successes. Thus, while we can acquire epistemic gains about our friends via merely acquiring evidence, *solely* acquiring the relevant epistemic gains in such a way does not suffice for fulfilling the demands of friendship.

Even so, the critic of my view might point out, it does not immediately follow that friendship comes with zetetic obligations. What was wrong with solely acquiring epistemic gains via merely acquiring evidence was that doing so is compatible with being disinterested in the evidence we acquire and thereby in the corresponding epistemic gains which result from doing so. However, we might think, following Brinkerhoff (2023) that we can fulfill the demands of friendship without actively inquiring so long as we *actively attend* to the evidence that we passively acquire about our friends (for example, our friend's [unprompted] testimony), perhaps by being generally open to and interested in it while acquiring it. For instance, it might seem like Ursula would become a good friend to Emily should Ursula be better about attending to the evidence she receives about Emily, by being generally open to and interested in listening when Emily tells Ursula about her life. If we accept this line of reasoning, then friendship comes with attentional, but not zetetic, obligations.

However, acquiring epistemic gains about our friends *solely* by actively attending to the evidence that we acquire about them won't – or at least doesn't always – suffice for fulfilling the demands of friendship either. To see why, return to **Unfriendly Ursula**, and suppose that Ursula is in fact interested in and attentive to Emily's testimony. Presumably, many of us would nevertheless find it objectionable if attending to Emily's unprompted testimony was the *sole* means by which Ursula were to acquire epistemic gains about Emily. After all, this would be a scenario in which what Ursula knows about Emily is *wholly* dependent on what Emily chooses to tell her. However, we have already seen that both sharing our friends' distresses and enjoyments as if they were our own and defending our friends' reputations requires knowing *particular things* about our friends; namely, details about what their projects are and which of their projects matter most to them, along with

information that would constitute a good defense of their characters and the quality of their wills. While there are some cases in which we might learn all of these things non-zetetically from our friends, there also can be cases where we would not, and in these cases, actively inquiring will be required to acquire the relevant epistemic gains.<sup>18</sup> Moreover, even if one's friends *are* forthcoming with the relevant information, it is arguably objectionable to leave the acquisition of such critical epistemic gains up to chance, by leaving them up to whether our friends happen to be forthcoming. Finally, at least arguably, failing to actively ask one's friends questions about things like their values, hopes, dreams, and fears manifests a kind of problematic indifference to them even if one is receptive to what they tell one unprompted.

We should conclude from this that friendship comes with zetetic obligations. Moreover, this idea plausibly extends to loving relationships more generally. Ebels-Duggan (2008) argues that 'love directs us to share in each other's ends, doing things with each other (156).' However, similar to the Aristotelian demand of sharing in a friend's enjoyments and distresses as if they were our own, sharing in another's ends requires not only knowing what those ends are, but what sharing in those ends requires you to do. But to gather evidence about our loved ones' ends to share in those ends is not to gather evidence in an uninterested or uninvested way, but to do so in order to figure something out about our loved ones. And, even if we were to find out about our loved ones' ends in some non-zetetic way, it should strike us that fulfilling the demands of loving relationships requires not just that we so happen to find out about our loved ones' ends (for example, via [unprompted]

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<sup>18</sup> My claim is thus not that we must *always* gain the relevant epistemic gains via inquiring about our friends, and that we can never acquire them some other way (for example, via direct [unprompted] testimony from our friends themselves). Rather, my claim is that inquiry is required in *some* cases; either because our friends are not forthcoming about the relevant information or because leaving the acquisition of the relevant epistemic gains up to chance is objectionable. And, the conclusion that moral reasons are fit-related reasons to adopt interrogative attitudes holds so long as there are some such cases.

testimony), but that we (at least sometimes) take it upon ourselves to inquire into what those ends are.

Similarly, Dover (2022) argues that ‘interpersonal inquiry’ (that is, conversation in which we seek to understand one another) is a way of approaching conversation (particularly with loved ones) to which we should aspire. Crucially, ‘interpersonal inquiry’ requires ‘taking one another seriously,’ which involves, among other things, treating others’ understanding of themselves as relevant to our understanding of them via seeking their input on their own characters in conversation. But seeking someone’s input about herself in conversation in a way that genuinely takes her seriously requires more than merely acquiring evidence about her, for the latter is compatible with being disinterested in her. Rather, it is to acquire evidence about her in order to figure something out about her (that is, who she takes herself to be).

This leaves us with the following result: there are facts which make it the case that we must acquire certain epistemic gains to meet moral demands. Those facts thus constitute moral reasons to adopt interrogative attitudes towards the questions whose answers yield those epistemic gains. However, the fact that morality demands that we acquire those epistemic gains also makes them worthy of our acquisition. It follows from this that the very facts which constitute moral reasons to acquire certain epistemic gains also make it fitting to acquire them. And, this entails that those very facts also make it fitting for us to form interrogative attitudes towards questions which yield those epistemic gains as their answers. In this way, the very facts which constitute moral reasons for us to form interrogative attitudes about particular questions also make it fitting for us to do so. Finally, since fit-related reasons are RKR’s, if moral reasons make it fitting to adopt interrogative attitudes about particular questions, then moral reasons are, at least in some cases, RKR’s in favor of adopting interrogative attitudes.

## 5.2. Clueless Clyde

While we can appeal to the demands of friendship to vindicate Emily's resentment towards Ursula, the same move is not available to us to vindicate Bobby's assessment of Clyde as objectionable. After all, Bobby finds Clyde objectionable not because Clyde is failing along some dimension of friendship, but because Clyde does not care to learn about things that happen in distant parts of the globe. I argue in this section that Bobby's assessment of Clyde as objectionable thus tracks a different moral demand that Clyde fails to meet; namely, that Clyde fails to be properly other-regarding in virtue of being indifferent.

Let us, following Brookes Brown (2023), say that I am indifferent about something in case it elicits no meaningful attitude or action response on my behalf. For instance, if I am indifferent about eggplant, then the presence of eggplant will neither cause me to desire it nor cause me to feel repulsed. And, the presence of eggplant similarly provides me with no reason for action. It neither motivates me to cook or eat it, nor motivates me to throw it in the trash. While not all indifference is morally objectionable, we might think that indifference about particular subject matters is. My indifference towards eggplant may not carry any moral weight, but it would be morally objectionable were I to be indifferent upon seeing a drowning baby, the idea being that the drowning baby should elicit a meaningful response.

Brown provides compelling reason to think that indifference is morally objectionable across a broad range of moral traditions. For instance, indifference, generally speaking, makes us less other-regarding. If we are virtue ethicists who think that being other-regarding is an ethical virtue, then this would be a reason to find indifference morally objectionable. Alternatively, we might think, following Hurka (2003), that if something is intrinsically good, then being indifferent about that thing is intrinsically bad. If we are consequentialists, this plausibly makes it morally objectionable to be indifferent about intrinsically good things, because doing amounts to doing something intrinsically bad and so diminishes the amount of goodness in the world. Moreover, being



indifferent towards others seems to interfere with treating them as ends. Presumably, treating others as ends requires recognizing that their actions and attitudes make a difference to the way that the world is. Of course, according to none of the broad<sup>19</sup> moral commitments mentioned above does the claim that indifference is, all things considered, morally objectionable entail that there is *nothing* about which we can be indifferent (after all, there does not seem to be anything obviously morally objectionable about my indifference towards eggplant, all things considered). The idea is just that regardless of what moral theory is correct, it is highly plausible that there will be certain things about which indifference *will* be morally objectionable.

We can now offer candidate explanations of Clyde's objectionability in terms of his indifference, noting that which explanation we find most compelling will depend on our other moral commitments. Perhaps by failing to consider people on the other side of the world as among those whose lives are worth learning about, Clyde has failed to exhibit the ethical virtue of being properly other-regarding. Or, perhaps there is some story about how his inaction with respect to learning about the floods entails a failure to properly afford Pakistanis respect for persons. Alternatively, while there is nothing intrinsically good about the floods themselves, perhaps there is something intrinsically good about the *state of being curious* about what is happening in the lives of others, regardless of how distant those others are. If this is the case, then being indifferent about acquiring that state might make it the case that, per Hurka's view, Clyde is doing something intrinsically bad and so diminishing the amount of goodness in the world. Notably, we need not commit to any particular story about Clyde's objectionability. Establishing that there are moral reasons to adopt

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<sup>19</sup> For an example of more specific moral view that is relevant here, consider Holly Smith's (2014) view that any moral theory which grounds moral obligations in an agent's beliefs about the features of her options requires agents to gather information before acting. If Smith is right, then acting morally requires a *lack* of indifference about certain features of the world; in contrast, it entails that paying attention to certain features of the world makes a difference to acting morally, and thus requires gathering information about those features in order to determine what to do.

interrogative attitudes only requires establishing *that* there is a plausible moral reason for Clyde not to be indifferent, not establishing *which* moral reason that is.

We are now in a position to understand what for our purposes is crucial. This is that remedying his indifference towards people across the world (and thereby becoming properly other-regarding) will require Clyde to acquire some epistemic gains. However, it's not the case that Clyde needs to acquire epistemic gains about everyone or everywhere. Depending on our other moral commitments, we might think that he need only acquire epistemic gains about what is happening in certain other countries in the world (for example, those with which his own country is involved in partnerships or relations), or more basically, that he need only acquire epistemic gains about where those countries are even located. However, we need not take a stance on the scope or volume of what being other-regarding requires to get the conclusion that being other-regarding requires Clyde to acquire epistemic gains of some sort. Though puzzling through questions about what we need to pay attention to is deeply important for determining how we ought to live, the burden is on the respective moral traditions to say something about how we ought to weigh competing moral concerns when determining what we need to pay attention to.

It is equally important to note that, just as in the case of **Unfriendly Ursula**, merely acquiring evidence about the relevant subject matters (whatever they turn out to be) will not suffice for Clyde's being properly other-regarding. This is because, as we have seen, we can acquire evidence in a disinterested way. However, it is precisely being interested in the lives of others that makes us properly other-regarding! So, even if being other-regarding involves gathering evidence, fulfilling that moral demand will require us to gather that evidence *in order to figure something out*; namely, in very rough terms, what is going on with respect to the lives of other people. And, since acquiring evidence in order to figure something out presupposes that there is something that we want to figure out, this is just to say that being properly other-regarding requires adopting

interrogative attitudes about particular questions in order to figure out their answers (that is, in order to inquire about them).

We have now ended up in a similar place as we did when thinking about **Unfriendly Ursula**. Just as before, each of the broad moral traditions above plausibly requires us to be other-regarding, and being other-regarding requires us to acquire certain epistemic gains. As we have seen, the fact that morality, at least according to the traditions sketched, requires that we acquire those epistemic gains makes those epistemic gains worthy of our acquisition. Previously, I argued that this is so because acquiring epistemic gains (at least sometimes) amounts to figuring out the answers to whichever questions yield those epistemic gains as answers. And, given that we figure out the answers to questions, at least in large part, to relate to others in accordance with moral demands, if moral demands (and other practical demands) do not determine which questions are worthy of figuring out (and thereby which epistemic gains are worth acquiring) it is not clear what would.

This again leaves us with the following result: the very facts which constitute moral reasons to acquire certain epistemic gains also make it fitting to acquire those epistemic gains. And, this entails that those very facts also make it fitting for us to form interrogative attitudes towards questions which yield those epistemic gains as their answers. In this way, the very same facts which constitute moral reasons for us to form interrogative attitudes about particular questions also make it fitting for us to do so. Finally, since fit-related reasons are RKR's, if moral reasons make it fitting to adopt interrogative attitudes about particular questions, then moral reasons are, at least in some cases, RKR's in favor of adopting interrogative attitudes.

## 6. Further Implications

I have argued that, contrary to initial appearances, moral reasons in favor of attitudes, can, at least for certain interrogative attitudes, be RKR's for those very attitudes. This is because there are certain epistemic gains whose acquisition morality demands, and this demand not only gives us

moral reason, but also makes it fitting, to acquire them. I close by speculating that this conclusion suggests two further implications: first, that if moral reasons are RKR for interrogative attitudes, then they may turn out to be RKR against belief, and second, that the kind of reasons which are RKR for attitudes might depend significantly on how those attitudes are connected to certain activities.

Prior to illustrating these implications, it is worth noting that, though the cases of **Unfriendly Ursula** and **Clueless Clyde** both concern moral reasons to adopt interrogative attitudes, it is plausible that a similar line of reasoning can be developed concerning other kinds of practical reasons. This is because taking the means to our ends often requires adopting interrogative attitudes in order to inquire. At the very least, achieving our knowledge-directed aims (for example, the aim of knowing about the status of the principle of deductive closure) seems to require this (for example, inquiring about challenge cases that threaten it). If we were to develop a picture according to which at least some of our ends generate fit-related reasons in favor of taking the means to achieving them and we accept that inquiring is often one such means, then other kinds of practical reasons, like moral reasons, would at least in some cases turn out to be RKR in favor of adopting interrogative attitudes.

Let's now turn to the relation between reasons for interrogative attitudes and reasons against belief. In §3 I endorsed Friedman's connection between interrogative attitudes and inquiry and concluded that fit-related reasons to adopt interrogative attitudes towards questions to figure them out *just are* fit-related reasons to adopt interrogative attitudes towards questions to inquire about them. While everything said thus far solely depends on the relatively uncontroversial connection between interrogative attitudes and inquiry, Friedman also endorses a more contentious connection between inquiry and suspending judgment.

According to Friedman, at the very least, the epistemically appropriate thing to do when inquiring about some question Q is to suspend judgment about Q. More strongly, inquiring about Q (or at least ‘epistemically appropriate’ inquiring) perhaps *entails* suspending judgment about Q. The motivation behind that claim is this: If I hold an interrogative attitude towards Q, then Q is ‘open’ or ‘unanswered’ for me. This is plausible particularly with respect to the cases of interrogative attitudes about which we are concerned, in which we hold such an attitude towards a question Q in order to figure out its answer. Presumably, my holding such an attitude toward Q in order to figure out its answer presupposes that Q is unanswered for me. In contrast, a subject who believes some answer to Q is a subject for whom Q is answered. It follows from this that if we believe some answer to Q and, at the same time, hold an interrogative attitude towards Q, we treat an answered question as unanswered. This, Friedman says, is not epistemically appropriate. Instead, the stance that I ought to take towards Q when inquiring about Q is the suspension of judgment about Q. To suspend judgment about Q is to keep Q ‘open,’ and so is to treat an unanswered question as genuinely unanswered. It follows from this that in the ‘epistemically appropriate’ cases, inquiring about Q will entail suspending judgment about Q.

If we accept Friedman’s conclusion about suspension of judgment and inquiry, then if 1) there are moral reasons in favor of adopting interrogative attitudes in order to inquire and 2) inquiry entails suspension of judgment, then these moral reasons in favor of interrogative attitudes are also moral reasons in favor of suspending judgment. Moreover, if moral reasons to adopt interrogative attitudes towards Q are fit-related reasons then they are also fit-related reasons to suspend judgment about Q. However, if we accept the Friedman line of reasoning above, then reasons in favor of suspending judgment about Q are presumably thereby reasons *against* believing some answer to Q. So, if moral reasons to adopt interrogative attitudes are fit-related reasons to suspend judgment, they

are *thereby* fit-related reasons against believing. Finally, given that fit-related reasons are RKR, moral reasons are, at least in some cases, RKR against believing.

This would yield a perhaps surprising result. While recent work on moral encroachment has provided compelling reason to think that moral considerations bear on belief and knowledge, much of the literature is concerned with the extent to which moral considerations affect how strong one's reasons need to be in order to be justified in believing or count as knowing.<sup>20</sup> In doing this, moral considerations arguably do not themselves play the role of *reasons* for or against belief. In contrast, the implication here is that moral considerations *themselves* might constitute reasons against believing that P. In this way, moral considerations may bear not just on how strong our reasons must be in order to have a justified belief but also constitute our reasons, and in particular, our RKR, against forming one.

Second, whether moral reasons constitute RKR for attitudes appears to depend significantly on how those attitudes are connected to certain activities. As we have seen, moral reasons are RKR for adopting interrogative attitudes towards questions *in order to inquire about them*. However, it is far less clear that moral reasons are RKR for adopting interrogative attitudes in cases in which those attitudes are not connected to that activity. For instance, the fact that a demon will kill a baby unless I wonder about an abstract question in order to appreciate significance plausibly gives me a moral reason to wonder about that question, but it does not obviously make it fitting for me to do so. In this way, the fact that moral reasons are RKR for interrogative attitudes in certain cases seems to depend on the fact that the cases about which we are concerned are cases in which the interrogative attitudes in question are connected to the activity of inquiry.

This suggests the more general thesis that whether moral reasons for attitudes are RKR for those very attitudes might depend on whether those attitudes are connected to certain activities.

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<sup>20</sup> See, among others, Basu and Schroeder (2019), Moss (2018), and Bolinger (2020).

Should this general thesis hold, the results would be significant for extant accounts of right and wrong-kind reasons for attitudes, all of which rely on context-independent features (for example, state versus object dependence) to characterize them. If it turns out that which facts constitute RKR for attitudes is in some sense dependent on whether those attitudes are connected to certain activities, such context-independent distinctions might not be so illuminating. Even more surprisingly, which reasons count as RKR for attitudes would vary depending on the activities in connection with which we adopt those attitudes. The importance of these results for a theory of normativity indicates that the aforementioned general thesis, along with the attitude-activity connections on which it relies, might just merit further inquiry.

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