Asking expresses a desire to know

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A speaker's use of a sentence does more than contribute a content to a conversation. It also expresses the speaker's attitude. This essay is about which attitude or attitudes are expressed by using an interrogative sentence to ask a question. With reference to eight lines of data about how questions are circulated in conversation, it is argued that a desire to know the question's answer(s) is expressed.

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1 Introduction

A speaker's use of a sentence in a context does more than contribute a compositionally-determined content to a conversation. The use of a sentence also expresses the speaker's attitude(s) towards the sentence's content. Which attitude or attitudes are expressed is a well-explored topic for assertion, the default act performed by using a declarative sentence. Less well-explored is what attitude or attitudes are expressed by the act of asking, the default act performed by using an interrogative sentence. This is the focus of the present essay.

To keep terminology straight, I will use question to name the compositionally-determined content contributed by an interrogative sentence in a context, and reserve asking, following Whitcomb (2017), to identify the default speech act that is performed by a speaker's use of an interrogative in a context. Speech acts other than asking are plausibly performed with non-canonical interrogatives of different kinds.[1] As such, I ignore such interrogatives here. Our subject matter is what attitude or attitudes are expressed by a speaker's use of a canonical interrogative in a context.

What it is for an attitude to be *expressed* can be explicated in different ways. For example, expression can be understood in a normative manner. This happens in theories where the attitude expressed is the attitude required by a norm or required for performing the relevant speech act sincerely (Whitcomb, 2017). Or,

[1] Examples of non-canonical interrogatives include echo, biased, and flipped interrogatives. See Dayal (2019) and Farkas (2022) for discussion of non-canonicality as a category of interrogatives. Rhetorical and exam questions are further outliers. But it is less obvious whether these outliers are tied to non-canonical interrogatives or instead to the different speech act performed by using a canonical interrogative. For example, questions used for examining are defective with parentheticals like the one in ⌜Q, I wonder?⌝, and there is a tradition of understanding rhetorical questions semantically (Rohde, 2006; Biezma and Rawlins, 2017). In what follows, I will treat these as if they were non-canonical interrogatives. However they are best understood, they are not the default act performed by using an interrogative.

expression can be understood in a non-normative manner. This occurs in theories where what's expressed is what the speaker intends the hearer to recognize, or the attitude attributed by hearers as a result of social cognition (Bach and Harnish, 1979). There are still further options. I do not rely on a particular explication of *express* in what follows. Since my focus is on which attitude or attitudes are expressed, I use the term neutrally.

This essay will argue that an attitude expressed by asking $\mathcal{Q}$ is the desire to know $\mathcal{Q}$. Call this the DESIRE-TO-KNOW VIEW. The view has two key components. The first is that asking expresses a desire. Asking, in other words, expresses a motivational state that is satisfied for speakers under certain conditions. The second component is that the relevant desire is satisfied by knowing $\mathcal{Q}$. The desire expressed is not a desire for anything else. Throughout, I will occasionally gloss knowing $\mathcal{Q}$ as knowing the answer(s) to $\mathcal{Q}$.

The desire-to-know view is not unprecedented. It is commonly theorized that asking expresses desire, especially in theories where asking is a kind of command or directive (Bach and Harnish, 1979; Searle and Vanderveken, 1985). The desire-to-know view, or at least one of the many nearby views, is also widely endorsed but usually without being argued for explicitly.[2] My plan is to provide a number of new arguments in §2 to motivate the desire-to-know view. Then I turn in §3 to discuss how the view compares with the suggestion that asking expresses other attitudes or states. Before concluding by highlighting the view's consequences, I consider the objection that the desire-to-know view is too cognitively demanding in §4.

2 The arguments

To argue for the desire-to-know view, I will provide seven lines of data con- cerning how questions are circulated in conversation. These lines of data will be argued to be best explained by the view. Seven of them are new, and one is repurposed from Whitcomb (2017). Though independent of one another, the data canvassed cumulatively provide a compelling basis from which to conclude that asking expresses a desire to know. After presenting the data, I will consider alternative explanations of this data on which asking expresses a desire for a propositional attitude weaker or stronger than knowledge.

2.1 Desire to know

Defective conjunctions. If the use of an interrogative with content $\mathcal{Q}$ expresses an attitude A in a context, the use of that interrogative will not be compatible with a

[2] For example, Jeffreys (1939, 407) suggests that a desire to know is part of the meaning of an interrogative, Carlson (1982, 61) proposes that such a desire is inferrable from asking a question, Davis (2005, 126-135) maintains that there is a "natural connection" between a desire to know and interrogative sentences such that using the latter expresses the former, and Braun (2011, 587-590) defends that sincere question-asking commonly involves a desire to know but only requires a desire to be told a true answer.

subsequent sentence in which the speaker denies taking A to Q. Such a denial will feel contradiction-like because what's expressed is denied. In the case of assertion, the observation made by Moore (1942, 1962) that $\ulcorner p$, but I don't believe $p\urcorner$ is widely taken as evidence that assertion expresses belief. A similar line of evidence exists for the desire-to-know view of asking.

(1) #I don't want to know this, but did Sonia sneeze?

Conjunctions like (1) are defective, and the desire-to-know view explains why. Asking Q expresses the desire to know Q. So the subsequent denial contradicts the expressed desire.

Retracted askings. Sometimes speakers ask a question but then decide that they want to take it back. A conventional way to retract an asking is by stating that one does not want to know Q.

(2) Did Sonia sneeze? Wait/actually, I don't want to know.

Example (2) is similar to the defective conjunction in (1) except the disavowal of desire happens after the asking. It is felicitous because the subsequent disavowal is interpreted as a retraction of the initial asking. The desire-to-know view accounts for why. Stating that one no longer has the desire to know—the desire that motivates the speaker to seek an answer—signals that the asking no longer needs to be answered.

Reported askings. It is frequently necessary to reference what another person asked. Reporting an asking is a way to clue in third-parties to what happened in another conversation in which they were not a participant. Such reports are a helpful window into how asking is understood. They reveal what we take speakers to have done when they asked a question. Of relevance is that attributing a desire to know Q is regularly treated as a reporting that Q was asked. An example is (3) below.

(3) Sally wanted to know whether Sonia sneezed.

Attributing a desire is not equivalent to attributing an asking. We may use (3) to merely explain Sally's inquisitive behavior, for example. But (3) is frequently treated as a report of what Sally asked. The desire-to-know explains why. Since asking expresses a desire to know, hearers are inclined to infer that a question was asked from an attribution of a desire to know.

Indirect askings. Speech acts have a direct and indirect way of being performed. For speech acts like assertion and asking, the direct way to perform the act is uttering the relevant sentence type. To indirectly perofrm the speech act, one typically uses another sentence type. For example, *Can you pass the salt?* is an interrogative sentence but received as a command. Askings can be indirectly

performed by using a declarative that reports the speaker's or a third-party's desire to know.[3]

(4) (a) The boss wants to know whether Sonia sneezed.
(b) Yes, she did.

(5) (a) I want to know who sneezed.
(b) Sonia did.

(4a) and (5a) illustrate. In encountering sentences akin to either, we interpret them as askings. This is why it is natural to reply to them, as (4b) and (5b) do, by answering the relevant question. The desire-to-know view easily furnishes an explanation. Attributing a desire to know is attributing that one is in a psychological state associated with asking. So such an attribution is a natural way to indirectly ask.

Prompted askings. Sometimes askings need to be prompted. This happens when they flow of the conversation makes it less natural to just ask a question outright. One example of a situation where askings are prompted is at the start of a conversation. For example, one might approach the concierge at a hotel to get some questions answered about the area. To politely start the conversation, one might lead with (6a) instead of immediately posing a question to them.

(6) (a) Hey! I was hoping you could answer some questions.
(b) Sure! What do you want to know?
(c) Tell me what you want to know.

In reply, it is natural for them to ask (6b), or to state (6c) to invite one or more askings from the speaker. This is predicted by the desire-to-know view. Asking $\mathcal{Q}$ expresses a desire to know $\mathcal{Q}$. So asking can be prompted by inviting one to share what they want to know.

Strengthened askings. Many speech acts can vary in their strength. Consider assertion. Assertions express an attitude like knowledge or belief by default. But hedging with *I guess* as in ⌜p, I guess⌝ weakens that strength by indicating that the speaker's attitude is weaker than knowledge or belief (Benton and van Elswyk, 2020). Askings plausibly come in stronger or weaker varieties too. Modulating this strength appears to be accomplished by modifying the strength of the desire that is expressed in asking the question.

[3] Whether the use of a sentence performs an indirect speech act depends on further pragmatic conditions being met. One such condition for indirect question-asking is that the person from whom the information requested is the addressee. If this condition is not met, the statement is not a interpreted as an asking. For example, *The boss is asking whether Sonia sneezed* can be interpreted indirectly as a question. But there also cases where it can be used merely to describe the boss's behavior to a third-party. As such, instances of ⌜I want to know $\mathcal{Q}$⌝ do not indirectly ask whether $\mathcal{Q}$ when such pragmatic conditions are unmet. For example, a referee provides case where a person is waiting on the phone to see if a store received their takeout order. When asked what they are doing by a friend, the person can report *I want to know whether they received the order* without asking the friend a question. This is owed to the friend not being the addressee from whom the speaker wants the answer(s).

(7) I kinda want to know: did Sonia sneeze?

(8) I really want to know: did Sonia sneeze?

(9) I need to know: did Sonia sneeze?

(10) I'm dying to know: did Sonia sneeze?

Consider (7) to (10). In each, the default wanting is either downgraded or upgraded by the initial preface. The consistent effect is that the strength or force of the asking is modified. The desire-to-know view enables us to understand why. If asking $\mathcal{Q}$ expresses a desire toknow $\mathcal{Q}$, qualifying that desire is a way to qualify that ask. The amount of wanting is the degreed component of asking that can modified.

Opting out of askings. Addressees can opt-out of answering a question by saying *I don't know* (Reynolds, 2002). But this is not the only way to opt-out. Another way makes reference to the speaker's desires. Sentence (11) provides an example.

(11) I'm sorry. I can't tell you what you want to know.

As an opt-out, (11) is most natural in a context where the addressee *does* know the answer(s) to the speaker's question. But, for whatever reason, they are not permitted to share that answer with the speaker. So their opting-out is not because they fail to have the answer(s). It is because they cannot offer the answer(s). The desire-to-know explains. In asking $\mathcal{Q}$, the speaker expresses a desire to know $\mathcal{Q}$. Acknowledging that desire and stating that it cannot be fulfilled signals that one is answerless.

Seeking another's answer. Here is the data repurposed from Whitcomb (2017). Suppose a hearer does not know the answer(s) to the question they are posed. They opt-out, but don't stop there. Instead, they cooperatively suggest that a third-party be asked. The basis or explanation for asking a third-party that's cited is overwhelmingly that the third-party knows the answer(s).

(12) Let's ask Sally—she knows the answer(s).

An example is (12). The desire-to-know view tells us why knowing the answer(s) provides such a basis. Third-parties who know are consulted because third-parties who know are those who can fulfill the desire expressed by the asking.

2.2 Desire to *A*

What about attitudes weaker than knowledge? To explore whether there is parallel data to the above with weaker attitudes, we cannot just swap out *know* with other verbs like *believe* or *guess*. These verbs do not typically embed interrogatives.[4]

[4] I add the caveat *typically* because there are exceptions. For example, see the experimental and corpus evidence discussed in White (2021). As such, the defectiveness of verbs like *believe* with interrogative complements is not merely a matter of grammar. However, these complications are best avoided in the present context.

For example, *Sally wanted to believe whether Sonia sneezed* parallels the above but is defective. To avoid this wrinkle, I will swap out *know* with the nominal construction *have a N about Q* where *N* is replaced with a noun like *belief* and *about* is used to embed an interrogative.

When we use such constructions, we encounter grammatical but pragmatically odd sentences.

(13) ? Sally wanted to have a belief about whether Sonia sneezed.

(14) ? Sally wanted to have a guess whether Sonia sneezed.

We can perhaps imagine contexts where (13) or (14) are acceptable. But these are not contexts which provide parallel data. To start, neither sentence is treated as a report of Sally's asking. We do not frequently infer from such constructions that Sally asked whether Sonia sneezed.

Similarly, neither *belief* nor *guess* can be easily used to indirectly ask a question. Examples (15) and (16) perhaps have contexts where they appropriate. But it is very difficult for these to be received as indirect askings of the embedded interrogative.

(15) ? I want to have a belief about whether Sonia sneezed.

(16) ? The boss wants to have a guess about whether Sonia sneezed.

For the data above that can grammatically allow the replacement of *know* with a verb like *believe* or *guess*, matters are not better. Askings cannot be retracted with *I don't want to believe/guess* or *I don't want to have a belief/guess*, and askings cannot be prompted with *Tell me what you want to believe/guess* or *Tell me what you want to have a belief about*. Additionally, askings cannot be strengthened by modulating the strength of the desire to believe (e.g. ⌜I'm dying to believe: *Q*?⌝ is defective), and addressees cannot opt-out of askings with *I can't tell you what you want to believe/guess* or *I can't tell you what you want to have a belief/guess about*. Finally, cooperative deference to third-parties cannot felicitously take the form *Let's ask Sally—she believes the answer*(*s*). Such considerations reveal the a desire expressed is a desire for knowledge and nothing weaker.

What about desiring more? Talk of wanting to be certain or sure is more common than talk of wanting to believe or guess. But the parallel data that replaces *knows* with *be certain* or *be sure* is also not uniformly felicitous. The parallel reporting and indirection is unusual. For example, contexts can be envisioned where (17) and (18) are acceptable. But (17) is more naturally understood as reporting what Sally wants as opposed to reporting her asking.

(17) ? Sally wanted to be certain whether Sonia sneezed.

(18) ? I want to be sure whether Sonia sneezed.

Likewise, (18) is most naturally understood as an assertion about the speaker's desires as opposed to an indirect asking. Additional parallel data shakes out worse.

For example, *What do you want to be certain/sure of?* is not a prompt that can be used in ordinary contexts where certainty is not typically expected. In the concierge context mentioned above, it is noticeably awkward. Attempts to weakly ask with ⌜I kinda want to be certain/sure: Q?⌝ are awkward too. Such considerations motivate that a desire to know and not a desire for something more is what is expressed when a speaker asks a question.

3 Alternative mental states

To complete the case for the desire-to-know view, let's consider how it compares to alternatives. The alternatives considered are that the use of a canonical interrogative expresses curiosity, a desire to be told the answer(s), and/or ignorance. These alternatives are not always presented explicitly as views about which attitude or attitudes are expressed by the use of a canonical interrogative. But we can treat them as such for the purpose of exploring the plausibility of the desire-to-know view.

3.1 Curiosity

Askings plausibly express attitudes like curiosity and wonder (Whitcomb, 2010). In contrast to the parallel data involving a desire for weaker or stronger attitudes than knowledge, parallel data featuring *curious* or *wonder* are uniformly felicitous. We can report askings by reporting what someone was curious or wondering about, we can indirectly ask by self-attributing what we are are curious about, we can prompt askings by telling someone to share what they're wondering about, and so on. The data surveyed for the desire-to-know view can be modified to motivate a curiosity view.

Whether this poses a problem for the desire-to-know view depends on how curiosity and the desire to know are related. Suppose that curiosity is distinct from a desire to know.[5] Then the desire-to-know view is unaffected by there being similar arguments that askings express curiosity. The act of asking may express curiosity alongside a desire to know. Nothing limits the speech act of asking to expressing exactly one state or attitude. However, suppose that curiosity is a (type of) desire to know.[6] Then it looks like the curiosity view can explain all eight lines of data in §2.1. When speakers and hearers attribute or reference a desire to know, they are talking about curiosity.

But this is too fast. On views which identify them, curiosity is typically theorized as an *intrinsic* desire to know.[7] However, the desire-to-know view does

[5] For example, see the discussion of curiosity as an attitude that is not metacognitive in Friedman (2013, 153-156), and Carruthers (2018, 131-134). A discussion about wonder not being metacognitive is provided by Drucker (2022, 66-74).

[6] Such a view is endorsed in passing by Williamson (2000, 31), and defended in detail by Whitcomb (2010), Haziza (2022), and Nagel (Forthcoming).

[7] Among others, see Gottlieb and Oudeyer (2018, 764), Golman et al. (2021, 6), Haziza (2022, 5), and Nagel (Forthcoming).

not have this requirement. It is compatible with the expressed desire being intrinsic *or* extrinsic. As such, the desire-to-know and curiosity views have different explanatory scopes. The curiosity view, if curiosity is an intrinsic desire to know, can only explain data involving intrinsic desire. If the desire involved is non-intrinsic, only the desire-to-know view explains it.

Cases with non-intrinsic desire abound. For example, when I ask when my flight departs because I don't want to miss it, or ask when my parking expires because I don't want to get a ticket, I am asking out of a practical need. I am not intrinsically motivated to close a knowledge-gap. Rather, I am extrinsically motivated to avoid the practical costs of a missed flight or a parking ticket. Or, when I am tasked by my partner to find out whether Q, answering Q may be of no special value to me. My interest in learning its answer is entirely for the practical purpose of relaying it to my partner.

Importantly, none of the earlier lines of data require the desire attributed to be intrinsic. The self-attribution of an extrinsic desire to know will still produce a defective conjunction, still be usable for retracting, opting out, or indirectly asking. The attribution of an extrinsic desire to know to a speaker can still serve the purpose of reporting or prompting askings. As such, the desire-to-know view is still needed to explain what attitudes are expressed. If curiosity is not a desire to know, askings can express two attitudes or states. If curiosity is an intrinsic desire to know, curiosity is only expressed for the subset of askings in which the speaker expressed an intrinsic desire to know. The desire-to-know view is required to explain what question-directed attitude is expressed every other time a canonical interrogative is used.

3.2 Desire to be told

An alternative to the desire to know is the desire to be told the/an answer. Data can be furnished for this alternative paralleling our earlier data concerning a desire to know. For example, stating that someone wants to be told Q is also treated as the report that someone asked Q, one can retract an asking with *I don't want to be told* Q, the strength of askings can be modified by stating how much one wants to be told, and so on. As a consequence, one can assemble a parallel argument to defend a desire-to-be-told view.

The desire-to-be-told view differs by being addressee-centric in a way that a desire-to-know view is not. On the desire-to-know view, what a speaker wants is for themselves to know p. In contrast, the desire-to-be-told view holds that speakers want an addressee to perform an act of telling p. In many situations, these desires are plausibly intermingled. Asking is typically directed at an addressee. Assuming the desire-to-know, the pressure exerted through such directedness is naturally understood as a pressure for the addressee to facilitate the speaker knowing the answer(s). As such, what is expressed is, in effect, a desire to know *because* the addressee told them.

Nevertheless, the desires can be expressed without each other. Consider uses

of interrogatives in contexts where the speaker knows or believes that the other conversational participants do not have the answer(s) to the question that is asked. Or, relatedly, consider questions that a speaker poses to themselves such as those asked during a soliloquy. These are admittedly atypical uses. But there is nothing defective about them as askings, the default speech act performed by using an interrogative. In these cases, it seems that the speaker merely expresses the desire to know the answer(s). They do not expect this desire to be satisfied because the addressee will tell them. With such cases, only the desire-to-know view correctly explains what desire is expressed.

Even if a desire to be told is always expressed, such a desire would not distinguish askings from interrogatives used to examine a student's understanding of taught material. With the latter uses, the speaker knows the answer(s). So it is not natural to understand them as expressing a desire to know. They already do. However, it is natural to understand them as expressing a desire to be told the answer(s) by the addressee. Such considerations lead Braun (2011, 587-590) to conclude that uses of interrogatives generally express a desire to be told the true answer(s). But there is marked difference between what interrogatives express by default, and what they express when used for examination. The desire-to-know can explain this difference and the desire-to-be-told cannot. The difference is what the speaker desires. In asking but not examining, speakers express a desire for themselves to know.

3.3 Ignorance

Askings plausibly express ignorance of the answer(s) to the question asked. Some have gone a step further to defend that askings are governed by a norm—the ignorance norm—requiring speakers to not know the answer(s) to the questions asked (Whitcomb, 2017; van Elswyk and Sapir, 2021). There is much to recommend this view. However, the viability of this view has no bearing on the desire-to-know view. As noted in discussing curiosity, nothing limits the speech act of asking to expressing exactly one state or attitude. If asking does express ignorance, asking can express ignorance alongside a desire to know. If it does not, asking can still express a desire to know.

Unlike curiosity, ignorance is not a type of desiring to know. The ignorance view is therefore not a genuine alternative that can explain the eight lines of data that motivate the desire-to-know view. However, given its plausibility, noting how the desire-to-know view fits with the ignorance view is worthwhile. Ignorance of the answer(s) is a knowledge-gap. A desire to know the answer(s) provides motivation to close the knowledge-gap. When combined, the views therefore hold that asking a question expresses that the speaker has a problem (i.e. ignorance of the answer(s)) that they want solved (i.e. knowledge of the answer(s)).[8]

[8] Is expressing a desire to know p compatible with already knowing p? It seems so. For example, speakers may know p without p being luminous to them. Such cases are discussed by Archer (2018) and van Elswyk and Sapir (2021) in connection to the ignorance norm. In such cases, it is perfectly

4 The demands of desire

A desire to know is metacognitively complex. To recognize it in a speaker, one has to see the speaker as having an attitude (desire) towards an attitude (knowledge). Some might worry that the desire-to-know view is too demanding. In particular, young children ask questions but they might not be capable of such mental representation. But they are. The desires-to-know fits with various findings from development psychology.

Around their first birthday, children are tracking people's desires (Wellman and Woolley, 1990; Repacholi and Gopnik, 1997; Woodward, 1998; Gergely and Csibra, 2003). They also begin tracking who knows what in conversation. Where this knowledge tracking is most carefully studied is with respect to how infants use pointing gestures (Behne et al., 2012; Krehm et al., 2014). Children point to provide knowledge, and, importantly, point to request knowledge too (Kovács et al., 2014; Goupil et al., 2016; Lucca and Wilbourn, 2019). Such pointing behavior plausibly reflects an understanding that, when one does not know, one can want or have the goal to know it. Pointing can be used to help others achieve what they want, or to alert others as to what one wants.

A study by Begus and Southgate (2012) helps illustrate. In their experiments, a child faced an experimenter who was standing in front of a curtain. Puppets would then emerge from behind the curtain with objects that were familiar or unfamiliar to the 16-month old. After some training, children would begin to point to the objects to prompt the experimenter to label the object for them. In one condition, the experimenter labeled familiar objects correctly. In another condition, the experimenter would label some familiar objects incorrectly such as calling a banana a "shoe." What Begus and Southgate found is that children in the first condition pointed considerably more. Their explanation is that children preferred receiving answers from the knowledgeable experimenter.

By 18-24 months, children can differentiate speech acts performed by using different types of sentences (Goodhue et al., 2023). This differentiation plausibly involves attitude tracking. For example, children have learned to pair the use of an interrogative with ignorance of a question's answer (Luchkina et al., 2018), and to distinguish information-seeking from quiz questions according to what the speaker knows (Grosse and Tomasello, 2012). These abilities improve over time with preschoolers being more proficient in tracking knowledge in others than toddlers (Aguirre et al., 2022).

rational for the speaker to desire to know whether p and to express that desire. They want what they have—they just don't know they already have it. Cases in which the speaker is aware of already having the solicited answer can also be rational. The speaker is just insincere or uncooperative if the use of the interrogative is an asking as opposed to the examination another person (Bach and Harnish, 1979; Searle and Vanderveken, 1985). However, it might not be rational for a person to *inquire* into what they transparently know, if inquiry involves a desire to know. See Willard-Kyle (2023) for discussion. But to ask a question with a canonical interrogative is not the same as inquiring. It is a means by which one may inquire.

Altogether, such evidence motivates that children are capable of tracking a desire to know around the time they are able to understand that uses of interrogatives can be askings. As such, the desire-to-know view is not too demanding.

5 Conclusion

The desire-to-know view is not a complete theory of asking. It is a view about what attitude or attitudes are expressed by a speaker's use of a canonical interrogative. Offering a full theory of asking which appreciates the significance of the view outstrips the ambition of this essay. Even still, what we have seen is that the view is well-motivated (§2), that it fits naturally alongside other suggestions about what attitudes are involved with asking (§3), and that it is compatible with recent findings in developmental psychology about when kids track the knowledge and desires of others (§4).

The desire-to-know view also pairs nicely with a knowledge-centric approach to communication. A natural picture is that asking and assertion mirror each other. What speakers want when asking is what assertions provide. This is why assertions answer askings. The desire-to-know view mirrors the view that assertion expresses and requires knowledge (Williamson, 2000; van Elswyk and Benton, 2023). Accordingly, the desire-to-know view encourages us to see that knowledge is not merely central to what we do with declaratives. It is central to what we do with interrogatives too.

In discussing how the view compared to potential alternatives (§2), I repeatedly noted that it was compatible with them, *i.e.*, that a desire to know may be expressed alongside curiosity, a desire to be told, and/or ignorance. This observation was made to highlight that considerations favoring these alternatives do not count against the desire-to-know view. However, a further question raised is whether all of these states or attitudes *are* expressed by a speaker's use of a canonical interrogative. If they are, asking would stand in stark contrast to the speech act of assertion. For example, assertion is usually theorized to express one attitude such as knowledge or belief, as opposed to a whole constellation of interrelated attitudes. If they are not, perhaps expressing a desire to know is more central to asking than the others. I leave this and related questions to be asked on another occasion.[9]

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