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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1111/sjp.12574>

Posted at the Zurich Open Repository and Archive, University of Zurich

ZORA URL: <https://doi.org/10.5167/uzh-259781>

Journal Article

Published Version



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Originally published at:

Gaultier, Benoit (2024). The effort to be neutral. *Southern Journal of Philosophy*:1-10.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1111/sjp.12574>

The effort to be neutral

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Abstract

My aim in this article is to elucidate the nature of a form of intellectual and practical neutrality that is not covered by existing accounts of suspension of judgment. After rejecting some inadequate characterizations of this attitude of neutrality, I provide a positive characterization of it: it is a successful effort to resist certain tendencies that are part of the dispositional profile of the doxastic state one is in on a given issue. I conclude by saying a few words about the reasons for which this effort can be made, and by answering in the negative the question of whether all the attitudes that can be characterized as attitudes of committed neutrality are of the same type.

1 | INTRODUCTION

Anyone endeavoring to capture the nature of suspension of judgment must face an important difficulty posed by the fact that there is little agreement on what it means to suspend judgment; it is likely that what falls under one person's concept of suspension of judgment is not what falls under another's. So, when two people strongly disagree about the nature of what they take to be designated by “suspension of judgment,” there is a risk that they are simply talking past each other rather than disagreeing about one and the same thing, and that they both adequately characterize the nature of the different attitudes they designate when talking about suspension of judgment.

In this article, I shall adopt an approach to the question of the nature of suspension that will neutralize that risk. I shall simply aim to capture the nature of the type of intellectual and practical neutrality instantiated in the following two cases:

JURORS. At the beginning of a trial, Esther, as a juror, is asked by the judge to “suspend judgment—that is, to be impartial—on whether the defendant is guilty until the end of the trial, when all the evidence has been examined.” More precisely, she is asked to do this “whether or not, before the end of the trial, the evidence appears to [her] to clearly indicate that the defendant is guilty,

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or innocent.” Esther then resolves to follow this requirement and, as a result, adopts an attitude of neutrality during the entire trial that she would not have had otherwise. For instance, she does not analyze the different pieces of evidence during the trial based on any view she may have about whether the defendant is guilty.

SKEPTICISM. After having read Academic skeptics, John is convinced by their arguments to the effect that “one cannot know anything about the external world and should suspend judgment on whether things really are so-and-so”—for example, on whether there really is a table in his room, or on whether there really is a computer in front of him. John then resolves to adopt an attitude of neutrality vis-à-vis the truth-value of all propositions about the external world, and as a result treats none of them as facts. However, on this or that issue concerning the external world—for example, whether there really is a table in his room, or a computer in front of him—the evidence still appears to him to clearly indicate that things really are so-and-so.

I shall first negatively characterize the form of intellectual and practical neutrality that these subjects succeed in achieving as a result of their resolution to be so neutral. As it will turn out, this form of neutrality is not covered by existing accounts of suspension of judgment (Section 2). This means that if one is inclined to characterize this form of neutrality as a form of suspension, then these accounts do not cover all forms of suspension. Alternatively, if one is not inclined to characterize this form of neutrality as a form of suspension, these accounts do not cover all forms of “committed neutrality” (Sturgeon, 2010, p. 136). I shall then advance a positive characterization of this form of neutrality: it is an effort to resist certain tendencies that constitutively go with the doxastic state one is in on a given issue (Section 3). To conclude, I shall briefly indicate the reasons for which such efforts can be made (Section 4).

2 | WHAT ESTHER AND JOHN'S NEUTRALITY IS NOT

Regarding **SKEPTICISM**, it would clearly be false to say that John has no opinion, no belief or disbelief, about the truth or falsity of the propositions at issue—for example, the proposition that there really is a table in his room, or the proposition that there really is a computer in front of him. John is “in cognitive contact” with these propositions (Wagner, 2022, p. 674) and he has already “entertained [them] in thought” (Raleigh, 2021, p. 2451). Most importantly, he had beliefs about the truth or falsity of these propositions before taking the resolution to be neutral on them. There is also little reason to think he will stop having these beliefs after taking this resolution. There is no doubt that he will continue to believe that there really is a table in his room and a computer in front of him. For instance, if he were forced by a being he knows to be omniscient to bet a significant sum of money on whether these propositions are true, John would not hesitate to bet on their truth. And if he were free to decide how much he wants to bet on their truth, he would likely bet a huge sum of money on it.

The same goes when it comes to **JURORS**. It could be that Esther, before taking the resolution to be neutral or impartial on whether Paul, the defendant, is guilty until the end of the trial, neither believes nor disbelieves this. And it could also be that, during the trial, she is in a perfect state of indecision on this issue—a state of having an intermediate degree of confidence of 0.5 exactly as to whether Paul is guilty. But the contrary could also be the case; it could be that, if forced by our omniscient being to bet a significant sum of money on whether Paul is guilty during the trial, Esther would almost unhesitatingly bet on his guilt—and maybe with

even more confidence than if she were forced to bet on whether she parked her car on Main Street this morning, and not on Parallel Avenue, where she also often parks when she comes to the court. This would indicate that Esther's degree of confidence that Paul is guilty is (much) higher than 0.5.

It would therefore be a mistake to identify the attitudes involved in *JURORS* and *SKEPTICISM* with the attitude of having no opinion at all, or with being completely undecided or perfectly agnostic about the truth or falsity of the propositions at issue. Relatedly, the twofold distinction Matthew McGrath draws between agnosticism and suspension of judgment clearly distinguishes agnosticism from the form of neutrality at issue in *JURORS* and *SKEPTICISM*.

The first way in which McGrath thinks suspension of judgment differs from agnosticism is that “talk of ‘refraining from’ as well as ‘suspending’ judgment also suggests something agential—refusal, intentional omission—in a way that ‘being agnostic’ doesn’t” (McGrath, 2021, p. 472). That suspension of judgment has an agential dimension that agnosticism (or belief) lacks is manifest for McGrath in the fact that “being offered a reward to have an intermediate state of confidence on a question doesn’t seem like the sort of thing that can be my basis for moving into or being in such a state, not in a fully conscious and direct way, as it can for suspending” (p. 483). The second way in which McGrath thinks that suspension of judgment differs from agnosticism is that the former is about the future and is aim-directed, while the latter is not (cf. p. 472). He characterizes this aim as follows: to suspend judgment on a question is for McGrath “to put off belief-forming judgment, that is, to omit it because one aims to judge it later (and not before) or when and only when certain conditions obtain (which one does not yet believe obtain)” (p. 469). Being agnostic, on the contrary, “does not seem to require any such aim” (p. 474). For instance, if one “know[s] that [one’s] evidence and/or power of judgment will never be as good as they are currently,” or if one does not “care about getting back to the question or knowing the answer later” (p. 473), one can still be agnostic, but it seems that one cannot suspend judgment. Now, as the attitude of neutrality involved in *JURORS* and *SKEPTICISM* obviously is agential and aim-directed, it cannot be characterized as a form of agnosticism, whether perfect or not.¹

Let us turn to another negative characterization of John and Esther's attitude of neutrality. McGrath's view of suspension differs from Friedman's in that, for Friedman, suspending judgment is a *sui generis* interrogative first-order propositional attitude that “expresses or represents or just is one's neutrality or indecision” (Friedman, 2013, p. 180), and partly consists in being in an “inquiring state of mind” (cf. Friedman, 2017). But they both hold that suspending judgment on whether *p* involves an epistemic aim—that of determining whether *p*. On both their accounts, from the suspender's perspective, the suspensive attitude should favor attaining this aim. But while it is certainly true in the case of *JURORS* that the attitude of neutrality involved goes with such an aim, it cannot be the case in *SKEPTICISM*. Indeed, in this last case, John decides to be neutral vis-à-vis the truth-value of all propositions about the external world while thinking he will never be,

¹The fact that this attitude is agential and aim-directed also means that it differs strongly from forms of suspension that are “automatic,” that do not require any “prior conscious consideration” of the propositions at issue (Greenberg, 2020, p. 3291), and that are more dispositional than occurrent (cf. Sosa, 2019, p. 365). Alexander Greenberg illustrates such forms of suspension in the following way: “To use Robert Audi's example: ‘one might come to believe, through hearing a distinctive siren, that an ambulance went by, but without thinking of this proposition or considering the matter’. [...Imagine now that] I hear a siren, but I don't know the difference between ambulance and police sirens (though I recognize both as emergency-services vehicles). In such a case, I think it's plausible that an attitude of neutrality about whether an ambulance went by can play a role in my cognitive economy. It might explain why, for example, I begin to worry about whether something's happened to my infirm neighbor, and why I look out the window to check. This doesn't look like it requires prior conscious consideration of whether an ambulance has gone by, any more than belief did in Audi's original example” (Greenberg, 2020, p. 3291).

whatever his evidence, in a position to determine whether the external world really is so-and-so.² And one cannot aim at something one takes to be unattainable.³ So, admitting John does have an aim when forming the resolution to be neutral vis-à-vis the truth-value of any proposition p about the external world, this aim cannot be the epistemic aim of determining whether p .

Another negative characterization of the form of neutrality involved in JURORS and SKEPTICISM is that it does not merely consist in having a higher-order belief about one's epistemic situation as to the question of whether p , such as the belief that “one cannot yet tell whether or not p , based on one's evidence” (Raleigh, 2021, p. 2455), or the belief that one is “neither in a position to know p nor in a position to know $\sim p$ ” (Lord, 2020, p. 128). For Raleigh, the reason that such higher-order beliefs are insufficient for suspending judgment on whether p is that suspension requires that one is “in a neutral doxastic state with respect to p —i.e. [that one] neither believes that p nor disbelieves that p ”—due to one's having such higher-order beliefs (Raleigh, 2021, p. 2457). There must be, Raleigh argues, an “explanatory connection” between these higher-order beliefs and one's “doxastic neutrality concerning p ” (p. 2457). But since in JURORS and SKEPTICISM it is unlikely that the subjects concerned will be, after their resolutions, doxastically neutral on the propositions at issue, another explanation must be found of why such higher-order beliefs are intuitively insufficient for these subjects to have the neutral attitude they have in these cases.

What then about the idea that, in JURORS and SKEPTICISM, the subjects concerned have, *in addition to higher-order beliefs* such as those mentioned above, an *intention or resolution*, based on these beliefs, to be agnostic or doxastically neutral on the proposition p at issue, that is, to neither believe that p nor that not- p ? This idea comes up against two difficulties. First, since the subjects know very well, as we all do, that they can no more be doxastically neutral on whether p at will than they can believe that (not-) p at will, the intentions or resolutions in question would then have to be intentions or resolutions *to cause oneself*, in some way or other, to neither believe that p nor that not- p . But this is not what these intentions or resolutions are, intuitively speaking, in JURORS and SKEPTICISM. Second, in these two cases, Esther's and John's form of neutrality consists in the attitude they have vis-à-vis the propositions in question as a result of their having formed the resolution to have this attitude and does not just consist in their having formed this resolution.

3 | WHAT ESTHER'S AND JOHN'S NEUTRALITY IS

How then to characterize the nature of the form of neutrality Esther and John exemplify in JURORS and SKEPTICISM, which does not appear to be covered by existing accounts of suspension of judgment? As has often been underlined in the literature on the nature of suspension, this attitude appears to be an attitude of “committed neutrality,” to use Scott Sturgeon's enlightening phrasing (Sturgeon, 2010, p. 136). It is, however, at least to the best of my knowledge, always presupposed in the literature that this neutrality is doxastic, that is, that it consists in neither believing that p nor that not- p , and instead in being in a state of neutral opinion or indecision as to whether p . There is, however, a way of being neutral as to whether p that does not consist in

²John then is what Machuca (2021) or Ferrari and Incurvati (2022) call a “pessimist agnostic”. For these authors, when one takes one's evidence to be insufficient to determine whether p , one can suspend on this issue in three different ways, depending on one's belief on whether “further enquiry [will] deliver evidence that settles p positively or negatively” (Ferrari & Incurvati, 2022, p. 374) (in other words, on whether “evidence will ever be available that might make it possible to decide whether p ” [Machuca, 2021, p. 34]). The “optimist agnostic” believes this will happen, the “pessimist agnostic” believes it will not, and the “pyrrhonian” or “hesitant” agnostic believes neither of these things and suspends judgment on this issue too. As Ferrari and Incurvati remark, “while optimistic and hesitant agnosticism leave the enquiry into whether p open, pessimistic agnosticism effectively closes the enquiry” (p. 375).

³This does not mean that ideals—of morality, for instance—cannot guide or regulate one's life. Indeed, while one cannot aim at attaining them, one can aim at getting closer and closer to them—that is, so to speak, at making as many steps as possible in their direction.

being *doxastically* neutral as to whether p . In order to see this, let us consider William Alston's list of the six main tendencies that constitute for him the “dispositional profile” of belief:

- (1) If S believes that p , then if someone asks S whether p , S will have a tendency to respond in the affirmative.
- (2) If S believes that p , then if S considers whether it is the case that p , S will tend to feel it to be the case that p , with one or another degree of confidence.
- (3) If S believes that p , then S will tend to believe propositions that he or she takes to follow from p .
- (4) If S believes that p , then S will tend to use p as a premise in theoretical and practical reasoning where this is appropriate.
- (5) If S believes that p , then if S learns that not- p , S will tend to be surprised.
- (6) If S believes that p , then S will tend to act in ways that would be appropriate if it were the case that p , given S's goals, aversions, and other beliefs. (Alston, 1996, p. 4)

A crucial distinction should be made between these six tendencies. Tendencies (2), (3), and (5) can be said to be irresistible: when subjects believe that p , there is nothing they can do to resist the associated tendencies to (i) feel it to be the case that p , (ii) be surprised if they learn that not- p , and (iii) believe that q when they believe that p implies q . It is only by ceasing to believe that p that they can cease to (i) feel it to be the case that p , (ii) be surprised if they learn that not- p , and (iii) believe that q when they believe that p implies q . Things are different, however, when it comes to the tendencies (1), (4), and (6). These tendencies are resistible in the sense that, even while believing that p , we can still resist (i) responding in the affirmative when asked whether p , (ii) using p as a premise in theoretical and practical reasoning, and (iii) acting as if it were the case that p .

One's resolution to be neutral on whether p can then consist in the resolution to resist the three tendencies (1), (4), and (6) that are part of the dispositional profile of one's state of believing that p yet still resistible. This resolution—which one can take while being in this state, as in SKEPTICISM, or before being in it, as in JURORS—must be distinguished from the resolution to be doxastically neutral on whether p , which is the resolution not to be in the state of believing that p nor in that of believing that not- p , with their respective irresistible tendencies.

Consider now how Alston and Jonathan Cohen take acceptance to differ from belief. For Cohen, accepting a proposition is treating it “as given . . . for deciding what to do or think in a particular context” (Cohen, 1992, p. 4). For Alston, it is including this proposition “in one's repertoire of (supposed) facts on which one will rely in one's theoretical and practical reasoning” (Alston, 1996, p. 8). This involves performing “a voluntary act of committing oneself to [p], to resolve to use [p] as a basis for one's thought, attitude, and behavior. (And, of course, it involves being disposed to do so as a result of this voluntary acceptance)” (p. 17). Note that, for Alston, acting, talking, and reasoning as if it were a fact that p is not sufficient for accepting that p . Doing this is compatible with believing that not- p . But accepting that p requires “really taking seriously the idea that [p is] true” (p. 17)—or, more strongly, taking one's evidence to make p more likely than not- p (cf. pp. 10–11), “though not enough to make it something I find myself believing” (Alston, 2007, p. 132).

Resolving to resist the tendencies (1), (4), and (6) that are part of the dispositional profile of any belief that p —that is, the tendencies to respond in the affirmative when asked whether p , to

use p as a premise in theoretical and practical reasoning, and to act as if p were the case—can then be seen as a refusal to accept that p without accepting that not- p .

Consider also how Will Fleischer characterizes a subject S 's endorsement of a proposition p in a research domain d . This endorsement requires that:

- (1) S is disposed to assert that p , or otherwise express commitment to p (in d).
- (2) S takes herself to be obligated to defend p (in d).
- (3) S treats p as a premise in her further reasoning (in d).
- (4) S shapes her research program in d (in part) based on p .
- (5) S is resiliently committed to p (in d).
- (6) S takes p to be a live option (i.e. she doesn't know p is false).
- (7) In endorsing p , S aims to promote healthy inquiry. (Fleischer, 2018, p. 2652)

Resolving to resist the tendencies (1), (4), and (6) that are part of the dispositional profile of any belief that p is, or implies, opposing the satisfaction of the conditions (1)–(5) that must be satisfied for p to be endorsed, according to Fleischer. Such a resolution can then be seen as a refusal to endorse p , and so, as a refusal to endorse one's belief that p .

However, Esther's and John's neutral attitudes vis-à-vis the propositions at issue are not just that of having resolved to resist these tendencies. For one to be neutral on whether p in the way Esther and John are, it is also necessary that, as a result of such resolutions, one *succeeds* (to a significant extent) in resisting the tendencies (1), (4), and (6) that are part of the dispositional profile of believing that p . Since it is hardly conceivable that one can be engaged in an activity of trying to resist something without being continuously voluntarily engaged in it, then even if one woke up with one's brain having been manipulated so that one finds oneself at that very moment in a state that is identical to that of resisting the tendencies (1), (4), and (6), no activity of resisting these tendencies could follow that moment unless one formed and maintained the resolution to do so. Esther's and John's form of intellectual and practical neutrality can then be characterized as *the (significantly) successful deliberate effort to resist certain of the tendencies constitutively attached to the doxastic state one is in on an issue*—that is, the tendencies (1), (4), and (6). When this state is weaker than that of belief in terms of degree of confidence—when this state is, for instance, that of suspecting something to be the case—then the force of these tendencies will be weaker than if they had been attached to a state of belief. Hence, it will be easier to resist them. (The tendencies [2], [3], and [5], though also weaker, will still be irresistible). When this state is a state of perfect neutrality or agnosticism on the issues in question, the force of these tendencies will be nil, offering no resistance to one's will.

The effort to resist the tendencies in question arguably is, as an effort, not an *act* or a *state* but, rather, a goal-directed *activity* stretching over time. Metaphysically speaking, it is a *process*. Because this effort is also, like any effort, under one's direct control, and it follows from a resolution of the subject concerned, it can be described as an “agential commitment,” to use Alfred Mele's way of characterizing strength of will (cf. Mele, 1995, pp. 71–74). This makes the form of neutrality at issue in this article agential in a way in which being agnostic (or believing) is not. Following force-based theories of effort that define efforts as “exertions of forces against some resistive force in order to reach some goal” (Bermúdez & Massin, 2023, p. 2; cf. also de Vignemont & Massin, 2015), the sort of effort this form of neutrality consists in can be

characterized as the agential, goal-directed⁴ mental activity of exerting a force against the resistive force of some of one's doxastic states.

Accordingly, not trusting one's judgment is not sufficient for one to have the attitude of neutrality in question. Suppose, for instance, that John observes that his doxastic state as to whether there really is a table in his room is not sensitive to the skeptical arguments that he judges to entirely defeat the perceptual evidence that leads him to be in the doxastic state of believing that there is a table there. Suppose also that John has strong practical reasons to rely on the proposition that there is table there in his actions and reasonings, and to affirm this proposition (e.g., he will get an important sum of money if does this). If, because of these reasons, John does not make the effort to resist the tendencies (1), (4), and (6) attached to his doxastic state of believing that there is a table in the room, he does not have the attitude of neutrality in question on this issue, even if he no longer trusts his judgment after having observed his doxastic insensitivity to the Ancient skeptics' arguments. Relatedly, this underlines that merely dissimulating certain of one's beliefs and acting as if one did not have them is not sufficient for one to have the attitude of neutrality in question. Indeed, if, for example, one resists one's tendencies to act, talk, and overtly reason in line with one's belief that French theory is a philosophical nightmare—because one has been very kindly invited for dinner by affable French Deleuzian philosophers—but one does not make any effort to cease making mental inferences based on the belief that French theory is a philosophical nightmare, one's attitude is not that of Esther and John in *JURORS* and *SKEPTICISM*.

This last point is most important, as it helps us to see why the attitude of nondoxastic committed neutrality, as we may call it, is not just “pretend neutrality.” Let me further underline this point by considering the question of whether we would say that Esther merely demonstrates “pretend impartiality” when she follows the judge's requirement to be impartial on whether the defendant is guilty until the end of the trial, when all the evidence has been examined, even if, before the end of the trial, the evidence appears to her to clearly indicate whether the defendant is guilty or not. If, in order to meet this requirement, and during the entire trial, (i) Esther commits to, and engages in, making the effort not to assess the different pieces of evidence during the trial on the basis of any view she may have about whether the defendant is guilty, and (ii) she succeeds in doing this to a significant degree, would it be appropriate to say that she merely demonstrated “pretend impartiality” during the trial, not real impartiality? Clearly not, in my opinion. Now, as this intellectual kind of impartiality corresponds to the attitude of nondoxastic committed neutrality I have focused on in this article, it would then be inappropriate to describe this form of neutrality as merely “pretend neutrality.” Relatedly, because this attitude involves the commitment to making the sort of effort, stretching over time, that Esther makes in *JURORS* to prevent some of her beliefs from affecting her intellectual life and verbal and practical behavior, this attitude cannot be identified with the temporarily unextended act of concealing, on this or that occasion, the beliefs in question, or of blocking, on this or that occasion, their discursive and behavioral expression.

Let us now come back to *SKEPTICISM*. Imagine John, after having read Academic skeptics, commits to, and engages in, making the temporarily extended effort to prevent (to the extent this is possible) his belief that there really is a table in his room and a computer in front of him from affecting his intellectual life and his verbal and practical behavior. Imagine also that he succeeds in doing this to a sufficient extent. He can then be described as having an attitude of nondoxastic committed neutrality vis-à-vis the truth of these things. The effort in question will, however, be particularly difficult because his degree of confidence (over which he has no control) that these beliefs are true is very high, which makes the force of the doxastic

⁴On the goal-directed dimension of such efforts to be neutral, see the next section, on reasons to be neutral.

tendencies he tries to resist very strong indeed, and far stronger than in a case where someone merely suspects or has a middling credence that something is the case.⁵

Let me conclude this section by noting that from the fact that the form of neutrality at issue in this article is a deliberate effort to resist certain “doxastic tendencies,” as we can call them, some interesting consequences directly follow. First, because it is an effort and not a state of agnosticism, whether settled or merely provisional, it is unlikely that this form of neutrality will result in the *ataraxia* or “calm state of mind” Sextus Empiricus was aiming at by suspending judgment. Second, because it is an effort to resist doxastic tendencies the force of which can be strong (in particular, those attached to a state of belief), suspending in this way is *difficult* (which is, in passing, consonant with classical representations of suspension of judgment). Third, being an effort to resist doxastic tendencies, this form of neutrality admits of degrees, because efforts are things that admit of degrees, and one can resist something to a greater or lesser extent.

4 | REASONS TO BE NEUTRAL

What are the reasons for which one can make the kind of effort to be nondoxastically neutral that Esther and John make? In *SKEPTICISM*, John makes this effort on questions like that of whether there really is a table in his room based on higher-order beliefs like those mentioned above—that is, that the evidence does not put him in a position to tell, or to know, whether there really is a table in his room. John's suspension then is based on epistemic reasons. John is in the doxastic state of belief, but he judges the evidence that leads him to be in this doxastic state to be defeated by some other evidence, to which he is not doxastically sensitive—that is, the Ancient skeptics' arguments. So, John thinks he does not have sufficient evidence for the truth of the proposition in question to rely on it in his reasonings and actions, or to assert it, and then makes the effort to be neutral on its truth-value.

Things are a bit different in *JURORS*. Esther's effort to be nondoxastically neutral during the trial could be made while believing that (i) she already has very strong undefeated evidence that Paul is guilty (let us imagine that he just confessed to the crime), but that (ii) she should not take this as a premise in her reasonings about the evidence to come, in order to best evaluate it and to maximize her chances of having a true belief about his guilt or innocence at the end of the trial. Esther would then make the effort to be nondoxastically neutral for zetetic reasons rather than for evidential—that is, *purely* epistemic—reasons, as she has no rebutting or undercutting evidence to defeat her strong evidence that Paul is guilty.⁶

The effort to resist certain tendencies that are constitutive of the dispositional profile of any belief that *p* can also be made for practical reasons. Suppose Lila believes, based on her evidence, that she will not get the position for which she applied, but also believes that, if she does not (significantly) succeed in preventing this belief from affecting her intellectual life, behavior, and discourse in the way this belief naturally would, negative consequences would follow, whereas nothing terrible would happen otherwise. She could then decide for this reason to make the effort to resist the doxastic tendencies attached to her belief that she will not get the position for which she applied.

⁵Many thanks to an anonymous referee for this journal for having prompted the much-needed clarifications contained in the last two paragraphs.

⁶Esther's reasons to make the effort to be nondoxastically neutral qualify as “zetetic” because they are non-evidential but also not practical. They are reasons to make this effort given her epistemic aim of figuring out the right answer to the question of whether the defendant is guilty. In other words, Esther's situation in *JURORS* appears to be one of those situations where we ought not believe what we are permitted to believe given our evidence, because this would or could prevent us from “end[ing] up in the sort of epistemic state we want or need to end up in” (Friedman, 2020, p. 526).

Accordingly, the effort to be neutral on whether p by resisting one's doxastic tendencies to reason, act, and talk as if it were the case that p can be made for evidential, or purely epistemic, reasons as well as for zetetic and practical reasons. This is not to say, however, that there is no irrationality involved in nondoxastic committed neutrality: having evidential (or purely epistemic), zetetic, or practical reasons to make the effort in question supposes being in a doxastic state that is insensitive to these reasons. If rationality is (partly at least) interpreted in terms of sensitivity to reasons, this means that having these reasons supposes a form of irrationality. This is particularly plausible when the reasons to which one is doxastically insensitive are evidential, such as in SKEPTICISM: while John's effort can be characterized as epistemically rational as an effort to act, talk, and reason on whether p in line with his judgment about his evidence on whether p , there is also a form of epistemic irrationality in John's situation because his doxastic state on whether p is insensitive to his judgment. Epistemic rationality would then require John not just to make the effort to be neutral, but also to cause himself (as one cannot believe, or stop believing, at will) to be in a doxastic state on whether p that fits his judgment about his evidence on whether p .

5 | CONCLUSION

Let us conclude by considering the question of whether all the attitudes that can be characterized as attitudes of committed neutrality are of the same type. To this question the answer is negative, because while the attitudes of committed neutrality I have examined in this article do *not* involve doxastic neutrality, the attitudes of committed neutrality on which the literature on suspension of judgment focuses *do* involve doxastic neutrality.⁷ And I think that this difference is sufficient to make the former and the latter attitudes two different types of attitudes of committed neutrality. Does it follow from this that “committed neutrality” is a family resemblance concept? Not necessarily, because one could argue that the conditions that are necessary and sufficient for having attitudes of nondoxastic committed neutrality are sufficient for having attitudes of committed neutrality in general, whether doxastic or nondoxastic. If so, “committed neutrality” would not really be a family resemblance concept but would rather be a concept the extension of which would include (at least) two different types of attitudes.⁸

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

Open access funding provided by Universitat Zurich.

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⁷Friedman (2017) and Archer (2023) are exceptions. For them believing that p and suspending judgment on whether p are compossible but rationally problematic. I am rather inclined to think that the attitudes of committed neutrality on which the literature on suspension of judgment focuses are not compossible with belief.

⁸Thanks to two referees for this journal for having pressed me to say a few words about how I see the relation between the attitudes of committed neutrality at issue in the literature on suspension of judgment and the attitude of non-doxastic committed neutrality I have explored in this paper.

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