

Announcements and Such

- One Song — *Funkadelic*
 - “I’ll Stay” from *Standing On the Verge of Getting it On*
- **Final Exam will be:**
 Wednesday, May 16, 5-8pm @ 141 MCCONE
- **Possible Questions to be posted on May 1**
- **Today: Skepticism III**
 - Closure vs Relevant alternatives (review)
 - Closure, foundationalism, “easy knowledge”
 - Knowing, showing, and *order* confusions
 - Interlude - The Paradox of the Knower
- **Next Time: Skepticism IV**

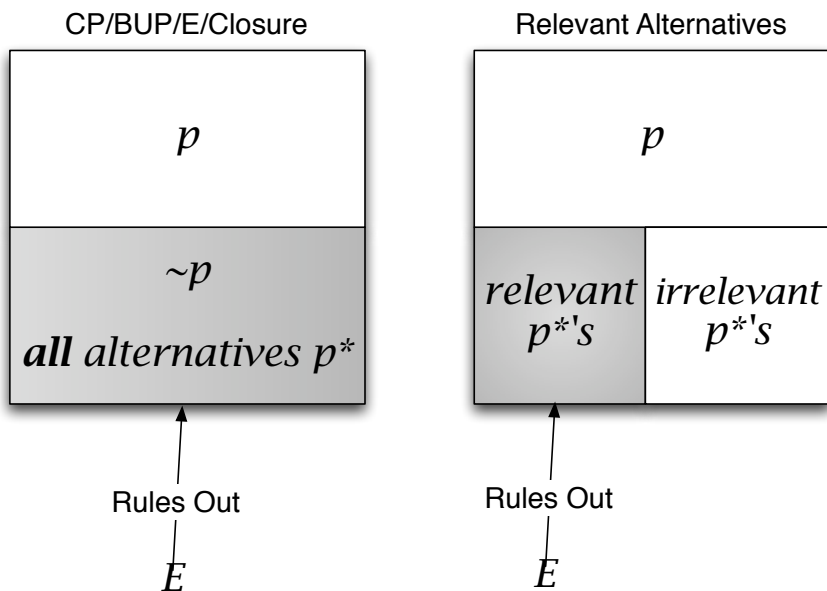
Skepticism III

Entailment and Inferential Grounds IV

- On a “relevant alternatives” account of knowledge, *S*’s belief that *p* constitutes *knowledge if S’s total evidence rules-out (not all possible, but) all relevant alternatives to p.*
- So, Dretske’s account is weaker than (BUP), hence, weaker than (C). This allows him to *reject closure* (and related principles like E and BUP).
- At the same time, this also allows Dretske to maintain that we *do know some things.*
- For instance, we know that it’s *zebra* before us, since our evidence rules-out all *relevant* alternatives to *this* (think: normal zoo stuff).
- But, we *don’t* know it’s *not a cleverly painted horse*, since our evidence *doesn’t* rule-out all relevant alternatives to *this* possibility. Dretske calls such (odd) possibilities “heavyweight”.

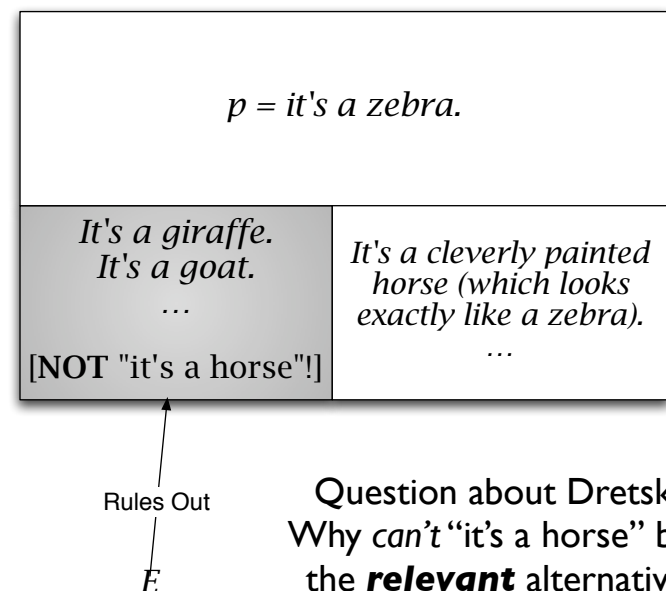
Skepticism III

Entailment and Inferential Grounds V



Skepticism III

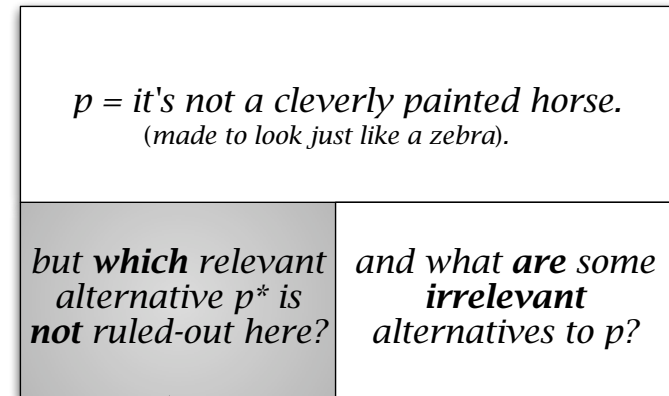
Entailment and Inferential Grounds V



Skepticism III
Entailment and Inferential Grounds V

- The answer comes from the following fact:
 - **Fact.** Assume (1) S knows that p , (2) p^* is an *irrelevant* alternative to p that is *not* ruled-out by S 's grounds (E) for p , (3) p^* entails q . Then:
 - (4) q must be an *irrelevant* alternative to p .
 - *Why?* Assume, for *reductio*, that (1)–(3) are true, but that (4) is false. That is, assume (1)–(3), but that q is a *relevant* alternative to p . If q is a relevant alternative to p , then q must be *ruled-out* by (E), since (1) S knows p . But, if E rules-out q , then it also rules out p^* , since (3) p^* entails q . But, if E rules-out p^* , then this *contradicts* (2).
 - If we apply this Fact to Dretske's zebra case, it follows that $q =$ "it's a horse" *must* be an *irrelevant* alternative to p . That's a bit odd, no?

Skepticism III
Entailment and Inferential Grounds V



Does **NOT** Rule Out!!

E

Presumably, "it is a cleverly painted horse" is *not* ruled-out. But, is *that* alternative *relevant* here? *Why?*

Skepticism III
Entailment and Inferential Grounds VI

- There are other interesting consequences of closure, when combined with foundationalism.
- Recall, foundationalists assume that there is such a thing as *basic knowledge*, which is defined as:
 - (BK) S has *basic knowledge* of p just in case S knows p prior to knowing that the cognitive source of S 's knowing p is reliable.
- If we combine (BK) with closure, then we can get what Shapiro calls "Easy Knowledge".
- Example: My friend wants a red table for his room, but he is worried that the table in front of us on the showroom floor that *looks* red might be white with red lights shining on it. I try to reassure him by the following reasoning.

Skepticism III
Entailment and Inferential Grounds VII

- (1) The table looks red.
- (2) The table is red.
- (3) If the table is red, then it is not white with red lights shining on it.
- (4) The table is not white with red lights shining on it.
- On standard foundationalist theories, I (and he) can come to know (2) on the basis of (1).
- Since we know (3) *a priori*, then given closure, we can come to know (4), on the basis of (2) and (3).
- It seems like we've come to know (4) *too easily*.
 - Note: even if $K(4)$ is true, $KK(4)$ needn't be!

Skepticism III Entailment and Inferential Grounds VIII

- There is a related problem that Jonathan Vogel calls “Bootstrapping”, which involves obtaining “easy knowledge” about one’s own reliability.
- Example: My friend is worried about the reliability of my color perception. I say, “Let’s check it out.” I set up a slide show in which the screen will change colors every few seconds. Then, I proceed to observe and reason as follows
 - (1) At t_1 , the screen looks red.
 - (2) At t_1 , the screen is red. [from (1), by (BK)]
 - (3) My color perception was accurate at t_1 . [follows from (1) and (2), so I apply closure]
 - (4) At t_1 , the screen looks blue
... < repeat this procedure n times >
 - ... So, by closure again, my color perception has always been accurate in the past (at all n times).

Skepticism III Entailment and Inferential Grounds IX

- Now, by inductive inference (we can assume as many instances of this pattern have been instantiated in the past as you like), I infer:
 - My color perception is always reliable.
- This seems like “easy knowledge” of the reliability of my own color perception.
- But, all this argument requires is (BK), closure, and the reliability of an inductive inference that seems OK (if *any* inductive inference is OK).
- If this is right, then it seems that we can’t have foundationalism, closure, and the reliability of inductive inference simultaneously.
- But, which one of these three should we give up? Either we go anti-foundationalist, or we go anti-closure, or we go for inductive skepticism.
- Maybe *this* is a reason to give up closure?

Skepticism III Knowing, Showing, and Order Confusions I

- When the skeptic asks “Do you *know p*?”, this tends to shift the question of whether I *know p* (Kp) to whether I *know that* I know p (KKp).
- The skeptic wants me to *show* that I know p (Kp). *Showing* requires offering *premises in support of the claim* that I know p (i.e., to *justify* Kp).
- I may not be able to do this — especially in light of the skeptical challenges the skeptic presents.
- Here’s a salient quote from Stroud:
 - If somebody knows something, p , he must know the falsity of all those things incompatible with his knowing that p (or perhaps all those things he knows to be incompatible with his knowing that p).
- This presupposes (KK). Why accept *that*?

Skepticism III Knowing, Showing, and Order Confusions II

- If we’re not careful about these order issues, we might be persuaded by the following reasoning:
 1. S ’s total evidence in the bad case (E_b) supports p to the same degree (may be *inductive* support) as S ’s total evidence in the good case (E_g) does.
 2. If (1) is true, then S knows p in the good case *if and only if* S knows p in the bad case.
 3. S does *not* know p in the bad case (since p is *false* in the bad case, and Kp entails p).
 4. Therefore, S does *not* know p in the *good* case.
- The subtle problem with this argument is (1).
- The skeptical dialectics *really* seem to motivate:
(1*) E_b and E_g support Kp to the same degree.

Skepticism III

Knowing, Showing, and Order Confusions III

- But, do the skeptical arguments even motivate:
 - (1*) *Eb* and *Eg* support *Kp* to the same degree?
- Putnam (“Brains in a vat”) isn’t convinced. The skeptical scenarios cannot be *too* radical, or the skeptical argument will undermine itself.
- If the skeptical scenario is bizarre *enough*, then, in the bad case, my sentences won’t express the salient propositions (or any propositions at all!).
- For instance, if I’m now *and have always been* a BIV, then “I know I have hands” doesn’t express the same proposition in the good case and the bad case. What *are Eb* and *Kp* in the bad case?
- Hard to say! This can be fixed. If I’m a *recently envatted* BIV, then *Eb* and *Eg* will express the same proposition, and *Kp* will be same in both.

Skepticism III

Knowing, Showing, and Order Confusions III

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Skepticism III

Interlude – The Paradox of the Knower I

- Consider the following self-referential statement:
 - (*p*) Sentence *p* is not known to be true.
- But, we can *prove p* is true, as follows:
 - (1) If *p* is false, then *p* is true.
 - (2) If (1), then *p* is true.
 - Therefore, (3) *p* is true.
- To see (1), reason as follows. Assume *p* is false. Nothing false can be known to be true. Therefore, *p* is not known to be true. Hence, *p*.
- (2) is a theorem of logic. Basically, (2) is equivalent to: either *p* is true or *p* is true.
- (3) follows from (1) and (2) by *modus ponens*.
- Thus, we have just *proven p self-evidently!*

Skepticism III

Interlude – The Paradox of the Knower II

- Here’s another plausible principle:
 - (*) If you can *prove p self-evidently*, then you *know* that *p* is true, *a priori*.
- Therefore, by (*), we *know* that *p* is true.
- Hence, *p* is known to be true.
- But, *p* says of itself that it is *not* known to be true. Paradox! BUT — is (*) *closure in disguise?*
- Here’s a related paradox:
 - (G) God does not know that G is true.
- *We can prove* (unparadoxically!) that God does not know that G is true!
- This seems like an *a priori* proof that God is not omniscient. And, **he can’t** seem to prove this!