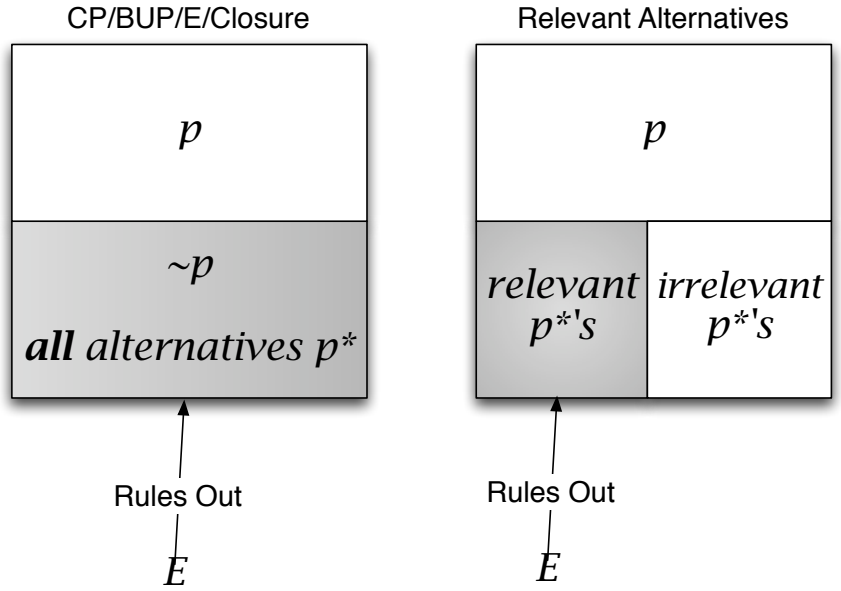
Announcements and Such

- 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*

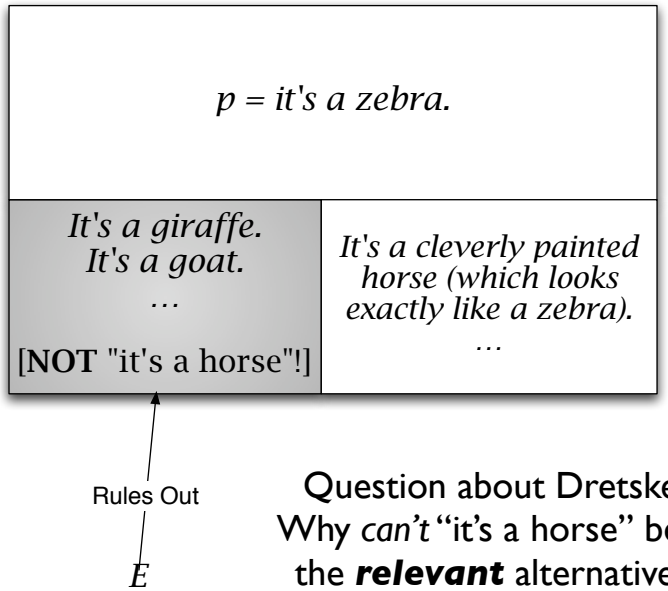
Skepticism III
Entailment and Inferential Grounds IV

- 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

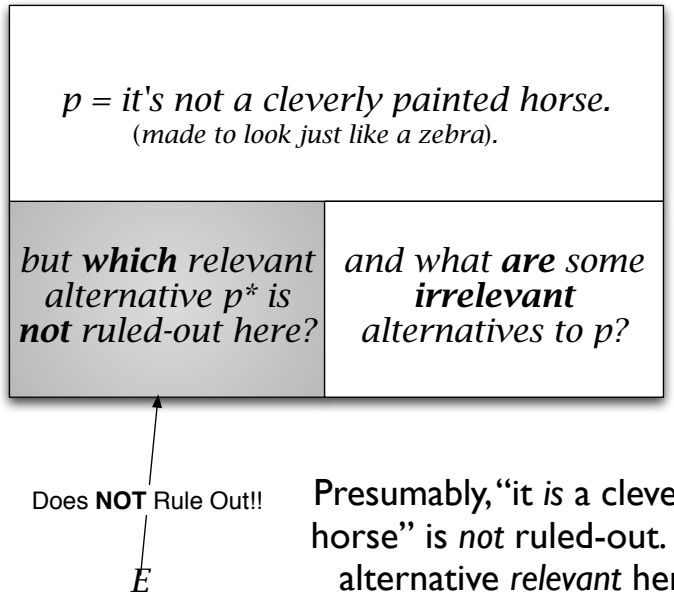


Question about Dretske's line:
Why *can't* "it's a horse" be among the ***relevant*** alternatives to *p*?

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



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 t1, the screen looks red.
  - (2) At t1, the screen is red. [from (1), by (BK)]
  - (3) My color perception was accurate at t1. [follows from (1) and (2), so I apply closure]
  - (4) At t1, 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 (*Eb*) supports *p to the same degree* (may be *inductive* support) as *S*'s total evidence in the good case (*Eg*) 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*) *Eb* and *Eg* 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!