

Readings:

DeRose, K. (1995), 'Solving the Skeptical Problem', *The Philosophical Review* **104**, pp. 1-52.

Lewis, D. (1996), 'Elusive Knowledge', in Bernecker and Dretske, ch. 26.

1. DeRose endorses Nozick's account (at least as being on the right track):

S knows that P iff:

- It is true that P.
- S believes that P.
- If it were not true that P then S would not believe that P.
- If it were true that P then S would believe that P.

Or: **S tracks the truth that P**

2. Nozick's response to the skeptical argument is to deny the second premise; more generally, to deny Closure:

(Closure) If S knows that P, and S know that if P then it follows that Q, then it follows that S knows that Q.

Nozick uses his account to argue that Closure fails: we can know that we have hands (for example), without knowing that we are not BIVs.¹ (We can track the truth of the former, without tracking the truth of the latter.)

3. But DeRose thinks this is wrong, because denying Closure forces us to accept abominable conjunctions: 'I know that I have hands, but I do not know that I am not a (handless) BIV'.
4. DeRose prefers a *contextualist* version of Nozick's account:

An utterance of 'S knows that P' in a context C is true iff S tracks the truth of P as far from reality as the epistemic standards of C require.

(An utterance of 'S does *not* know that P' in a context C is true iff S does *not* track the truth of P as far from reality as the epistemic standards of C require.)

5. DeRose gives an account of what an *epistemic standard* is: it is how far from actuality S is required to track the truth that P in order to count as knowing that P.

If the epistemic standards are *low*, one can know that P without tracking the truth that P very far from actuality.

If the epistemic standards are *high*, for one to know that P one must track the truth that P a long way from actuality.

6. How far from actuality S tracks the truth that P is a measure of the strength of her epistemic position with respect to P. One is always in at least as strong an epistemic position with respect to the proposition that one is not a BIV as one is in with respect to

¹ See Nozick, R. (1981), 'Knowledge and Scepticism', in Bernecker and Dretske, ch. 25. (Also in the reader.)

the proposition that one has hands. Hence P_2 is true. More generally, Closure is true, when uttered in a fixed context.

7. What is the mechanism by which the skeptic raises the epistemic standards? DeRose proposes the 'Rule of Sensitivity': When a speaker utters 'S knows that P' or 'S does not know that P', the standards for knowledge are raised (if need be) to such a level that to know that P one must track the truth that P at least as far as the closest worlds in which P is false.
8. Now to Lewis. Lewis endorses a contextualist version of relevant alternatives account of knowledge:

An utterance of 'S knows that P' is true iff S's evidence eliminates every possibility in which it is false that P, except for those possibilities which the speaker is properly ignoring.

9. Which possibilities are eliminated by S's evidence? Those in which her perceptual experience and memory are different from how they actually are.
10. Which possibilities can a speaker properly ignore? Lewis gives (roughly) the following rules:
 - Rule of Actuality:
Actuality cannot be properly ignored.
 - Rule of Belief:
Any possibility that the subject believes to obtain cannot be properly ignored.
 - Rule of Resemblance:
Any possibility that saliently resembles a possibility that cannot be properly ignored, cannot be properly ignored.
 - Rule of Reliability:
Any possibility in which a reliable method fails can be properly ignored.
 - Rules of Method:
Any possibility in which a sample is not representative, or in which the best explanation is not the true explanation, can be properly ignored.
 - Rule of Conservatism:
Generally ignored possibilities can be properly ignored.
 - Rule of Attention:
Any possibility not ignored cannot be properly ignored.
11. Lewis sums up the contextualist account this way: Epistemology destroys knowledge. Knowledge is elusive: examine it, and straightaway it vanishes.