Second Paper Topic
Philosophy 102
Spring, 2016

Length should be approximately 5 pages. Please use a line spacing of 3 lines per inch and a left margin of 1½ inches, 1 inch elsewhere. Point size may be no less than 10. Please be sure the printing is clear and that the paper stock is of a type that does not make it difficult to produce handwritten comments.   Papers will be evaluated on the basis of both content and quality of writing. You may if you wish cite the Web notes for this class, but this is not a research paper that would require other sources.

Due: Tuesday, May 31, in class.

Epistemological contextualists have claimed that the truth-value of an epistemic attribution (an attribution of knowledge or ignorance to an epistemic subject in the subject's particular circumstances) varies with the context of attribution. Devise your own case (similar to Dretske's zoo case) in which a single epistemic subject in a single circumstance is attributed knowledge by an epistemic attributor in one context and ignorance by the same attributor in another context. In other words, devise a case in which attributor A attributes knowledge that p in circumstances c to an epistemic subject S in context of attribution C_1 but attributes ignorance that p in c to S in context of attribution C_2. Be sure to explain what it is about the context that brings about the change in attribution.

Next, explain why you think the attributions vary with the context. (Hint: it would seem to involve the raising or lowering of epistemic standards on the part of A.) What do you think are the consequences of this phenomenon of variability in attribution? For example, do you think that there is no fixed standard of knowledge? That attributors mean different things in different contexts of attribution? That there is no fact of the matter about the truth or falsehood of sentences of the form 'S knows that p'? That there is a fixed standard of knowledge and that when there is variation, there is an error in one of the epistemic attributions? That something else is going on? Whichever explanation you give, try to give good reasons to accept your diagnosis as the best.