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Conflicts in interpretation

Abstract

Parmenion's assassination was inevitable. Or not? In order to communicate their speculative thoughts, speakers effectively use their implicit knowledge of how hearers arrive at the optimal interpretation of a speaker's utterance in a certain context. Optimization is a major concept in many areas of cognition. The central hypothesis advocated in this talk is that optimization plays a crucial role in natural language interpretation, too. The optimal interpretation of an expression is computed by evaluating candidate interpretations against a ranked set of (potentially) conflicting constraints.