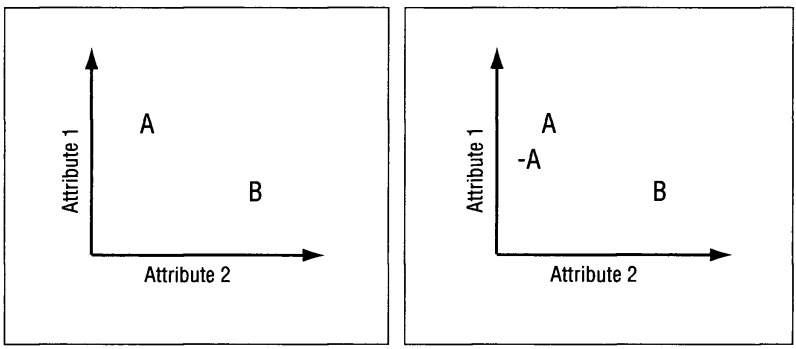
To better understand how relativity works, consider the following illustration:



In the left side of this illustration we see two options, each of which is better on a different attribute. Option (A) is better on attribute 1—let's say quality. Option (B) is better on attribute 2—let's say beauty. Obviously these are two very different options and the choice between them is not simple. Now consider what happens if we add another option, called (–A) (see the right side of the illustration). This option is clearly worse than option (A), but it is also very similar to it, making the comparison between them easy, and suggesting that (A) is not only better than (–A) but also better than (B).

In essence, introducing (–A), the decoy, creates a simple relative comparison with (A), and hence makes (A) look better, not just relative to (–A), but overall as well. As a consequence, the inclusion of (–A) in the set, even if no one ever selects it, makes people more likely to make (A) their final choice.

Does this selection process sound familiar? Remember the pitch put together by the *Economist*? The marketers there knew that we didn't know whether we wanted an Internet subscription or a print subscription. But they figured that, of