Phil. 270: Thursday, 4/9/20: Nozick, Nonclosure, and Skepticism

Closure, Single- and multi-premise closure, from simple to more advanced forms:

$K(p) \& p \Rightarrow q$	$K(q)$	$K(p_1) \& K(p_2) \& \ldots K(p_n) \& (p_1\text{-}p_n) \Rightarrow q$	$K(q)$
$K(p) \& K(p \Rightarrow q)$	$K(q)$	$K(p_1) \& K(p_2) \& \ldots K(p_n) \& K[(p_1\text{-}p_n) \Rightarrow q]$	$K(q)$
$K(p) \& CD(p \rightarrow q)$	$K(q)$	$K(p_1) \& K(p_2) \& \ldots K(p_n) \& CD[(p_1\text{-}p_n) \rightarrow q]$	$K(q)$

Where $CD(p \rightarrow q)$ means: the subject has competently deduced q from p, and has thereby come to have the attitude of knowledge toward q, if they didn't have that attitude toward q already

-Problem of the Aggregation of Risk

Adjusted AI:

-Regular, old "Argument from Ignorance" (AI):

1. You don't know that you're not a BIV
2. If you don't know that you're not a BIV, then you don't know that you have hands

So, C. You don't know that you have hands

-Adjusted AI; adjusted first premise, adjusted second premise, conclusion:

You don't know you have hands, because if you did know you had hands, you'd be able to competently deduce from that that you're not a bodiless brain in a vat, and thereby come to know that you're not a BIV. But you don't know that you're not a BIV, and you can't come to know it in that way.

Review: Nozick's Theory of Knowledge, without the bells and whistles: S knows that p iff

(1) p is true

(2) S believes that p

(3) not-p $\Box\!\!\rightarrow$ not-(S believes that p) and

(4) p $\Box\!\!\rightarrow$ S believes that p

-Applied to our skeptical argument, AI, Nozick's theory, plus his (everything's normal) view of our situation rules that: premise 1 is true; premise 2 is false; the conclusion is false. It's a "closure-denying," (second-premise-denying) rather than a "substantive Moorean" (first-premise-denying) response, to AI.

Insensitivity and Premise 1 of AI

-"Mooreans" ("Substantive Mooreans," who deny premise 1) now dominate. Gail Stine's paper that we'll look at next time, though it was earlier than Nozick's work, inspired some of this move toward substantive Mooreanism

-But if Mooreans want to be "enlightened Mooreans," they'll want to explain why what they reject can seem so plausible. Here, in giving what I call a "negative explanation," I think they (we?) have much to learn from Nozick

-Recall our Nozickean terminology of "[in]sensitivity":

-S's true belief that p is sensitive iff roughly S would not have believed that p if p had been false [i.e., iff roughly it satisfies Nozick's 3rd condition for knowledge]

-S's true belief that p is insensitive iff roughly S would have believed that p even if p had been false [i.e., iff roughly it fails Nozick's 3rd condition]

-The "Insensitivity Account" or "Subjunctive Conditionals Account" (SCA) of the plausibility of AI's first premise is based on this general claim:

> We tend to judge that S does not know that p when we think that any true belief that S has that p is one S would have held even if p had been false. In short, we tend to judge that insensitive beliefs do not constitute knowledge.

This general claim, together with the fact that beliefs to the effect that (effective) skeptical hypotheses are false are insensitive beliefs, predicts that we will tend to think that subjects don't know that skeptical hypotheses are false, i.e., we will find AI's first premise plausible

-What's pretty cool about SCA: Insensitivity is an intuitively powerful knowledge-killer: "You would have believed that even if it were false!" seems a good objection to a claim to knowledge. SCA doesn't seem to just happen to get a lot of cases right: it gets them right by means of an intuitively powerful explanation

-What's really great about SCA (review): patterns of judgments: lotteries and cleverly painted mules

-But why not then join Nozick (and the skeptic) in accepting 1?

Nozick's Closure-denying response to AI:

-Nozick's (commendable) attitude: admits the plausibility of closure, writing:

> We would be ill-advised, however, to quibble over the details of P [the closure principle]. Although those details are difficult to get straight, it will continue to appear that something like P is correct. (170.5)

-But Nozick denies closure, and the second premise of AI: closure is "wrong…and not merely in detail" (170.8); Nozick is not just "quibbling" here.

-But if closure and AI's premise are so plausible, why deny them? Because Nozick's sensitivity account of knowledge rules that they are wrong: 170.9

-The problem with Nozick's account (see reading 18: pp. 27.3-29.4): I don't think it solves our problem unless it ***explains why*** 2 is so misleadingly plausible (unless it contains a good "negative/deflationary" explanation)—especially if the power of 2's plausibility is steamroller-like! But Nozick simply leaves that vital explanatory task to "further exploration":

> Thus, if our notion of knowledge was as strong as we naturally tend to think (namely, closed under known logical implication), then the skeptic would be right. (But why do we naturally think this? Further exploration and explanation is needed of the intuitive roots of the natural assumption that knowledge is closed under known logical implication.) -- *Philosophical Explanations*, p. 242.3

-Nozick on Approaches to Skepticism: Refuting vs. Explaining: 16, pp. 164.8-165.2

-the kind of explanation Nozick seeks (these are my words, trying to capture Nozick's goal, I call this the "positive explanatory" approach): "Suppose knowledge required this, and the world and our situation in it were like that (pretty much as we suppose). Then premise n of your skeptical argument would be wrong, and we would know what we take ourselves to know. That's how, in the face of your skeptical argument, knowledge is possible."

-I've since written this up more nicely: See The Appearance of Ignorance, pp. 202-203 (attached)

Next time: Stine (reading 17)….