**3/7/17: Deserts (reading #12), Reid (reading #13)** Phil. 270

**Deserts**

-from last time: peer disagreement, conciliation, sticking to one’s guns. How our philosophical acceptances behave, esp. in relation to peer (or even superior) disagreement, calls into question whether these are **belief**s. Recall the comparison of *Abraham Lincoln was born in 1809* with *Incompatibilism is true*.

-“really believe” (pp. 2-3) and “in-between” states; beliefs and dispositions

-**knowledge**: I just outright deny this, about the target acceptances: “Philosophers generally don’t know—by any good standards—the positions we take on controversial issues” (p. 2). The scope of this is a bit murky, though: see note 2.

“Delusions of knowledge”

-**assertion** in deserts: Given the above stance on knowledge, philosophy (and other “knowledge deserts,” too) seems rife with flagrant violations of the knowledge norm of assertion (p. 10.1).

There seems to be a “special excuse or license” (13.3) in knowledge deserts to engage in a “pretense” (13.5) of knowing things one only accepts (& doesn’t actually know), and assert those things.

-How this works, & why it’s “handy”: paragraph straddling pp. 13-14

-Why this practice might make sense in knowledge deserts (as opposed to other settings): Incompatibilism vs. “There’s a garage around the corner” in the paragraph straddling pp. 12-13.

**Reid on the process by which we come to believe in material objects**

-terminology: “material object” vs. “physical object”/“body”. Question: How, oh how, can we ever be justified (ordinarily?, philosophically?) in accepting/believing that there are material objects?

-How, according to Reid, his predecessors saw the process by which we come to believe in MOs (Reid may be roughly right about Berkeley)

-Reid’s own account of the process

-some of Reid’s predecessors may largely agree with him on the process (or be willing to grant him his account), but disagree with him about the epistemological evaluation of beliefs so arrived at (they thinking they are not/would not be rationally justified), and are instead proposing an account of how beliefs in m.o.s *could be* (not-so-naturally) arrived at so as to be justified

**Reid on the epistemic evaluation of our beliefs in material objects**

-Berkeley’s “epistemological argument” (as an example of evidentialist arguments) and the evidentialist requirement

-Reid’s conservative/i-u-p-g account and his rejection

-Reid’s “argument for trust”: Reid’s conservatism vs. “thorough and consistent skeptics” and “semi-skeptics”

**Conservatism vs. Evidentialism**

-Conservatives like Reid (and Huemer, whose spat with BonJour eerily recreates Reid’s 18th Century debate with his foes) like to see their opponents not only as “semi-skeptics,” but also as (what is really the flip-side of the same coin) “semi-conservatives”: as (arbitrarily) choosey conservatives.

-But their opponents may well instead view themselves as something very different: as evidentialists: “No, I’m not picking some natural sources of belief to get some kind of favored status. I don’t care about any natural sources of belief, how things appear to me, or anything like that. For me, rational justification results from having beliefs that are supported by one’s *evidence*!”

I fight this out with Descartes (or his ghost) in the long footnote (#30) on the bottom of p. 46 (spilling over a bit to the bottom of 47) of reading #22.