**Starting Nozick on Skepticism (reading 19)** Phil. 270, 4/6/17

**Nozick’s Theory of Knowledge, without the bells and whistles** (see handout for 2/7 for further explanation, esp. concerning subjunctive conditionals):

S knows that p iff

(1) p is true

(2) S believes that p

(3) not-p → not-(S believes that p) and

(4) p → S believes that p

-Applied to our skeptical argument, AI, Nozick’s theory rules: 1: true; 2: false; C: false. It’s a “closure-denying” (this terminology will be explained next time), rather than a “substantive Moorean” response to AI.

**Insensitivity and Premise 1**

-“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, probably played a large role in this return to Mooreanism: a complicated history, involving Fred Dretske, whom Stine was responding to, and who anticipated Nozick’s work, vs. Nozick.

-But if Mooreans want to be “enlightened Mooreans,” they’ll want to explain why what they reject can seem so plausible. Here, I think they (we?) have much to learn from Nozick

-Recall (from 2/7) 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: patterns of judgments: riff on lotteries and cleverly painted mules (following reading 21, pp. 24-25)

**Coming: Nozick, Non-Closure, and Premise 2; and the great Gail Stine…**