Phil. 270: 12/2/21: Nozick, Nonclosure, and Skepticism / Stine start   Readings 16, 17

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 $\square\rightarrow$ not-(S believes that p) and
    (4) p $\square\rightarrow$ 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) or a "skeptical" (accepting the conclusion) response, to AI.

Insensitivity and Premise 1 of AI
-"Mooreans" ("Substantive Mooreans," who deny premise 1) now dominate. Gail Stine's paper (that we are about to look at), though it was earlier than Nozick's work, later 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 <u>sensitive</u> 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 <u>insensitive</u> 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 now written this up more nicely: _The Appearance of Ignorance_, pp. 202-203

-Stine's Initial, Blunt, RA-Based Answer to Skepticism

-Stine is working from the the RA account of knowledge. Stine's construal of what she calls the RA view (252.3) includes that skeptical hypotheses (she doesn't use that term) are irrelevant in normal circumstances—despite our lack of "particular evidence against them" (251.9). This is "the whole thrust of the relevant alternative position" (253.7). Her very short (and brutally blunt) answer to the skeptic (at 252.1) is just that their alternatives (skeptical hypotheses) are irrelevant. Though she softens the answer to skepticism later (as we'll discuss next time), Stine does say at this point that this blunt reply to the skeptic is "fundamentally correct" (252.3).

-252.2: Advice on how to handle the skeptic, accompanying the brutally brief response: Turn a deaf ear to them!

-But…

-Why is the skeptical argument as persuasive as it is in the first place?

-Supposing skeptical hypotheses are irrelevant, exactly where does AI go wrong? Which premise is false?

-Stine seems pro-closure, suggesting premise 2 of AI is probably OK by her. So is she denying premise 1, claiming to know that radical skeptical hypotheses are false? Why can such claims to knowledge seem so wrong, then? (If there's time, a quick look at 15, pp. 57.8-58.3, 58.5)

-These are questions we will answer next time, as we also move into reading 18, D.V.