Philosophy 311: Knowledge and Justification
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Handout 8: The Tracking Theory of Knowledge

Fake barn cases → causal connection doesn't yield knowledge in weird environments

Why does causal connection yield knowledge in normal environments?
One answer: b/c in normal environments someone whose beliefs are causally connected to the facts *tracks the truth*

Tracking theory:

(T) S knows that p = S has a true belief that p and:
S tracks the truth about p

What is tracking the truth about p? Robert Nozick says it's a matter of your belief that p being *sensitive*, which is defined in terms of a counterfactual conditional:

(S) S knows that p = S has a true belief that p, and:
if p were false, S would not believe that p

The sensitivity condition is met in the "good" cases where the causal condition is met: ordinary perception, introspection, testimony. And it is not met in Gettier cases.

The sensitivity condition does much better than the causal theory in these cases:
Generalizations
Deviant causal chains
Fake barn cases

Four problems:

Problem 0: necessary truths. Consider this conditional: *if 2+2 didn't equal 4, I wouldn't believe that it did*. Can you wrap your mind around the antecedent?

Problem 1: grandmother cases. (Feldman, 88). Nozick's response was to modify the sensitivity condition by adding *methods of belief formation:*

(S-M) S knows that p = S believes that p, and S came to believe p via some method M such that: if p were false S would not believe, via M, that p.

However, now we have some tricky questions: what is a method, what methods do we use?
Nozick's response is not the only one available to the tracking theorist.

Problem 2: lucky knowledge. See Feldman's mugging case (p. 89). Can this case be handled with careful attention to methods?

Problem 3: modified fake barn country. See Feldman p. 89-90.