Phil. 270, 9/7: Goldman's Causal Theory

1. Initial look at Goldman's Analysis (369.8-370.0):

> S knows that p iff the fact that p is causally connected in an "appropriate" way with S's believing p.

-Goldman then spells out what constitutes an appropriate causal connection. But let's start with issues that arise however that gets spelled out.

-Goldman's theory is a "standard" (as we're using the term), but not a JTB-like analysis: he does require the "standard conditions" of truth & belief – and something more. But he does not require justification: As we've seen (remember his Lincoln example), Goldman sets himself up against "defenders of the traditional analysis" (370.7) here.

-note (first paragraph of paper) that Goldman is only dealing with knowledge of "empirical propositions"; we will return to that at 6, below.

2. "Causally Connected"

-364.7: the known fact need not cause the knower's belief: those two could instead have a common cause

-Issue: Especially when supposing the **_fundamental_** relata in causal relations are events, there may be questions about what it means for facts to be "causally connected" with states like beliefs. How substantial must the connection be? How does the causal theory work, in, say, the case of knowing that Trump is the President of the United States? Is it enough that my belief that he's the President (or the event(?) of my believing that?) is caused by some event or other that's somehow involved in Trump's holding that status? Or is the idea that if "… is causally connected with …", in its ordinary meaning, would truthfully apply to the fact that p and one's believing that p, then one knows that p?

3. "Appropriate" Ways of Being Causally Connected: How should we understand Goldman's laundry list approach to "appropriate" causal processes, especially given the way he keeps the list "open"? 370-71. Which features get a process on the list of appropriate ones? (Is it maybe reliability?) Or is it just at bottom a matter of what we deem "appropriate," where factors like reliability can explain why we might be inclined to deem a process "appropriate"?

-Does Goldman's theory actually make predictions about cases?

4. Inferential Knowledge: When we to Goldman's treatment of inferential knowledge around p. 363, his seemingly simple and non-mainstream theory starts looking very different

-In cases of inferential knowledge, knower must "correctly reconstruct the causal chain": 363. Must contain no mistakes (?!), but need not contain every detail, but just "all the important links" (363.7).

-Another important requirement: inferences must be "warranted" (363.8).

-Notice how this makes it vitally important whether a belief is held by means of inference. When it is, these new, onerous requirements are invoked. So G can't be so noncommittal as he wants to be (359-60) about when beliefs are inferred.
-The contrast between G's and the "traditional" theory not as pronounced as G seems to be letting on at 370: If almost all our beliefs are formed by inference, then we're getting close to a general justification requirement.

5. The Barn Case: Goldman's CT is refuted by the barn case: DPK 773.6. Goldman claims/admits this, but doesn't really nail down the case. So let's nail it down: Compare the case of knowing with the one where Henry doesn't know. The belief seems to be caused in the same way in the two cases. There doesn't seem to be any difference between them that affects how Goldman's causal theory would treat them (however the story of what an "appropriate process" is shakes out), yet there seems a difference in whether the subject knows.
-Is the case convincing; should it modified?

6. What of Knowledge of "Nonempirical Truths"?
-addressed by Goldman at 357.3, but…
-is not! –i.e., the traditional account is not adequate here. We can apply a general Gettier-case-generating formula to see this
-unappealing to give a split account, anyway

8. A few thoughts about the relation between Reliabilism and the Causal Theory

These assignments are designed to get you to engage with the material before we discuss it in class. Engage: say as best you can what's going on; say what you think about it or ask a question or two; and get it done. As far as your grade goes, the big thing is just to get it done, doing a reasonable job. As far as your learning goes, the big thing is just to get thinking about the material, so we can better hit the ground running in class. Since your space is limited, your exposition of the material should just cover the most important points (and the ability to recognize which are important is key here), giving the basic ideas. It is expected that you won't be able to go into great detail.