Reading:
Nozick, R. (1981), 'Knowledge and Scepticism', in Bernecker and Dretske, ch. 25.

1. Nozick suggests a counterexample to Goldman's causal theory:

    S is a BIV having her brain stimulated by scientists to believe (P) that she is a BIV having her brain stimulated by scientists.

    According to Goldman's account, S knows P, because S's belief that P is causally connected with the fact that P in an appropriate way.

    But that seems to be the wrong answer.[1]

2. Nozick offers his own account of knowledge:

    S knows P iff:
    - **P is true**
    - **S believes P**
    - **If P were not true then S would not believe P**
    - **If P were true then S would believe P**

    Or: S knows P iff S 'tracks the truth' of P.

3. Some points about counterfactual (or 'subjunctive') conditionals:

    a. 'If P were the case then Q would be the case' is sometimes written as 'P $\Box\!\!\to$ Q'.
    b. 'If P were the case then Q would be the case' does *not* mean 'If P then Q'.
    c. 'If P were the case then Q would be the case' does *not* mean 'P entails Q'.
    d. What does it mean? According to Lewis (and now many others): in all of the closest possible worlds in which P is true, Q is true as well.[2]

4. How well does Nozick's account handle the Gettier cases?

    a. <u>Ten coins case</u>. S believes (P) that the man who will get the job has ten coins in his pocket. But if P were false then S would still believe P. So S does not know P (the intuitively correct answer).

    b. <u>Farmer case</u>. S believes (P) that there is a sheep in the paddock. But if P were false then S would still believe P. So S does not know P (the intuitively correct answer).

5. The fourth condition is not needed to correctly handle the Gettier cases. So why does Nozick include it?

    To correctly handle cases like the BIV case above. S believes (P) that she is a BIV having her brain stimulated by scientists. Her belief *passes* the third condition: if P were false, it

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[1] Nozick also claims that mathematical and ethical knowledge are a problem for Goldman.
[2] See David Lewis (1973), *Counterfactuals* (Oxford: Blackwell).

is *true* that S would not believe P. But it *fails* the fourth condition: if P were true, it is *false* that S would believe P.

Wait a minute, that's not right: the nearest possible world in which P is true is the *actual* world, and in the actual world S *does* believe P. So, according to the semantics given above, it is *true* that if P were true then S would believe P.

Nozick recognizes this, and offers a different account of the meaning of 'If P were the case then Q would be the case': It is true iff in all of the *close* worlds in which P is true (not just the *closest*), Q is true as well.

Then in the BIV case it is *false* that if P were true then S would believe P, because there is a close world in which P is true but S does not believe P. So S does not know P.

6. How does Nozick's account fair with other cases?
   a. Lottery case
   b. Eruption case
   c. Clock case
   d. Thermometer case
   e. Barns case

7. As it stands, Nozick's account seems pleasingly elegant. Unfortunately, he needs to modify it to avoid counterexamples:

   First, he modifies the fourth condition to the following:

   If P were true then S would believe P, and S might not believe that not P

   Second, he modifies his account to mention 'methods or ways of coming to believe':

   S knows P iff:
   - **P is true**
   - **S believes P, via method or way of coming to believe M**
   - **If P were not true, and S were to use M, then S would not believe P via M**
   - **If P were true, and S were to use M, then S would believe P via M**

   Why this modification? Because of cases like the following:

   John knows that Floyd was stripped of his title, because he read it in the paper. But it was only by chance that he read it – the article caught his eye as he was walking by.

   According to Nozick's first account, John does not count as knowing – the intuitively wrong answer. But according to the new account he does – the intuitively right answer.