12-2004

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Recommended Citation

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Abstract

Edward Craig has proposed that epistemology should eschew traditional conceptual analysis in favor of what he calls "conceptual synthesis." He proposes we start not from the finding of necessary and sufficient conditions that match our intuitions; rather we start from considerations on what the concept of knowledge does for us. In this paper I will explore one aspect of Craig's proposal – the good informant. It is this aspect that is central to Craig's epistemic method and perhaps most problematic. I will evaluate this concept by first articulating three initial worries that some have had about the concept and then show how each of the initial worries can be quelled by looking deeper into the features of what Craig's proposal is. I then assess Craig's proposal on its own terms by looking at the concept of a good informant in light of the criteria for an adequate explication. What I will show is that while there is much to be sympathetic with in Craig's proposal, there are some open questions that need to be solved in order to say that an adequate explication has been reached.

The question as to the appropriate method of epistemic analysis has always been an issue for epistemologists. In recent years, the traditional method utilized in epistemology – conceptual analysis – has come under attack from various perspectives. Yet, often no replacement method is given in its place. In two works, "A Practical Explication of Knowledge" and *Knowledge and the State of Nature*, Edward Craig proposes a new way of doing epistemology. Craig's epistemic method eschews traditional conceptual analysis in favor of what he calls "conceptual synthesis." He proposes we start not from the finding of necessary and sufficient conditions that match our intuitions; rather

we start from considerations on what the concept of knowledge does for us. Though there is much to discuss in Craig's proposal, in this paper I will explore one aspect – the *good informant*. It is this aspect that is central to Craig's epistemic method and perhaps most problematic. In what follows, I will evaluate this concept by first articulating three initial worries that some have had about the proposal. I will then show that each of the initial worries can be quelled by looking deeper into the features of what Craig's proposal is. I will then assess Craig's proposal on its own terms. Instead of looking to counterexamples for possible problems, I will look at the concept of a good informant in light of the criteria for an adequate explication. What I hope to show is that while there is much to be sympathetic with in Craig's proposal, there are some open questions that need to be solved in order to say that an adequate explication has been reached.

1. Conceptual Synthesis and the Role of Good Informants

Instead of the traditional conceptual analysis on the concept of knowledge, Craig proposes to approach epistemology by investigating the value of knowledge, i.e., what the concept of knowledge does for us.[1] He asks us to consider what role knowledge plays in our lives, and then consider what a concept having such a role might be like and what the conditions that would govern the application of such a concept are (Craig 1990, p. 2). His methodology is that of explication. For Craig, to explicate a concept is to "construct a new version of it satisfying certain standards, with the proviso that to count as a new version of that concept it had to emerge with many of its principal features intact" (1990, p. 8). His method is similar to Rudolf Carnap's rational reconstruction although on a practical, rather than a theoretical, level. It is practical in that it is an explication of a concept that is supposed to help the survival of epistemic agents in communities. Thus, Craig's proposal is different than traditional epistemic analysis in three ways: first, the proposal changes the order of the inquiry and take the characterization of the value of knowledge first and then assesses how well our intuitions fit with that explication; second, it maintains that all

features of the explication come from the value of the concept of knowledge; and third, we explicate the concept only by evaluating what value the concept of knowledge, not knowledge itself, has to human life (Schmitt 1992, p. 555).

So what does the concept of knowledge do for us? Craig maintains that the concept of knowledge "is used to flag approved sources of information" (1990, p. 11). As he states, humans need true beliefs about their environment that can serve as a guide to successful actions; hence, they need sources of information that will yield true beliefs (1990, p. 11). Humans do have "onboard" perceptual sources of information, but they also need to acquire information from those around them if they are to survive. So, humans need ways of evaluating these sources of information and the concepts that are in use with such sources.

This is where the notion of the informant comes into play. Whenever one is in the position of seeking information on whether p is or is not the case, she first wants an informant who will tell the truth about p. Yet, in order to survive, we not only want informants, but rather *good* informants. A good informant is an agent who believes p and p is the case, and has some detectable property that correlates her being right about p (1990, p. 18). So, in order to be a good informant, one must believe p, p must be true, and she must have some property the inquirer can detect to inform her that she is to be trusted. Furthermore, we will want a way in which to distinguish good informants from not-good informants.

There is a further interesting dimension to Craig's notion of an informant. There is an ethical dimension at work here as well as an epistemic one. An informant is a "co-operating member of our species" (1990, p. 36). An informant is someone who can empathize with our situation. That is, she cannot just provide the information, but also understand why it is that we want or need the information. This distinguishes an informant from a mere source of information. Mere sources of information cannot exhibit this essentially human element. They cannot "know what the inquirer is up to" (1990, p. 36). It is this feature that illustrates the situation we are in – epistemic agents who treat each others as subjects with the common purpose of obtaining

true beliefs and not as mere sources of information from which true beliefs will be extracted (1990, p. 36).

Craig recognizes that one may object to his proposal on the grounds that agents can know even when they are unwilling to tell what they know and agents also can know even when inquirers cannot detect any property that correlates the agent with having a true belief. It is here that Craig introduces the "objectivising" of the concept of a good informant. The principle of objectivisation states that agents start from simple, self-interested concepts and progress from these to more and more general, "objective" concepts. Our concept of a knower is the objectivised concept of a good informant. A good informant is one that is in *my* interest to find. She supposedly would have information for *me*, has information that is in *my* concern, will be able to communicate with *me*, and is accessible to *me* (1990, p. 85). Yet, such a concept will not serve a community's needs. A community will objectivise the concept. That is, we will subtract what is relevant to me at a particular time. Once we objectivise the concept of a good informant, we are left with the true belief requirement and the requirement of having a property correlating well with true belief on the issue in question, but the requirement of having a detectable property will be "diluted" (1990, p. 90). This diluting results in our ability to recommend good informants to others who detect in ways different than our own. So, I can recommend informants to others that they might not normally detect and others can recommend informants to me that I cannot detect. So a good informant need not have a property that I can detect as long she has a property that someone can detect.

The bottom line of Craig's proposal is that an agent who is a good informant is a good informant whatever circumstances the inquirer is in and whatever attitudes the inquirer has towards the matter (1990, p. 91). Thus, a good informant is an agent that has a very high degree of possessing a true belief. This high degree must be for all, not just for one person in particular circumstances. And the more we objectivise the concept; we get closer to the concept of knowledge.

2. Some Initial Worries about Good Informants

While the addition of good informants is supposed to, in part, salvage epistemic analysis from the traditional problems facing the standard practice of finding necessary and sufficient conditions, it does raise some immediate questions. In this section I will articulate three worries some have had.[2] First, how and when should we check others' powers of detection? That is, how do we know that the others we are trusting do not have worse powers than we do and hence should not trust them? Second, what good is objectivising the concept of a good informant to that of a knower if the informant won't talk to anyone? And third, if we raise the requirements of a good informant to being "very likely to be right," then such an account will not serve our everyday purposes.

2.1. First Worry – Problem of Worse Detectors

According to Craig's process of objectivisation, we take the primitive concept of a good informant and objectivise it to the point to where it is no longer a matter of a person who would inform just myself about whether p. This is the move toward that of a knower. We are supposed to reach a point where we can no longer worry about recognizing good informants and we can trust others since they may have greater powers of detection. Yet, what of those that have worse powers of detection (Dancy 1992, p. 395)? The problem here is that Craig maintains the recognizability requirement will be diluted once we have objectivised the concept. Yet, once this requirement is diluted, we can fall victim to trusting those who have very weak powers of detection.

    This leads to one of two possible results. First, there should be no diluting of the concept. We need in place a way in which to check the powers of the detectors. We need a way in which to determine those who have strong powers. Or, second, the recognizability requirement was never a part of the concept of a knower in the first place (Dancy 1992, p. 395). That is, when we want to determine whether p is the case we want someone who we can recognize as knowing whether p, but that is not to say that being a recognizable knower is part of the

concept of knower. Dancy illustrates this point with an analogy; "when we are looking for someone to heal us, we obviously want someone we can recognize as such, but the concept of being a recognizable healer is not part of the concept of a doctor" (p. 395). Either option weakens Craig's proposal considerably.

2.2. Second Worry – Problem of the Closed-Mouth Informant

It is important to note that objectivisation does not only apply to an agent finding a good informant, but it also applies to group action. When epistemic agents are in groups, they have a considerable interest in finding partners who have true beliefs about whether p is the case. Furthermore, this interest does not go away even in situations where the others in the group are unable or unwilling to convey information. This is central to Craig's proposal. Yet, if it is possible to have a knower who will not convey any information to the group, then it would seem that the concept of a good informant is irrelevant to that of a knower. In other words, if it is possible to have a knower who won't talk to anyone, then it is possible to have a concept of a knower without it being the result of the objectivisation of the primitive concept of a good informant (Feldman 1997, p. 211). So, it would seem that the concept of a good informant does not have a role in the concept of a knower.

2.3. Third Worry – High Standards and Our Everyday Epistemic Purposes

According to Craig, we never know how much importance getting the correct information has and so the standards for being a knower are going to be very high. That is, to be a knower, one must meet very demanding standards since we do not know the risks and/or benefits of the information. As Craig states:

In saying that someone knows whether p we are certifying him as an informant on that question, and we have no idea of the practical needs of the many people who may want to take him up on it; hence a practice develops of setting the standard very high, so that whatever turns, for them, on getting the truth about p, we need not fear reproach if they follow our recommendation. (1990, p. 94).

So, due to the value that having true beliefs has for us, our objectivised concept of a knower will result in having very high epistemic standards.

The problem here comes from a tension between the high standards that have been placed and the desire for the proposal to be applicable to our everyday lives. That is, by setting the standards high, we set them too high to please everyone (Feldman 1997, p. 211). Suppose that someone asks me for the best place to get coffee. Now, I restrict myself to informing the person of informants who are only very likely to be right. It may (and probably will) be the case that I will fail to recommend anyone to the person. This would surely fail to satisfy many people in everyday circumstances since there would be many people who are more than able to be good informants on the question of the best coffee even if they are agents who are only, say, merely likely to be right (Feldman 1977, p. 211). So, this objectivised concept will not serve our purposes in everyday life. We normally do not seek out informants who are "very likely to be right" on everyday, trivial matters (though what counts as everyday and trivial will be highly subjective). So, Craig's proposal fails to do exactly what he hoped for at the outset, to give us a *practical* explication. The demands he sets are just too high.

3. Responding to the Initial Worries

In this section I will attempt to offer some responses to each of the initial worries articulated above. Overall, I take it that once we look at Craig's proposal from a broader perspective we see that many of the initial worries dissolve.

3.1. Responding to the First Worry

In responding to the first worry it is important to remember an initial feature of Craig's proposal – it is a *practical* explication. The remembrance that it is a practical explication is important due to it not being problematic that there is a counterexample. Just because we sometimes fall victim to someone with worse powers of detection than ourselves does not immediately pose a problem for the proposal. That is, since we have eschewed the method of providing necessary and sufficient conditions in favor of merely attempting to provide a new version of the concept with as many of the practical principal features intact, the finding of a counterexample does not initially pose a problem (Craig 1986–7, p. 214).

Yet one may respond that this is not merely a counterexample. If it is common that we encounter one who has worse powers of detection than ourselves, then the practical explication itself is in trouble since the concept is not very useful to us in our everyday lives. That is, we will have to up the recognizability requirement or drop it in order for it to be practical. I believe that Craig can accept the first horn of the dilemma without problem. According to Craig, there is a way of determining the powers of detectors. The way this is initially done is by the recommendation of others. By saying that someone knows that p, we are certifying their status as an informant (1990, p. 94). This status as an informant is a status for everyone. In other words, the standard being set is very high. Such a high standard allows us to not worry about the possibility of finding someone with weak powers of detection. If someone recommends another as an informant, then she is certifying that informant as one who meets the high standards for anyone's practical needs. That is, whatever anyone's needs, the recommendation of another as an informant certifies the person as someone who can give us the truth about p. It is in this way that the recognizability requirement is part of the concept of a knower. Hence, I do not see that Craig is necessarily plagued by this problem.

3.2. Responding to the Second Worry

The problem of the closed-mouth informant turns on the possibility of having a knower who will not tell anyone what it is they know. If it is possible to have such a person, then the concept of a good informant is irrelevant to that of a knower. Yet, Craig has a response to such an example. According to Craig, it may not be the case that the informant wants or is willing to tell me what she knows, but she may be willing to tell someone else. The information can travel through the "pipeline" to get to me (hopefully) eventually (1990, p. 93). That is, the purpose of the information will eventually be satisfied via the transferal of information, even if *my* purposes for having the information are not satisfied. It is this that objectivisation is supposed to provide. Objectivisation is intended to provide a "satisfying… explanation of how and why such a concept comes to be formed" (1990, p. 93).

Now this may seem unsatisfying to some. What of the closed-mouth informant who just does not tell me, but does not tell *anyone*? In such a case, the group action or group purpose of the information fails to be satisfied. But this still fails to falsify the proposal on the table. In someone being recommended to us as an informant, they are merely being certified as a knower. If the knower does not convey the information to us, then it is not the case that they would not be a good informant or that they the recommender's powers of detection are weak. All that is being said is that the channels of communication are not open. This is not initially problematic for Craig. Craig maintains that channels of communication *should* be open, not that they *are* open. It is the case with the closed-mouth informant that the information should be conveyed, it is just that it is not. This does not show that the concept of a good informant is not part of being a knower. It shows that there is a normative dimension to the conveying of information (and one that Craig invokes in his proposal). It is the case that I am seeking one who should convey information, but to say that she won't "spill the beans" does not entail that being a good informant is not part of being a knower. Thus, while such cases may (and probably do) exist, they do not pose a problem to Craig's analysis of the concept of a knower.

3.3. Responding to the Third Worry

The problem of high standards and our everyday epistemic practice
stems from Craig's demand that when we recommend an informant,
we are to recommend one that we can certify is very likely to be right.
This is supposed to put us in the position of not being able to recom-
mend informants in everyday inquisitions since the standard is too
high. That is, the objectivised concept will not suit our everyday epis-
temic purposes since everyday epistemic situations are such that we,
more often than not, cannot recommend anyone who meets the certi-
tude standard. The problem with this worry is that it takes Craig's pro-
posal to dictate that we must recommend only those informants that
are "very likely to be right." This is not what Craig is proposing. Craig's
proposal maintains that a practice will develop by which we will have
high standards for informants. I believe, contra Feldman, that we do in
fact seek out informants who will be very likely to be right. The worry
trades on the moving from our seeking out such an informant and the
recommender being able to recommend someone who fits this stan-
dard. It may be the case that the recommender cannot recommend
anyone since she does not know anyone who has the information that
we need. It is not the case that neither the recommender nor I have
impractically high standards, it is that there is no one, to the recom-
mender's knowledge, who can fulfill the standards we have at the time.
Everyday situations would seem to coincide with Craig's proposal
without much difficulty.

3.4. A Final Point about the Initial Worries

I believe that many of the above worries stem from a problem concern-
ing the type of epistemic analysis that Craig is proposing. Craig's pro-
posal is meant to be a practical explication and not a conceptual
analysis. Craig intentionally eschews the possibility of his proposal fal-
ling victim to various counterexamples. The reason Craig gives for re-

jecting conceptual analysis is that 'knows' is not susceptible to analysis. He claims that any strict definition will fall victim to counterexamples where the link between truth and justification breaks down. As he states:

> [T]here is not going to be any X that absolutely has to be regarded as conferring high probability on S's being right about p no matter what else we know about S and his circumstances; there will always be something else we could come to believe which would bring us significantly to lower our estimate; so examples will always be available to show that a proposed analysis does not offer sufficient conditions (1986–7, p. 226).

In light of this, Craig proposes that we eschew traditional analysis and try an alternative approach.

It is worth noting that Craig does not offer a substantial argument on why conceptual analysis fails. He offers two comments about the traditional methodology failure. First, for any proposed analysis, the skeptic attempts to argue that our intuitions about the intension of the concept determine a smaller extension that our everyday intuitions about the extension (1990, p. 1). Now, if the skeptic is correct, we have a question as to which set of intuitions should give priority in determining the correct folk concept. If the skeptic is incorrect, then we need an argument as to why the skeptical worry is in fact non-problematic. What this points out, according to Craig, is that a considerable amount of epistemological work needs to be done to just to say that there is such a folk concept at all and address what is the appropriate methodology to address any such questions (1990, p. 1). Second, even if we suppose that we have an analysis that captures our folk concept fully, the question still looms as to why has a concept which fits the conditions proposed in the correct analysis had such widespread use (1990, p. 2). This question leads us to the follow point:

> There seems to be no known language in which sentences using 'know' do not find a comfortable and colloquial equivalent. The implication is that it answers to some very general needs of human life and thought, and it would surely be interesting to know which and how (1990, p. 2).

   The worry here is that more complex the analysis to the concept, the harder it will become to answer these questions.

   Craig treats such concerns as problematic to the point where we should move off into a different direction – a practical explication. This move is what dissolves many of the worries. Craig's proposal offers him a way of side-stepping proposed counterexamples that do not directly play into the conditions he has set for the explication. So, if one is to accurately assess Craig's proposal it would seem that one has to change her epistemic venue and approach the question of whether Craig has given an adequate explication qua explication. Let us now turn to this question.

4. The Explication of 'Good Informant'

Craig maintains that his explication is akin to Carnap's method of explication (or rational reconstruction). 'Explication', as Carnap used the term, described a process of revising a concept (1950, pp. 3–8).[3] In an explication, philosophers take a concept that is too vague (the concept to be revised or the "explicandum") and replace it by a more precise concept (the new concept that replaces the original or the "explicatum"). The latter concept is to be less vague that the original, but it is not to be perfectly precise. The explicatum is intended to be an improvement over the previous concept, but it is not intended to suitable in all subsequent circumstances. Take, for instance, the concept of salt. People may first have this concept in mind when discussing seasonings, but this concept will not do for chemists. For chemists, salt will be replaced by the concept sodium chloride (NaCl). This latter concept is much more precise than the original. Now, obviously the concept of sodium chloride will not work for someone interested in physical chemistry, so it may at some time be replaced by a more precise concept.

   Carnap maintained there are four factors in judging an explication to be adequate. First, the explicatum needs to be similar to or, as Hanna puts it, "agrees with" the explicandum (1968, p. 36). Philoso-

phers cannot treat the correspondence between the two concepts as a mere coincidence. There needs to be some similarity between the two to warrant the explication. Second, the explicatum needs to be as exact as possible. That is, the characterization of the explicatum needs to be given in as exact a form as possible so it can be easily integrated into a well-connected system of already accepted concepts. Third, the explicatum needs to be fruitful. The revised concept is more fruitful the more it can be brought into connection with other concepts on the basis of observed facts. The more it can be used in the formation of laws governing the concepts in questions. And, finally, the explicatum needs to be as simple as possible. The simplicity of a concept is measured by the simplicity of the form of its definition and the simplicity of the forms of the laws that connect it with other concepts. Simplicity, as Carnap notes, is only of secondary concern. The factor's importance only comes into play when there is a choice between numerous concepts which seem to satisfy the other factors the same. When the explicatum meets these four conditions, it is said to be adequate.

What is important to recognize is that an explication is not intending to give necessary and sufficient conditions. Since explication is a matter of *revising*, the question of whether it is true is misleading. The judgment that an explicatum is similar to the explicandum may be judged true or false *to a certain degree*. As well it may be judged true or false whether the explicatum is exact, fruitful, or simple *to a certain degree*. The reason I say "to a certain degree" is that the judgment is a matter of whether the explicatum is similar, exact, fruitful, or simple *enough* to be adequate. Since there is this inherent vagueness even within the explicatum, an explication cannot result in necessary and sufficient conditions.

One thing to note is that unlike conceptual analysis, our concepts cannot be incorrect in the sense of failing to correspond to a mind-independent reality. It is possible for our concepts to be incorrect in that they are confused, but this is not the same as in conceptual analysis. The goal of the analysis is *not* to provide us with a correct account or with our shared, common theory; rather it is to eliminate confusion.[4]

Craig alters this method by maintaining that he is interested in a *practical*, rather than *theoretical* explication. He intends to throw "light

on the nature and origins of present practice" (1990, p. 8). He intends to "illuminate" the vague concept we already have by showing that a concept with the hypothesized role would be sufficiently close to the original that it itself exhibits (1990, p. 2). Those hypothesized characteristics are based in what the concept does for us, the value it has for us, what its role in our life is, etc. So, while Craig's proposal owes a deep debt to Carnap's method, it is slightly altered for his own practical purposes.

So, the question is whether the standards by which to assess Craig's proposal meet the criteria for an adequate explication?[5] As articulated earlier, the concept of 'knowledge', according to Craig, is that of the objectivised concept of a 'good informant'. Does this meet the four features of similarity, exactness, fruitfulness, and simplicity? Similarity, for Carnap, is a matter of the explicatum being able to be substituted for the explicandum in most cases where it has been used (Carnap 1962, p. 7). It would seem to be the case that a 'good informant' can be used in place of 'knower' in most cases. In practical situations, which Craig is interested in, to replace the concept of a knower with that of a good informant would yield the same pragmatic results. It is important to note that Carnap does not demand "close similarity" (1962, p. 7). It is allowed that there are considerable differences. So, if one is looking for information as to whether p, it would be pragmatic to look for a good informant who could inform you as to whether p.

To meet the exactness requirement a good informant would have to have its rules of use be given in an exact as way as possible so as to be able to be introduce into our already well-connected epistemic system.[6] The question here is what already established epistemic concepts we are trying to introduce the explicatum into. If we say that we are attempting to introduce 'good informant' into our traditional, justified-true-belief epistemic system, then Craig's proposal fails here. Since Craig has not given explicit rules as to when an informant has a justified true belief nor any notion of the evidential relations the informant has, it is not clear that Craig's proposal meets this feature of explication. In fact he disavows the possibility of many of the traditional probability, evidential, or other justificatory concepts that play into our conception of knowledge. Essentially, Craig has rejected the al-

ready established epistemic system at the outset, so it is not clear that he can maintain that the rules governing the use of 'good informant' have been given in as exact a way as possible. One could say that if we look merely at our everyday epistemic situation, the rules governing 'good informants' can be introduced in a fairly exact way, but surely even in our everyday epistemic situation there will be some evidential notions. And if there are some notions of evidential or other justificatory concepts in our everyday epistemic situation, then Craig's proposal has not satisfied this feature of the explication.

The fruitfulness requirement maintains the concept is useful for the formation of many universal statements (Carnap 1962, p. 7). Through the objectivisation of the concept, Craig has proposed that we now have it such that the standards for recommending a good informant are the same for everyone even without knowing what one's purposes are for acquiring the information. So, it would seem that due to the objectivisation of the concept, we can develop various epistemic "laws" to governing our everyday epistemic practices. In this way, Craig's proposal does meet the fruitfulness requirement.

Lastly, simplicity is supposed to be a matter of the explicatum being simple in light of the first three requirements. I take it that by not invoking traditional epistemic notions a 'good informant' is simple in its form. Craig's three requirements of a good informant (that one be likely enough in the context to be right about p, that there are open channels of communication, and that there is some detectable property) do not invoke any unnecessary requirements outside of our everyday epistemic needs. So, it would seem *prima facie* simple. Yet, a question does arise. How exactly do we specify the "detectable property"? Craig's move is to derive the recognizability requirement from the objectivisation of the concept of a good informant. It seems that we get the ability to detect from the recommendations of others. But does this meet the simplicity requirement? It is not clear. Craig does a lot of epistemic work in order to get to the objectivised concept of a good informant. Furthermore, given that we are restricting ourselves to everyday epistemic situations, it seems prima facie problematic to say that the objectivised concept of a good informant is simple in light of similarity and exactness requirements. I do not take it as a settled matter as to whether Craig can cash out the recognizability require-

ment in a way in which to satisfy the simplicity requirement, but it would seem problematic at the outset.

5. Concluding Remarks

Craig's proposal does not fall victim to many of the various worries that some have had about it. I believe that if we look deeper at Craig's account, many of the worries fall by the wayside. Yet, a number of questions arise if we assess the proposal on its own terms – as an adequate explication of knowledge. If we consider Craig's proposal in light of the criteria for an adequate explication it is not clear that his proposal is ultimately satisfying. While I do believe that he can account for the similarity and fruitfulness features, I am less convinced that he can account for the exactness and simplicity requirements. This is not to say that there are no ways of doing this while still remaining faithful to Craig's goals. I am sympathetic to both Craig's goals and methods, but I believe that more needs to be given in the way of fitting the concept of a good informant into our everyday epistemic situation which (very likely) includes some traditional justificatory concepts.[7]

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Keywords
Epistemology, Craig, Conceptual Analysis, Explication, Good Informant

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Resumo

Edward Craig propôs que a epistemologia deveria afastar a análise conceitual tradicional em favor do que ele denomina "síntese conceitual." Ele propõe que não comecemos por encontrar condições necessárias e suficientes que correspondam a nossas intuições, e que, ao contrário, comecemos com as considerações sobre o que o conceito de conhecimento faz por nós. Neste artigo, vou explorar um aspecto da proposta de Craig – o bom informante. É esse aspecto que é central no método epistêmico de Craig, e talvez o mais problemático. Vou avaliar esse conceito, primeiro, articulando três preocupações iniciais que alguns tiveram sobre o conceito, e então mostrando como cada uma dessas preocupações iniciais pode ser acalmadas ao examinarmos com mais profundidade os aspectos daquilo que é a proposta de Craig. Então, avalio a proposta de Craig em seus próprios termos, tendo em conta o conceito de bom informante à luz dos critérios para uma boa explicação. O que vou mostrar é que, enquanto há muito com o que se possa concordar na proposta de Craig, há algumas questões deixadas em aberto, que precisam ser resolvidas para podermos dizer que uma explicação adequada foi alcançada.

Palavras-chave

Epistemologia, Craig, Análise conceitual, Explicação, Bom informante.

Notes

[1] I will not at this time go through Craig's arguments for rejecting traditional conceptual analysis as the appropriate methodology for epistemology. The general line of reasoning as to why he eschews traditional conceptual analysis will be discussed in a later section.

[2] These worries are taken from Dancy (1992) and Feldman (1997).

[3] I should note that there are some who disagree with an explication being a matter of revising a concept. W. V. O. Quine (1960, § 53) and Joseph Hanna (1968, p. 30) agree that it is better to speak of explicating linguistic terms or, as Quine calls them, "defective nouns." The reason for this is that, as they see it, concepts are mysterious and it is better to avoid them when it is possible to make the same point referring only to predicates. I leave this for the time being an open question and will continue to speak of explicating concepts since I am following Carnap's method primarily and it is he that speaks of explicating concepts.

[4] We can see this by looking at an example such as the Gettier case. When philosophers ask "What is the nature of knowledge?" on this view, they are not searching for a better understanding of the concept as in the standard conceptual analysis. They are looking to replace our current, confused, imprecise concept with a concept that is less confused and more precise. So, the traditional account of knowledge is meant as an explication in that it is supposed to be a replacement for our confused concept of knowledge. The Gettier case, then, is intended to show that there is an important criterion that is not being met by our current explication of knowledge being justified true belief. Since an adequate explication must overlap with the initial concept, our intuition that Smith does not know is good evidence that the proposed explication does not overlap enough with our initial concept.

[5] I am taking it that Carnap's four factors are sufficient to initially assess whether Craig has given an adequate explication.

[6] Carnap maintains that it be introduced into a well-connected system of scientific concepts, but I feel that we do not have to demand this latter part of Craig's proposal. Since Craig is not proposing to introduce the concept into a scientific system, but rather our everyday epistemic situation, we need not demand that a 'good informant' be exact in a scientific sense.

[7] I would like to thank the two anonymous reviewers for their insightful and exceptionally helpful comments.