

NOTAS E DISCUSSÕES
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PLANTINGA-WARRANT AND RELIABILIST WARRANT

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Abstract. I argue that reliabilist warrant should not require that a true belief have been produced in accordance with a design plan. At least sometimes, it seems sufficient that there be an intent for the faculty to have the reliable outcomes it in fact has. This pertains to the notion of warrant of Alvin Plantinga.

Keywords: Alvin Plantinga; warrant; design plan; accidental reliability.

Warrant is what makes for knowledge when added to true belief. Plantinga-warrant is the way Alvin Plantinga defines warrant:

A belief has warrant for a person only if that belief is produced by cognitive faculties functioning properly (subject to no dysfunction) in a cognitive environment that is appropriate for one's kind of cognitive faculties, according to a design plan that is successfully aimed at truth. (Plantinga 2000, p.156)

Plantinga-warrant, I shall now argue, should not be necessary for reliabilist warrant, and that is because reliabilist warrant should not require a design plan. Consider the following imaginative scenario: A designer designs a cognitive faculty to create true beliefs of type *B* in creatures. Alas, the inner workings of the faculty are not according to the way the creator designed the faculty to work. There are three purely accidental, permanent deviations from the design-plan of the apparatus. However, the three deviations are of such a nature that when they interact together and with the rest of the design, the faculty works reliably to produce true beliefs of type *B*. The faculty works with no malfunction in the way it should now work given its accidentally produced inner structure and works according to the remaining requirements of Plantinga-warrant. This, of course, was not the way things were planned. In relation to the design, that the faculty produces reliable beliefs of type *B* is purely accidental. Now suppose the designer, when discovering the curious fact that the three deviations operate with the rest to produce the same results as his original design plan decides to leave well enough alone and leaves the deviant,

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but reliable, faculty in the creatures. That the designer knows what the effects are of the faculty's workings and intends for the faculty workings to create those effects in the creatures should be sufficient for warrant, together with the other ingredients of Plantinga-warrant. Whether the faculty is working according to her original design plan or according to a pattern not foreseen but now endorsed should make no difference to warrant. At least in some cases, it should be sufficient that the created beliefs be produced in accordance with an intention that the faculty produce such beliefs.

Now a reply to this might be that when the designer agrees to employ the reconfigured faculty for her ends that is tantamount to her making the new configuration of the faculty her new design plan. So we end up with a design plan after all. To neutralize this reply let's change the story as follows: The designer never discovers the departures from her design plan. She makes a design, implements it, and sees that the faculty is producing her desired results just fine. She never thinks of the possibility of freak changes in the depths of the workings of the faculty bringing the same desired results. She simply uses this faculty successfully without ever discovering that it does not fit her design plan. She knows of no new design plan to endorse. Warrant for the beliefs of type *B* should exist as much as it would were the original design plan to have been in place. The design plan drops out of the picture.

At least in some cases, it should be sufficient for warrant that the person who implements the faculty be able to change or withdraw the mechanism and in addition that the person want the mechanism to work for her purposes. It is allowing the mechanism to work successfully for the given purpose that is sufficient. We move even further away from a designer, yet still have warrant, in the following story: *A* designs a mechanism to produce reliably beliefs of type *X*. The mechanism does not do what *A* thought it would. Instead the mechanism produces beliefs of type *Y* reliably. *B*, observing all of this, has been looking high and low for a reliable type-*Y* producing mechanism. *B* steals the mechanism from *A* and uses it to achieve type-*Y* beliefs reliably. *B* was not a designer, and the mechanism does not function according to the workings of any design. Yet, when the rest of the Plantinga-warrant conditions are fulfilled, the type-*Y* beliefs should have warrant.

I suspect that the attractiveness of a design plan for warrant might lie in its being a way of nailing down an intent to use the faculty for the outcomes at hand, and in supplying a base against which malfunction of a faculty can be defined. However, intent by itself should do the trick, at least some times, and that the faculty works reliably given its inner workings, whether complying with a designated design or not, will give us the base from which to measure malfunction.¹

References

Alvin Plantinga. 2000. *Warranted Christian Belief*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

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Resumo. Argumento que a garantia confiabilista não deveria exigir que uma crença verdadeira tenha sido produzida de acordo com um plano com desígnio. Pelo menos algumas vezes, é suficiente que haja uma intenção para que a faculdade tenha os resultados confiáveis que ela de fato tem. Isso diz respeito à noção de garantia, de Alvin Plantinga.

Palavras-chave: Alvin Plantinga; garantia; plano de desígnio; confiabilidade acidental.

Notes

¹ Intent has to be translated into something metaphorically akin to it when true belief is warranted by a faculty created by natural processes that lack intent. What might correspond metaphorically to intent here is the way natural processes sometimes seem to coalesce to produce an outcome as though driven to it inexorably over time, as a person might. I leave this issue open for now.