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The problem of coherence and truth redux.  (English) [Zbl 1384.03069]
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Summary: In [“What price coherence?”, Analysis 54, No. 3, 129–132 (1994; doi:10.2307/3328660)], P. Klein and T. A. Warfield put forward a simple argument that triggered an extensive debate on the epistemic virtues of coherence. As is well-known, this debate yielded far-reaching impossibility results to the effect that coherence is not conducive to truth, even if construed in a ceteris paribus sense. A large part of the present paper is devoted to a re-evaluation of these results. As is argued, all explications of truth-conduciveness leave out an important aspect: while it might not be the case that coherence is truth-conducive, it might be conducive to verisimilitude or epistemic utility. Unfortunately, it is shown that the answer for both these issues must be in the negative, again. Furthermore, we shift the focus from sets of beliefs to particular beliefs: as is shown, neither is any of the extant probabilistic measures of coherence truth-conducive on the level of particular beliefs, nor does weakening these measures to quasi-orderings establish the link between coherence and truth for an important amount of measures. All in all, the results in this paper cast a serious doubt on the approach of establishing a link between coherence and truth. Finally, recent arguments that shift the focus from the relationship between coherence and truth to the one between coherence and confirmation are assessed.

MSC:
03A05  Philosophical and critical aspects of logic and foundations
03B48  Probability and inductive logic

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