On coherent sets and the transmission of confirmation

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Abstract

In this paper, we identify a new and mathematically well-defined sense in which the coherence of a set of hypotheses can be truth-conducive. Our focus is not, as usually, on the probability but on the confirmation of a coherent set and its members. We show that, if evidence confirms a hypothesis, confirmation is "transmitted" to any hypotheses that are sufficiently coherent with the former hypothesis, according to some appropriate probabilistic coherence measure such as Olsson′s or Fitelson′s measure. Our findings have implications for scientific methodology, as they provide a formal rationale for the method of indirect confirmation and the method of confirming theories by confirming their parts.

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