

Re: Epistemology 201: The Science of Science

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From: robert j. kolker (*nowhere_at_nowhere.net*)

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Albert wrote:

> *Indeed. It is, as you pointed out, only evidence. Proof is only
> possible in mathematics.*

In the ideal instance. In the real world, proofs have become so long and involved that the question of their correctness is an empirical issue. Only in Platon's realm would a mathematical construct be pure and right. That fact that proofs are carried out by error prone humans introduces a genuine empirical issue as to whether a "proof" is really a proof.

There is an irreducible empirical aspect to the question of whether a particular –claimed– proof is indeed a proof. See the history of Wile's two proofs of FLT. The first one was wrong (an error was actually exhibited) and the second was –declared to be right– by a committee, since they could not find any errors.

Bob Kolker