

"On Methods of Inference": Notes For Review And Discussion (Including David Sedley Article: "On Signs")

Post by "Cassius" of August 26, 2021 at 6:55 PM

Probably a very important summary of the Epicurean position that our opinions should be based on observation and experience and not on "pure logic"

The favoured example of a sign-inference based solely on the similarity method is 'Since men within our experience are mortal, men outside our experience are mortal', and it is instructive to follow its role in the debate. First of all, it illustrates the Epicureans' grounds for defending the cogency of their method. The premiss that men within our experience are mortal embodies, they point out, extensive research and weighing up of evidence. Both historical records and current experience support it without

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exception; it is seen to persist through all other variations in men's characteristics; and there is no known obstacle to believing it. It is the cumulative effect of these considerations that makes irresistible the conclusion that men outside our experience (even the British, if there are any – 5.33–6) are mortal. The false inductive inferences brought forward by the Stoics as counter-examples all fail to meet at least one of these requirements.