

General Identification of the Argument in "On Methods of Inference"

Post by "Cassius" of October 28, 2020 at 10:42 PM

[Quote from Elayne](#)

Although reasoning by analogy was a stopping point then, continued observations of nature have taught us analogy is insufficient. It can generate hypotheses which then are tested. Testing of hypotheses-- making predictions based on a hypothesis and observing the results-- had not been discovered yet

That paragraph from Elayne points to series of questions that will require a lot of detail, starting at least with:

1. "Have taught us that analogy is insufficient." That is the question. What was the Epicurean method in full, and how did they deal with the obvious issues that can arise from use of analogy? We know they were using analogy *in part*, but probably *not in whole and alone*, and apparently they were trying to tie analogy as tightly as possible to empirical observation. There is apparently a lot of detail in the texts that do survive, as they were challenged in their methodology by the Stoics, and they composed extensive responses in reply.
2. "Testing of hypotheses... had not been discovered yet." I suspect that that will require a lot of review in order to predict how the Epicureans would respond to that. I think that's really the issue here, that of grasping a workable understanding of the issues involved that can be understood by a normal person and applied in real life -- because if all we come up with is a hugely complicated formula with a lot of variables, our result isn't usable in real life, and we are left back with a "faith" issue of how to pick those scientists whose methods we don't understand, but whom we decide to trust.

That's why I think Philodemus' book is particularly useful as it helps us flesh out these issues so we can come to something understandable and workable.