

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

Post by "Elayne" of October 29, 2020 at 9:34 AM

Oh, I do think Epicurus would agree with me, if he had access to what I have access to. I think if he knew about pragmatism and "certain enough to use for decisions", he would be fine with that. I don't think stats are a regression unless people don't understand what they are doing. I strongly suspect Epicurus would understand the uses of stats in the way I have outlined.

I think the real underlying question is "what degree of confidence do most people need before they can stop being anxious about other possibilities?" It is a totally different question from "how can we be 100% certain", a question which has the answer "we can't, but our confidence can be strong enough that we can forget about our worry."

A person with OCD can check that the stove is off 100x and still be uncomfortable with uncertainty the instant they leave the room. A typical person will go about their day, maybe checking once. This is a question for human psychology research. You have to do it as an experiment to know what works for people's loss of anxiety.

We have some loose observations about people in predominantly atheist countries-- that they are less anxious. Do all of them understand physics or do they just trust the physicists? Did Epicurus' students all understand him, or was he charismatic?

My working hypothesis is that any explanation must be as reliable as possible for all types of students. Some will believe in science based on credibility assignment alone. Others need to have it explained in a way that makes sense to them, like with Stenger's books. Others need to visit your lab and inspect your equipment. Some will never be able to use their sense observations to modify their conclusions.