

Methods Or Considerations In Thinking

Post by “Eikadistes” of July 25, 2024 at 2:21 PM

Philodemos provides a number of examples of **deductive reasoning** in *On Methods of Inference* [<https://twentiers.com/on-signs/>] and seems to negate inductive reasoning:

He suggests that the following deduction is valid:

*'Since the men in our experience, in so far as and according as they are men, are mortal,
'Men everywhere are mortal,'*

Whereas the following inductive assumption is invalid:

*'Since men in our experience are mortal,
'Men everywhere are mortal,'*

As Philodemos writes, "**the analogical method of inference is not cogent**; and on the whole if it is cogent, it must assume that unperceived objects are like those in our experience."

However, he later asserts that "it will be sufficient for us to base our **belief on probability** in these matters, just as we do in regard to what is learned from trial; for example, that we shall be safe sailing in summer, since we have had experience of favorable winds in that season." If I'm reading that right, he seems to be saying that inductive reasoning tends to be inaccurate; however, it is at least functional, and, anticipating Pragmatists like William James, we can consider it true (enough).

I'll need to go back to the original Greek to identify the named methods of inference, because he seems to either accept or reject "argument from analogy", depending on the context: As he writes, "**if anyone uses the argument from analogy properly, he will not fail, and we consider that our statement is true**", whereas, he earlier states "**the analogical method of inference is not cogent**".

I find the text to be challenging, but, ultimately, it seems to me that Philodemos is providing us with examples of functional methods of inference that are not necessarily definite, only probable. Ultimately, it is up to our sensations to provide evidence to justify any given proposition.