

Syllogistic Reasoning and Canonical Reasoning

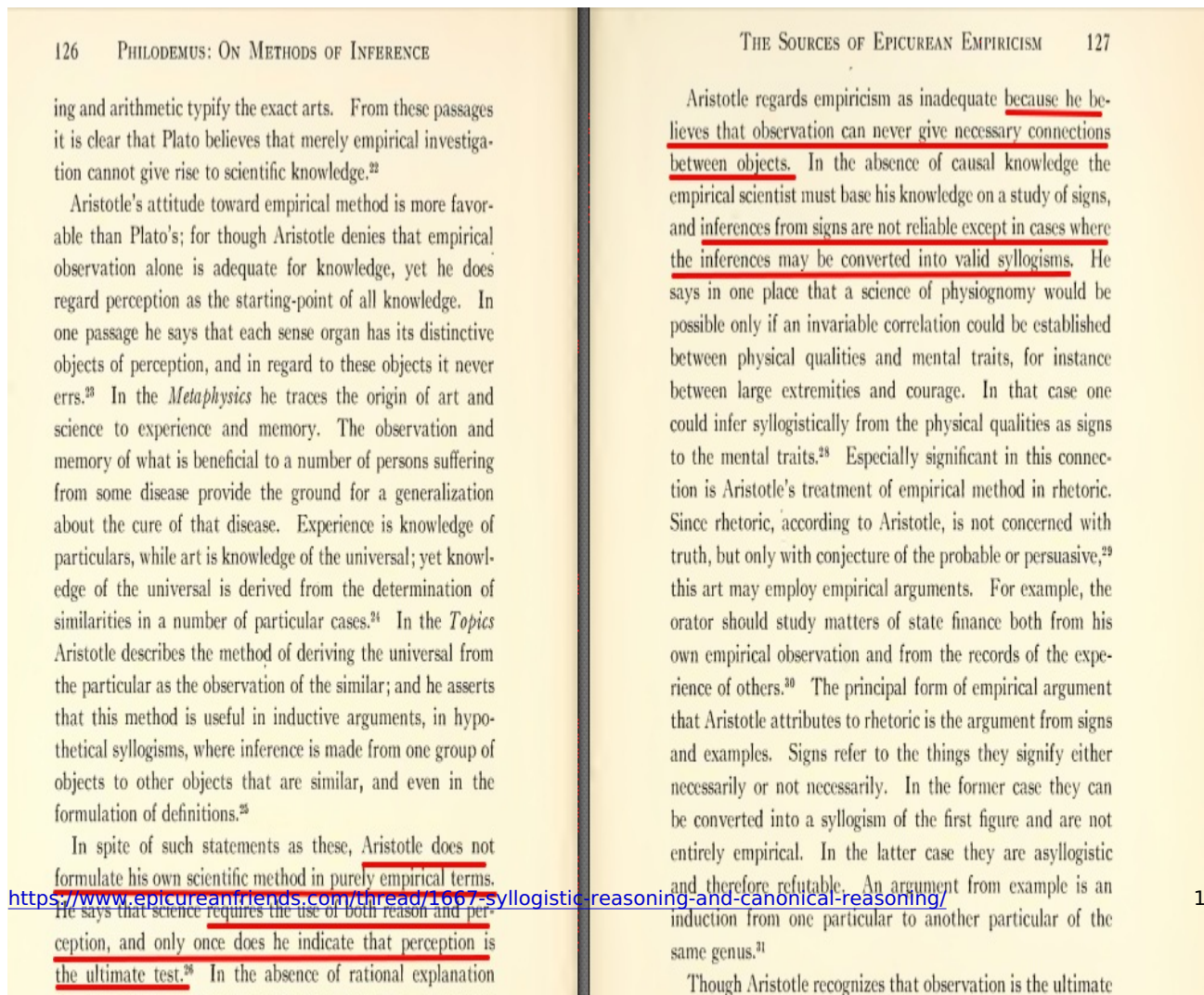
Post by "Cassius" of August 17, 2020 at 12:22 PM

This is a thread to discuss the interrelationships between "syllogistic reasoning" and "canonical reasoning."

At this point the main suggestion I have for textual material is:

1. - DeWitt's Epicurus and His Philosophy
 1. Chapter 7 - The Canon, Reason, and Nature
 2. Chapter 8 - Sensations, Anticipations, and Feelings
2. DeWitt's "[Epicurus on Immediate Presentations](#)"
3. 2 - [DeLacy's Appendix to Philodemus' On Methods of Inference](#):
 1. [Sources of Epicurean Empiricism](#)
 2. [Development of Epicurean Logic and Methodology](#)
 3. [Logical Controversies of Stoics, Epicureans, and Skeptics](#)

This page from the DeLacy material has always stuck in my memory as setting forth the issues most clearly:



To conclude, the Epicureans knew and used the extensive empirical theory that was available to them in ancient times, and even after the death of Epicurus they kept abreast of the empirical development of arts and sciences. They took the stand that a rigorous empirical method will establish “necessary” truths, and that in their own philosophy they possessed such a method. The following chapter will trace the formulation and applications of empiricism within the Epicurean school, and the final chapter will discuss the Epicurean defense of empirical method against the attacks of the Stoics.

Remember that this is Delacy's opinion about Epicurus, but here is a significant part of it!

immediate experience of objects that are known to the members of the group. Words refer primarily to objects that are apparent;⁴ their cognitive meaning, which is purely extensional, can be determined by specific empirical reference to the objects of experience. It follows for Epicurus that language, like truth, is on the level of perception rather than opinion, and that any use of words to refer to non-empirical entities, such as the universals of the rationalists, should be rejected as

² For further discussion of Epicurean epistemology, see C. Bailey, *Greek Atomists and Epicurus*, 236–274, and Philippson, *De Philodemi Libro*, 10–31. Bailey’s discussion must be used with caution.

³ Cf. P. De Lacy, “The Epicurean Analysis of Language,” *Am. Journ. Philol.* LX (1939), 85–92.

⁴ Diog. Laer. x.33.

140 PHILODEMUS: ON METHODS OF INFERENCE

lacking cognitive meaning.⁵ Epicurus condemns also the rhetorical use of language, since by emphasis on the form of expression it obscures the cognitive meaning of words, and draws the attention away from the truth of what is being said.⁶ He ridicules those who believe that they have said something when they have applied to some unknown object a metaphor from another object equally unknown.⁷ He holds that the only correct language for a philosopher is the language that has been gradually built up by society as a practical means of communication about the objects of experience; and if this language requires alteration because it is inexact or inadequate it should never be altered except in strict accordance with empirical facts.

Post by “Cassius” of August 17, 2020 at 9:30 PM

I will paste here a few paragraphs that appear to me to be highlights so someone skimming can decide if they want to read the whole thing:

ultimate reality.²⁸ Yet the Epicureans maintained that on the empirical level language involves no distortion of reality. By a psychological and half-unconscious process based on accumulated experiences, objects have been divided into classes according to their similarities and differences; and by virtue of this process, which produces what Epicurus called "anticipation," or "apperception" (προληψις), the person who uses or hears a word knows the sort of object to which that word refers. This is not to say that there is any sort of mental entity to which words refer; it is rather an approach to the later nominalistic view that words refer directly to objects and that the role of the person who relates words to objects is a purely functional one. The validity of this function is assured by the fact that the "anticipation" is based on accumulated experience and thus represents a very broad induction.²⁹

Important observation from the Epicurean Polystratus, that values are just as real as objects, although neither are reflections of Platonic forms, because they are real TO US:

EPICUREAN LOGIC AND METHODOLOGY 147

contradict appearances.²⁹ Finally, he gives an empirical approach to the problem of relations. He attacks the stand that relativity has any metaphysical implications. Those who argue that beauty and ugliness are not real by nature because they vary with individuals and situations would also have to admit that largeness, heaviness, and swiftness are unreal; but in doing so they would be going against the facts of experience. Polystratus' own view is that we must recognize as equally real both objects which remain the same in all situations, such as bronze and stone, and relations which always vary with situations. Relations do not exist in the way that objects do, but they are none the less real; and it would be foolish to deny the existence of either objects or relations, or to try to reduce one to the other.³⁰ Polystratus' chief concern in this analysis of relations lies, of course, in the realm of value. He is defending the empirical view that values are not absolute in a Platonic sense, yet they are nevertheless real elements in human experience.

Post by "Cassius" of August 17, 2020 at 10:01 PM

I think these three pages pretty well sum up what DeLacy sees as the three categories into which Epicureans divided things (I am using DeLacy's numbering so that is why it appears out of order):

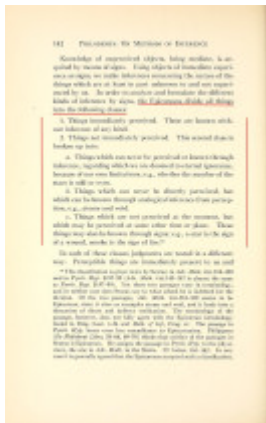
1 - Things we can validate directly through the senses because they are nearby. (Position here should not be controversial, but contradicts Plato.)

2 a - Things which can never be known due to our own limitations, such as whether the number of stars is odd or even - there is no test of truth for these - they can never be known.

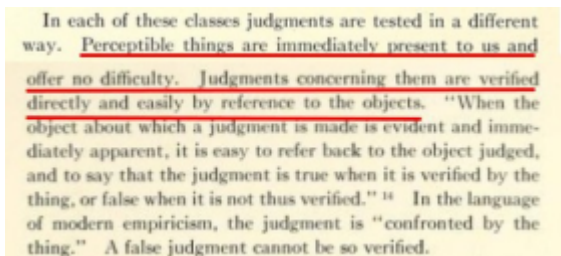
2 c - Things we may have to wait to validate through the senses, but ultimately we can get enough data to validate them through the senses. (Position here more aggressive but should not be controversial, still contradicts Plato.)

2 b - Things which by nature we can never get so close as to validate by the senses (the atoms, the far reaches of space). In this category things are considered true when there is some evidence from them and no evidence to the contrary. Multiple things can be considered true / possible. Choosing from among them, that only one is true, is improper absent sufficient evidence to do so, in which case you are in category 2c rather than 2b. (Position on this category is the most controversial; contradicts Plato)

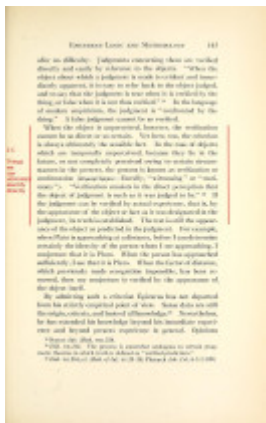
The list of the categories:



The test of truth for category 2a of Delacy List - Opinions about things immediately before us are validated directly against the object itself:



The test of truth for category 2c of Delacy list - Opinions about things that can eventually be validated directly by the senses are validated when we get that information :



The test of truth for things in category 2 b, those things which the senses can never examine closely enough to validate. This is the most challenging category and constitutes the Epicurean canonical reasoning on ultimate issues rather than syllogistic reasoning which arguably does not rely on sensory evidence.

