

"On Methods of Inference" - Best Source for the Text And Getting Started

Post by "Cassius" of November 30, 2020 at 10:01 AM

The best source for the text of this work is [the De Lacy translation available here](#). The appendix is excellent and should be read, if possible, before the work itself.

Post by "Cassius" of August 23, 2021 at 1:55 PM

The beginning sections of the text are not preserved, and therefore we don't have the opening explanation for what the work is about in order to serve as a guideline for what follows.

Perhaps even worse, the work includes lots of repetition of positions that Philodemus is arguing *against*, so it's necessary to know beforehand which side of the argument Philodemus is taking so that you know if he's talking about his side, or that of the (largely stoic) enemy.

And perhaps even worst of all, the Epicurean arguments are so unknown to us that it takes considerable explanation to understand the Epicurean side of things before getting started.

So for that reason I strongly recommend reading the introductory material, and the appendix, before reading the text itself. Of course that means we're relying on DeLacey, and we have to be careful about that too, but it's better than starting at the beginning and reading pages and pages of dense material and only finding out afterward that you've started in a section giving the Stoic argument and that Philodemus himself doesn't agree with anything that you've just read.

Here are some links to the sections to read first. Every one of these contains valuable information that will help tremendously if you read it before reading the text.

- [Forward](#)
- [Chapter 1 - Life and Work of Philodemus](#)
- [Chapter 2 - Introduction to "On Methods of Inference"](#)
- [Appendix 1 - Sources of Epicurean Empiricism](#)
- [Appendix 2 - Development of Epicurean Logic and Methodology](#)
- [Appendix 3 - Logical Controversies of the Stoics, Epicureans, and Skeptics](#)

Post by “Bryan” of November 11, 2023 at 9:17 AM

Here is a slightly reformatted version of De Lacy's work. Counter arguments are in red, Epicurean arguments (mostly from Zeno of Sidon and Demetrius of Laconia) in black, with explanatory section titles. Not complete and still has some typos.

Post by “Don” of November 11, 2023 at 9:44 AM

Quote

the person in Crete who was forty-eight cubits tall, according to those who examined the bones that were found

I wonder if they found dinosaur or ancient mammal bones. There was a Deinotherium (prehistoric elephant) fossil on the Greek island of Crete found in modern times.

Post by “Bryan” of November 11, 2023 at 9:51 AM

Yes they were finding those elephant bones in antiquity as well. The large space in the center of an elephant's skull where the trunk attaches was figured to be the place for a single large eye of the cyclops.

Post by “Bryan” of November 11, 2023 at 1:40 PM

[Quote from Bryan](#)

Yes they were finding those elephant bones in antiquity as well. The large space in the center of an elephant's skull where the trunk attaches was figured to be the place for a

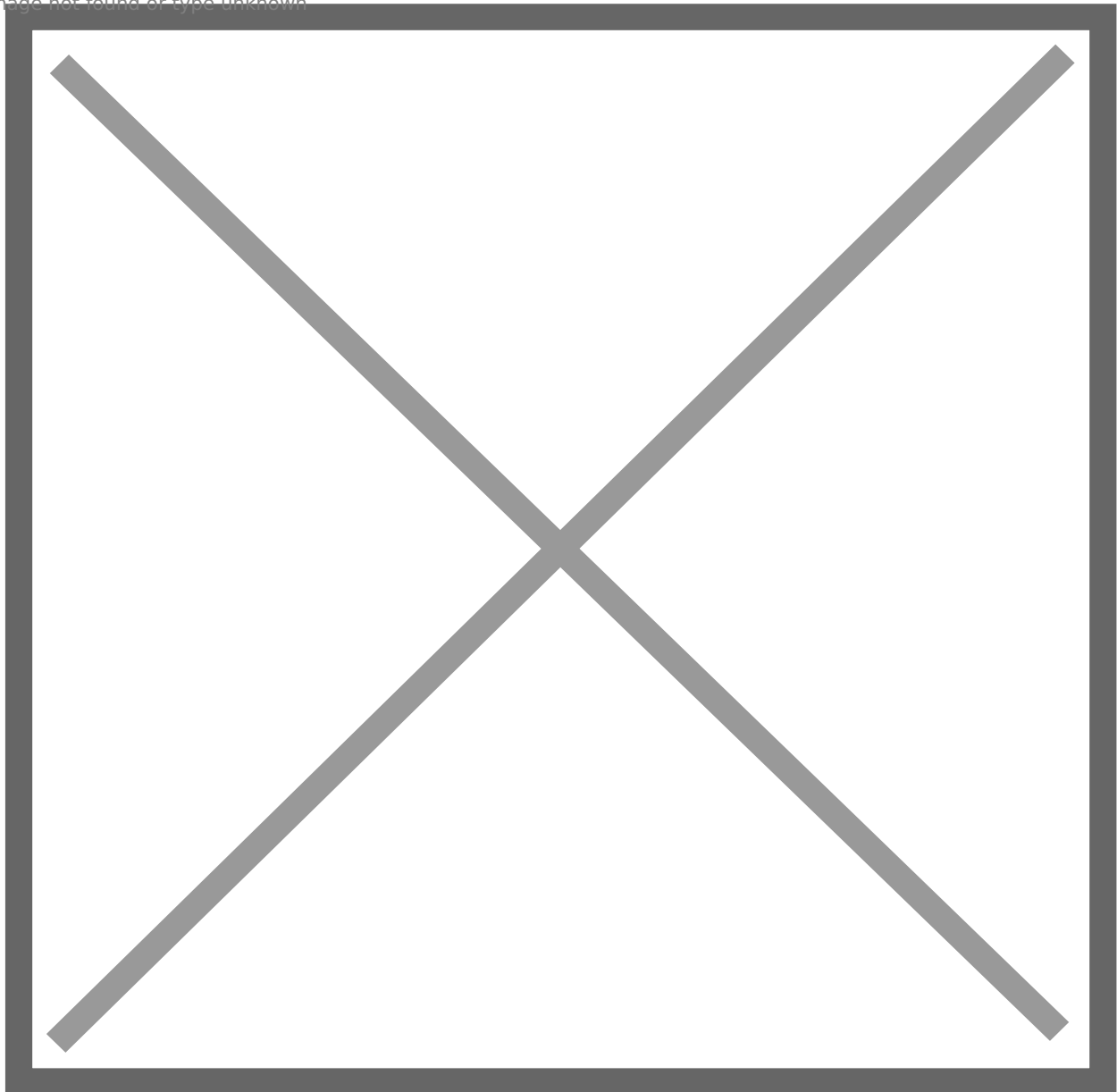
single large eye of the cyclops.

I cannot find the evidence I thought I had for this statement! Perhaps it is a speculation.

Post by “Don” of November 20, 2023 at 8:31 AM

Lo and behold, there's a book on this very topic:

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[The First Fossil Hunters](#)

The fascinating story of how the fossils of dinosaurs, mammoths, and other extinct animals influenced some of the most spectacular creatures of classical...

press.princeton.edu

Post by “Bryan” of December 14, 2023 at 1:34 AM

Of course, elephant bones were present and recognized as such by those who were familiar with them.

I recently was thinking about "elephantos, India quorum milibus e multis vallo munitur eburno" "Elephants, many thousands of which fortify India with an ivory wall " (DRN 2.537), I always thought this "wall" was just poetic. I still do, but there is this:

Dio Chrysostrom (Discourse 79.4) “Again, if ivory is a marvelous possession and worth fighting for, the Indians are of all men most blest and pre-eminent by far, for in their land the bones of the elephants are tossed aside and no one troubles to go near them, just as in our land the bones of cattle and of asses are treated; they even say that in many places the skulls of the elephants, tusks and all, are built into their house walls”

Post by “Don” of December 14, 2023 at 7:25 AM

[Quote from Bryan](#)

"Elephants, many thousands of which fortify India with an ivory wall " (DRN 2.537)

Is that a metaphor for using elephant-mounted troops in warfare? Like Themistocles interpreting "wooden walls" as ships.

Post by “Bryan” of December 14, 2023 at 10:08 AM

[Quote from Don](#)

<https://www.epicureanfriends.com/thread/1789-on-methods-of-inference-best-source-for-the-text-and-getting-started/>

Is that a metaphor for using elephant-mounted troops in warfare?

Yes I agree that war elephants are the main thing -- and probably the only thing -- that Lucretius is referring to. But the Dio Chrysostrom quote had me thinking for the first time perhaps there could be a bit more to it. We know that frozen Mammoth tusk huts are some of the oldest architecture discovered... Maybe there was a time in India when Elephants were as common as buffalo were in the Great Plains 150 years ago, and their bones were really so common that they became part of the architecture for some tribes for awhile.

This is all wild speculation. The climate in India would not preserve this, so the signs from which we can infer are few.