

Methods Or Considerations In Thinking

Post by “Cassius” of July 25, 2024 at 12:13 PM

This is a thread-starter for use in discussing "methods" or "considerations" in thinking, as referenced in the Epicurean texts.

Post by “Bryan” of July 25, 2024 at 12:40 PM

We can be sure Epicurus was aware of such distinctions, but as far as I can tell he was casual in dealing with these categories.

Post by “Cassius” of July 25, 2024 at 1:23 PM

I also want to be sure we emphasize what Bryan has produced on page 130 of the current version of his Epicurea, from Diogenes Laertius 10:32. It strikes me that the specific mention of these considerations lends them special importance in any proper analysis process:

1. **Circumstance**
2. **Analogy**
3. **Similarity**
4. **Combination / Synthesis**

ὕφেষτηκε δὲ τό τε Ὅραϊν ἡμᾶς καὶ Ἀκούειν, ὡσπερ τὸ ἀλγεῖν: ὅθεν καὶ περὶ τῶν ἀδήλων ἀπὸ τῶν φαινομένων χρὴ Σημειοῦσθαι: καὶ γὰρ καὶ Ἐπίνοιαι πᾶσαι ἀπὸ τῶν αἰσθήσεων γεγόνασι – κατὰ τε ^[1]περίπτωσιν καὶ ^[2]ἀναλογίαν καὶ ^[3]ὁμοιότητα καὶ ^[4]σύνθεσιν – συμβαλλομένου τι καὶ τοῦ λογισμοῦ

* Seeing and Hearing have been established, just like feeling pain: from which Taking signs about unseen things from visible things is also necessary: for indeed, all Thoughts have arisen from the senses – according to ^[1]circumstance, ^[2]analogy, ^[3]similarity, and ^[4]combination – with reasoning also throwing in something

ἡ περίπτωσις αἱ περιπτώσεις	circumstance	ΠΕΡΙΠΤΩΣΙΣ <i>fall around</i>
ἡ ἀναλογία	analogy	ΑΝΑΛΟΓΙΑ <i>reason again</i>
ἡ ὁμοιότης	similarity	ΟΜΟΙΟΤΗΣ <i>the same</i>
ἡ σύνθεσις αἱ συνθέσεις	synthesis	ΣΥΝΘΕΣΙΣ <i>to put together</i>

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

Philodemus 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 Philodemus 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 Philodemus 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.

Post by "Cassius" of July 25, 2024 at 2:50 PM

[Quote from Twentier](#)

I find the text to be challenging,....

It sure is, and especially since it seems to pick up in the middle, and it's sometimes hard to tell which arguments he is agreeing with, and which he is stating accurately but which are Stoic arguments that he ultimately disagrees with.

There's a lot more to get out of the book than I've gotten myself. I do think the Appendix to the DeLacy version is very helpful however, and it gives a lot of background about these issues that's not in the text.

Post by “Bryan” of July 25, 2024 at 5:10 PM

Yes, *On Methods of Inference* is very difficult and *On Nature book 28* is too. I was a bit wary to even bring up this list, because I am not ready to go back into either one just yet!

On a related note, I cannot look at my work for very long without seeing a lot of errors. This is a bit better:

ὕφεσθηκε δὲ τό τε Ὅραϊν ἡμᾶς καὶ Ἀκούειν, ὡσπερ τὸ ἀλγεῖν, ὅθεν καὶ περὶ τῶν ἀδήλων ἀπὸ τῶν φαινομένων χρή Σημειοῦσθαι: καὶ γὰρ καὶ Ἐπίνοιαί πᾶσαι ἀπὸ τῶν αἰσθήσεων γέγονασιν – κατὰ τε ^[1]περίπτωσιν καὶ ^[2]ἀναλογίαν καὶ ^[3]ὁμοιότητα καὶ ^[4]σύνθεσιν – συμβαλλομένου τι καὶ τοῦ λογισμοῦ

※ Seeing and Hearing have been established for us, just like feeling pain, where Taking signs from what is visible is also necessary for unseen things: for indeed, all Thoughts have arisen from the sensations – according to ^[1]circumstance, ^[2]analogy, ^[3]similarity, and ^[4]synthesis – with reasoning also throwing in something

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Post by “Cassius” of July 25, 2024 at 5:38 PM

Anyone have thoughts on how "analogy" differs from "similarity"?

Post by “Joshua” of July 25, 2024 at 6:16 PM

Analogy compares things which are alike in relationship, cause, operation, throughput, etc. Similarity compares things which are alike in nature, shape, size, origin, and so on.

The way in which ocean liners transport people is *similar* to the way in which cargo ships transport goods; both vessels collect their payload from land-based ports, and carry them over water to their destination.

The way in which cargo ships transport goods is *analogous* to the way in which red blood cells transport oxygen. Red blood cells collect oxygen at the port (the alveoli in the lungs) and carry that oxygen through shipping channels (the blood vessels) until they reach their destination (the cells of the body).

I'm thinking out loud, don't take this too seriously!

Post by “Cassius” of July 25, 2024 at 6:39 PM

I think this is well worth exploring because it's probably the front line of the way the Epicureans would have distinguished their approach to the search for truth as opposed to the use of "formal logic" by the other philosophers. Looking for and setting up "rules" that harden into inflexibility is a prescription for disaster, and I would expect that Epicurus would be looking for ways to describe a properly flexible approach that always takes into account new facts and new circumstances regardless of what "rules" of virtue or piety have been developed formally over time.

Seems to me that Frances Wright was attacking this issue also in saying something to the effect that "theory" is an enemy of truth. I'll look for that cite.

From Chapter 15 of A Few Days In Athens, Leontium speaking:

Quote

“I apprehend the difficulties,” observed Leontium, “which embarrass the mind of our young friend. Like most aspirants after knowledge, he has a vague and incorrect idea of what he is pursuing, and still more, of what may be attained. In the schools you have

hitherto frequented," she continued, addressing the youth, "certain images of virtue, vice, truth, knowledge, are presented to the imagination, and these abstract qualities, or we may call them, figurative beings, are made at once the objects of speculation and adoration. A law is laid down, and the feelings and opinions of men are predicated upon it; a theory is built, and all animate and inanimate nature is made to speak in its support; an hypothesis is advanced, and all the mysteries of nature are treated as explained. You have heard of, and studied various systems of philosophy; but real philosophy is opposed to all systems. Her whole business is observation; and the results of that observation constitute all her knowledge. She receives no truths, until she has tested them by experience; she advances no opinions, unsupported by the testimony of facts; she acknowledges no virtue, but that involved in beneficial actions; no vice, but that involved in actions hurtful to ourselves or to others. Above all, she advances no dogmas, — is slow to assert what is, — and calls nothing impossible. The science of philosophy is simply a science of observation, both as regards the world without us, and the world within; and, to advance in it, are requisite only sound senses, well developed and exercised faculties, and a mind free of prejudice. The objects she has in view, as regards the external world, are, first, to see things as they are, and secondly, to examine their structure, to ascertain their properties, and to observe their relations one to the other. — As respects the world within, or the philosophy of mind, she has in view, first, to examine our sensations, or the impressions of external things on our senses; which operation involves, and is involved in, the examination of those external things themselves: secondly, to trace back to our sensations, the first development of all our faculties; and again, from these sensations, and the exercise of our different faculties as developed by them, to trace the gradual formation of our moral feelings, and of all our other emotions: thirdly, to analyze all these our sensations, thoughts, and emotions, — that is, to examine the qualities of our own internal, sentient matter, with the same, and yet more, closeness of scrutiny, than we have applied to the examination of the matter that is without us: finally, to investigate the justness of our moral feelings, and to weigh the merit and demerit of human actions; which is, in other words, to judge of their tendency to produce good or evil, — to excite pleasurable or painful feelings in ourselves or others. You will observe, therefore, that, both as regards the philosophy of physics, and the philosophy of mind, all is simply a process of investigation. It is a journey of discovery, in which, in the one case, we commission our senses to examine the qualities of that matter, which is around us, and, in the other, endeavor, by attention to the varieties of our consciousness, to gain a knowledge of those qualities of matter which constitute our susceptibilities of thought and feeling."