

# How To Place Epicurus In Relation To "Nominalism"?

Post by "Cassius" of June 13, 2021 at 6:46 AM

## [Quote from Godfrey](#)

he went to great lengths to explain everything in terms of atoms and void, which I interpret as nominalism.

Yes that is the question. But I don't think it necessarily follows from the observation that nothing is eternal except matter and void to the statement that "there is nothing general except names" without drilling down very precisely into what is meant by "general."

## [Quote from Don](#)

Epicureans and Stoics on Universals

Yes that sounds like it's exactly on point - thank you! reading now!

From the opening:

## Quote

But the Stoics discuss genera and species, claiming that they are concepts and Epicurus refers to **natural kinds, of which we have preconceptions**. Both schools elaborate their views in reaction to the Platonic claim about the existence of the Ideas: the Stoics say that the Ideas are concepts and the Epicurean view of the world as constituted by a constant flow of atoms shows that there is no place for such kinds of items. The criticism of the Ideas produces very different theories of what counts as a generic item for Stoics and Epicureans. However, one crucial point of contact between the two accounts is that, for both, universal or generic features of reality are nothing other than the result of a mental capacity to recognize them. Thus, generic features characterize certain workings of the mind, and are not themselves items in reality independent of the mind. It is the Stoics who push this capacity of recognition to a state of having concepts in the mind which are utterly mind-dependent. Thus, it is the Stoics who set up a positive theory of universals as concepts, whilst the Epicureans contribute towards a conceptualist view of universals through their systematic elimination of the Ideas from ontology and epistemology.

How much should we bet that this discussion will or won't take us back into the deeper issues of "preconceptions" and "instinct"? 😊