

Preconceptions and PD24

Post by "Cassius" of January 22, 2022 at 8:36 PM

[Quote from Nate](#)

And here, perhaps, is a fundamental fallacy of Epicureanism. It holds that truth is identical with what is clearly and distinctly conceived. It substitutes imagination for thought. Unlike Spinoza, who contrasts the imperfect conception of the imagination with the adequate knowledge of understanding, Epicurus abides by what is easily and satisfactorily presented to the mind under a pictorial or semi-sensuous aspect.

This is an example of the generally hostile tone toward Epicurus I pick up in Wallace's writing when I last tried to read this book. There's a lot going on here - another example is in referencing Berkeley, and I don't find Wallace persuasive in even being clear what his point is, much less making it in a compelling way.

[Quote from Nate](#)

What the Epicureans principally objected to, we infer, were the principles—the axioms, postulates, and definitions: though others of them, like Zeno the Sidonian, went further, and urged that there were points involved in the demonstrations which had not been explicitly accepted in the preliminary principles.

This is a reference to geometry, but again I am not able to clearly say where Wallace is going. Is he saying that Epicurus was going too far in objecting to mathematics, or is he endorsing what I gather was Frances Wright's final viewpoint, that all efforts to conclude that any theory is sound, beyond just observation, is bound to fail.

It's definitely useful to add Wallace's translations to the big collection of variations of the texts, but I have not found his commentaries to be very helpful.

[Not posting this to be argumentative, just as a marker that if someone who is newer reads a long paragraph like that, and doesn't really follow where Wallace is going, that person is not alone.]

At the very least, if he is going to suggest that he is smarter than Epicurus and say something like this: "And here, perhaps, is a fundamental fallacy of Epicureanism. It holds that truth is identical with what is clearly and distinctly conceived. It substitutes imagination for thought." then I would like him to clearly explain why he thinks Epicurus was wrong and what he thinks the correct answer is. Does this mean he is a Platonist or religionist and finds truth in ideal forms or divine revelation or some kind of logic ("thought")?