

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

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Some reflections on the link between Epicurus and nominalism:

"When [Epicurus] says 'unreasonably' this is more than mere derision; it is a fundamental doctrine. Since the only real existences are atoms and void, it follows that no abstractions exist; 'justice is nothing by itself'; form cannot exist apart from substance, quality apart from thing, virtue apart from action. This results in a sort of nominalism; virtue becomes an empty name, corresponding to no reality" (De Witt, *Epicurus and His Philosophy* 247)

"But against Plato, the Epicureans think that universal ideas or concepts refer to a class of similar objects or concrete particular things, but the universal ideas are neither independent of these concrete particular, nor are they in things. They are merely verbal marks to enable us to think about the class of particular things. Hence, Epicureans foreshadowed medieval nominalism and also modern empiricism." (Masih, *A Critical History of Western Philosophy* 127)

"We saw William Euvrie propose Epicurus as the ultimate founder of the nominalist movement—a connection he seems to have picked up from a contemporary arts master at Paris, Johannes de Nova Domo. Pedro Fonseca still sees a link between nominalism and Epicureanism in the later sixteenth century." (Pasnau, *Metaphysical Themes* 1274-1671, 90)

"The reference to Epicurus as the spiritual father of nominalism was often repeated in the writings of late medieval realists. Besides Johannes de Nova Domo, the most important defender of this doxographical claim was Heymericus de Campo." (Friedman and Nielsen, *The Medieval Heritage in Early Modern Metaphysics and Modal Theory, 1400-1700*)