

How To Place Epicurus In Relation To "Nominalism"?

Post by "Cassius" of May 2, 2024 at 9:19 AM

Also: I note that the wikipedia article spends considerable time with William of Occam. In this last podcast, which I edited down to make it fit a normal length, I edited out a brief discussion that we had of Occam's razor. That's a related topic to nominalism, it seems from the wikipedia article, and I'd like us to explore that as part of our current series on Cicero's "on the nature of the gods." But I think before we go too far in evaluating it we need to spend time with how it relates to William of Occam's views on nominalism, as there are things here that seem to be a cause for concern in regard to nominalism, and those issues probably relate to too broad an interpretation of "Occam's razor" too. That's something Joshua was mentioning as well, that Occam's razor shouldn't be interpreted as meaning that "the simplest explanation is always correct." That would end up being a "rule" that I think goes further than Epicurus would go.

Comparing Occam to [PD24](#): "[PD24](#). If you reject any single sensation, and fail to distinguish between the conclusion of opinion, as to the appearance awaiting confirmation, and that which is actually given by the sensation or feeling, or each intuitive apprehension of the mind, you will confound all other sensations, as well, with the same groundless opinion, so that you will reject every standard of judgment. And if among the mental images created by your opinion you affirm both that which awaits confirmation, and that which does not, you will not escape error, since you will have preserved the whole cause of doubt in every judgment between what is right and what is wrong."

It appears to me that we have Epicurus laying down a better rule, that all theories which comply with facts about which we are confident must be considered to be possible, and that we don't settle on one until we have the facts to eliminate other possibilities. Injecting a rule of "preferring the simplest" or even "preferring the one which makes the least assumptions" concerns me as sounding like a rule which is not included within the more basic [PD24](#). I wonder if Occam's viewpoint (or the way it is interpreted) is asserting a rule that Epicurus would say is not justifiable if we are to ground our opinions exclusively on the evidence of the sensations, anticipations, and feelings, rather than looking for logical rules that are allegedly superior to and more important than the actual evidence.

This topic won't be easy or quick to resolve but it's something we can discuss here for a while before staking out positions.