

Feedback From A User

Post by “Lee” of February 18, 2020 at 2:15 PM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

My understanding of what the term "nominalistic" means is not sufficient for me to understand whether "nominalism" is accurate or inaccurate, or what that says about Adler and his opinion.

Your comment made me realize that I had assumed “nominalism” to mean the position that there are no universals, rather, there are only words that categorize particular things. I did a bit more reading and realized that “nominalism” has a more subtle definition and can mean at least a couple of things. I included a quote below from the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy with a link. My position appears to be a denial of abstract objects but an acknowledgement that our words describing general things point to some real material combination of matter.

In other words, “redness” and “circularity” are real concepts as manifested by a particular combination of atoms in each of our brains.

[Nominalism in Metaphysics- Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy](#)

“Thus one kind of Nominalism asserts that there are particular objects and that everything is particular, and the other asserts that there are concrete objects and that everything is concrete.

As noted above, the two forms of nominalism are independent. The possibility of being a nominalist in one sense but not in the other has been exemplified in the history of philosophy. For instance, David Armstrong (1978; 1997) is a believer in universals, and so he is not a nominalist in the sense of rejecting universals, but he believes that everything that exists is spatiotemporal, and so he is a nominalist in the sense of rejecting abstract objects. And there are those who, like Quine at a certain point of his philosophical development (1964; 1981), accept sets or classes and so are not nominalists in the sense of rejecting abstract objects and yet reject universals and so are nominalists in the sense of rejecting universals.

Thus Nominalism, in both senses, is a kind of anti-realism. For one kind of Nominalism denies the existence, and therefore the reality, of universals and the other denies the existence, and therefore the reality, of abstract objects. But what does Nominalism claim with respect to the entities alleged by some to be universals or abstract objects, e.g. properties, numbers, propositions, possible worlds? Here there are two general options: (a) to deny the existence of the alleged entities in question, and (b) to accept the existence of these entities but to argue that they are particular or concrete.”