

Perspectivism

Post by “Pacatus” of December 3, 2024 at 2:43 PM

Some thoughts triggered by the following comment by [Don](#) from the discussion of the Monday Zoom meeting: “One of the benefits of this forum is it gives a chance to read Epicurus and his school with fresh eyes and lets the texts, all of the available ones, speak for themselves.”

I think discussion on a forum like this can support a kind of perspectivist process of **learning**, viz. “the epistemological principle that perception of and knowledge of something are always bound to the interpretive perspectives of those observing it. While perspectivism does not regard all perspectives and interpretations as being of equal truth or value, it holds that no one has access to an absolute view of the world cut off from perspective.” No one has a “god’s-eye-view” – or a “view from nowhere” – from which to analyze reality.

[Perspectivism - Wikipedia](#)

Nietzsche is considered to be the first major developer of this principle:

“Nietzsche's perspectivism begins by challenging the underlying notions of 'viewing from nowhere', 'viewing from everywhere', and 'viewing without interpreting' as being absurdities. Instead, all viewing is attached to some perspective, and all viewers are limited in some sense to the perspectives at their command.”

The Spanish philosopher José Ortega y Gasset also took a perspectivist view (is there a pun there? 😊).

“From different positions two people see the same surroundings. However, they do not see the same thing. Their different positions mean that the surroundings are organized in a different way: what is in the foreground for one may be in the background for another. Furthermore, as things are hidden one behind another, each person will see something that the other may not.”

– José Ortega y Gasset (some years back I read almost all of Ortega’s work).

I agree with the principle – with the following **proviso**: from an Epicurean perspective, such **perspectivism must be properly grounded in and constrained by the *κᾶνών***. Otherwise, it could collapse into the kind of relativism that Nietzsche, for example, eschewed – or skepticism -- while refuting Nietzsche’s error: “There are no facts, only interpretation.”

[Remember, though, that *The Will to Power* is a collection of Nietzsche’s philosophical notes, not the final declaration of his thought.]