

Epicurean Physics and Canonics at Three Levels of Reality

Post by “Joshua” of December 3, 2025 at 3:21 PM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

These issues of recognizing more than one level of reality are discussed in similar manner in Sedley's "[Epicurus' Refutation of Determinism](#)."

Thank you! I knew you had brought this up before, but I could not recall your source. Here is one relevant passage from Sedley;

Quote

Epicurus' response to this is perhaps the least appreciated aspect of his thought. It was to reject reductionist atomism. Almost uniquely among Greek philosophers he arrived at what is nowadays the unreflective assumption of almost anyone with a smattering of science, that there are truths at the microscopic level of elementary particles, and further very different truths at the phenomenal level; that the former must be capable of explaining the latter; but that neither level of description has a monopoly of truth. (The truth that sugar is sweet is not straightforwardly reducible to the truth that it has such and such a molecular structure, even though the latter truth may be required in order to explain the former). By establishing that cognitive scepticism, the direct outcome of reductionist atomism, is self-refuting and untenable in practice, Epicurus justifies his non-reductionist alternative, according to which sensations are true and there are therefore bona fide truths at the phenomenal level accessible through them.