

Article - David Sedley - 1988 - "Epicurean Anti-Reductionism"

Post by "Cassius" of March 26, 2026 at 10:39 AM

In this article Sedley refers several times to aetiology and ontology and discusses which aspect is primary to Epicurus on a particular point. It might help to have this explanation before reading the article (pasted from our good friends at ChatGPT):

The phrase "**aetiologically rather than ontologically primary**" distinguishes two different senses in which something can be considered "primary" or fundamental.

1. Aetiologically primary (causally primary)

- *Aetiology* means **cause or explanation of origin**.
- If something is **aetiologically primary**, it is:
 - The **cause** or **source** of something else
 - What explains **how or why** something comes to be

☐ In simple terms:

It comes first in the order of explanation or causation.

2. Ontologically primary (being primary)

- *Ontology* concerns **what exists** and **what is fundamentally real**.
- If something is **ontologically primary**, it is:
 - More **fundamental in reality**
 - What other things **depend on for their existence**

☐ In simple terms:

It comes first in the order of being or reality.