

Explaining The Relationship Between Properties / Qualities of Atoms and Emergent Qualities of Things Formed From Atoms

Post by "Cassius" of March 26, 2026 at 6:43 AM

Another option:

Sedley's Routledge Encyclopedia entry (2005) states that "atoms themselves have only the primary or ineliminable features of body: size, shape and weight," and that the ground for this parsimony is the *Letter to Herodotus* §54-55: secondary properties are changeable by nature, whereas atoms are the enduring entities underlying change. [Routledge](#) Epicurus avoids the "reductionism" of Democritus — while everything is ultimately atoms and void, the emergent properties that arise from those combinations are not equivalent in every respect to their constituent atoms.

On the compound-body level, Lucretius distinguishes in *De Rerum Natura* properties that are inseparable (*coniuncta*, Greek συμβεβηκότα) from others that are accidental (*eventa*, συμπτώματα). [Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy](#) And crucially on the ontological status of those emergent qualities: although colors and other accidents are real, they are irreducibly different from atomic structures, and atomic structures are in no way ontologically privileged over the phenomenal level — neither level has a monopoly on truth. [Routledge](#)

Here is the main structural diagram showing the full ontological hierarchy:

