

# Updated FAQ Entry: Why Should I Care About Epicurean Physics When So Much Science Has Changed In The Last 2000 Years?

Post by “Peter Konstans” of June 16, 2026 at 8:53 AM

IMO emergence has become popular because it promises a middle way between dualism and physicalism. You can have your cake of not believing in the supernatural and eat it with the pleasure of knowing that, while the cake is made of atoms, it is somehow more than those atoms.

Stephen Hawking said in an interview that the human race is just a chemical scum. Well, emergence allows us to accept we are a chemical scum while rejoicing in being more than just a chemical scum. This appeal is part of the reason for the remarkable spread of the term. It can be found everywhere, from fundamental physics to chemistry and biology, to sociology and economics.

However appealing, it is an illusion. To be real means to have causal power. If everything is physics, only the atomic entities of fundamental physics have causal power. Other things are therefore unreal, illusions. So there are no objects. No creatures, colours or concepts. Instead, there are distinct arrangements of quantum fields.

Our sensory limitations mean we can't see quantum fields. Our cognitive limitations mean we can't intuitively understand them. Yet despite these limitations we perceive a world full of structure and meaning. From a physicalist perspective, this leads to many fascinating whys. Why do we perceive creatures, colours and concepts? Answering such whys doesn't require us to accept emergence and it doesn't require us to revise Epicureanism.