

# Key Citations On Atoms, Void, and Emergence

Post by “Cassius” of October 4, 2023 at 12:00 PM

1. **Diogenes of Oinoanda Fragment 5:** Now Aristotle and those who hold the same Peripatetic views as Aristotle say that nothing is scientifically knowable, because things are continually in flux and, on account of the rapidity of the flux, evade our apprehension. We on the other hand acknowledge their flux, but not its being so rapid that the nature of each thing [is] at no time apprehensible by sense-perception. And indeed [in no way would the upholders of] the view under discussion have been able to say (and this is just what they do [maintain] that [at one time] this is [white] and this black, while [at another time] neither this is [white nor] that black, [if] they had not had [previous] knowledge of the nature of both white and black.
2. More to come....

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Post by “Bryan” of February 2, 2025 at 10:49 AM

When the distinction between atoms and compounds is not significant, I wanted to highlight that Epíkouros uses the term "What is corporeal (τό Σωματικόν)" for both together:

"...as both what is corporeal and the void exist..."

(Epíkouros, Peri Phýseōs, Book 28, P.Herc. 1479 fr. 1 col. 1)

# P.Herc. 1479 fr. 1 col. 1

## column 1

[.....] ἄμα καὶ ὅτι πᾶν  
10 [.....το]ῦτ[ο ε]ἰ μηδ' οὕτως  
[εἴη τις ἐ]γνοῶν, ὡς ἔ[σ]τι τό τε  
[σ]ωματικὸν καὶ τὸ κενὸν ε-  
[- ca.9 -] μηθ' οὕτως, ὡς ὁ

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**Post by “Cassius” of February 2, 2025 at 11:46 AM**

### [Quote from Bryan](#)

When the distinction between atoms and compounds is not significant, I wanted to highlight that Epikouros uses the term "What is corporeal (τό Σωματικόν)" for both together:

Thanks for pointing that out. It can definitely be confusing, especially when we start talking about accidents/events and properties/qualities. Atoms have no color but their combinations and movements generate color, and so I gather that even though atoms and combinations of

atoms might both be referred to as bodies, I gather you have to get to the combinations stage before you can properly start talking about accidents/events/qualities that are perceptible to us.

I know I have been tempted to say in the past that atoms have "properties" and bodies have "qualities," but I gather it can't be neatly divided like that given the different shades of meaning of the words. At the combination level you have to start dealing with "properties or qualities that can be separated without destroying the thing" vs "properties or qualities that can't be removed without destroying the thing." (And those are scare quotes, I am not representing that that is a quote from Lucretius)

Bryan if you can think of a chart or other way to make those distinctions clear that would help a lot with that section of Lucretius talking about the Trojan War (in book one as I recall).

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### **Post by “Bryan” of February 2, 2025 at 1:00 PM**

#### [Quote from Cassius](#)

I gather you have to get to the combinations stage before you can properly start talking about accidents/events/qualities that are perceptible to us

Yes, I think the biggest challenge is the different terms we have in English. For the qualities you are referring to, Lucretius calls "events" and Epíkouros calls "symptoms."

αἱ <b>ποιότητες</b>	Qualities	<b>ΠΟΙΟΤΗΤΕΣ</b> <i>category state</i>
<i>Qualities are of two types:</i>		
τὰ <b>συμπτώματα</b>	<i>Contingent Qualities:</i>	<b>ΣΥΜΠΤΩΜΑΤΑ</b> <i>to fall together</i>
ĒVENTA	"SYMPTOMS"	
<i>Slavery or Freedom, Poverty or Riches, Peace or War</i>		
τὰ <b>συμβεβηκότα</b>	<i>Necessary Qualities:</i>	<b>ΣΥΜΒΕΒΗΚΟΤΑ</b> <i>to have walked together</i>
CONIUNCTA	"PROPERTIES"	
<i>Weight to stone, Heat to fire, Liquidity to water</i>		

In terms of whole natures: For the atoms, the only necessary qualities are shape, three-dimensionality, and weight. For the void, its only quality is to never be able to be subjected to any influence in any way.

αἱ <b>ποιότητες</b> περὶ τὰς <b>ἀτόμους</b>	qualities of the atoms	
τὸ <b>σχῆμα</b> τὰ <b>σχήματα</b>	shape	<b>ΣΧΗΜΑ</b> <i>holding [a form]</i>
τὸ <b>μέγεθος</b> τὰ <b>μεγέθη</b>	size / extension	<b>ΜΕΓΕΘΟΣ</b> <i>largeness</i>
τὸ <b>βάρος</b> τὰ <b>βάρη</b>	weight	<b>ΒΑΡΟΣ</b> <i>heavy</i>

All other qualities are emergent and the contingency or necessity of the qualities is from the perspective of the compounds that exhibit them.

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**Post by “Cassius” of February 2, 2025 at 3:44 PM**

Those are very helpful Bryan!

since most of this is discussed by both Epicurus in Herodotus and Lucretius in his poem, can we fill in the chart with the latin equivalent at every step of the way? Perhaps you already have on Chart one, but it would be helpful on chart 2 as well.

Embarassing to say, I always find the Latin easier to relate to than the Greek 😞