

Article: "Extraterrestrial Life May Look Nothing Like Life On Earth..." (and for our purposes, applying the article to "gods")

Post by "Pacatus" of December 15, 2024 at 2:26 PM

From the *Letter to Phytocles* (just as a textual addendum to the parts of this discussion that reflects on modern science, and uncertainties in our knowledge of the natural world – as we all agree on “no supernatural” 😞)

“[86] We must not try to force an impossible explanation, nor employ a method of inquiry like our reasoning either about the modes of life or with respect to the solution of other physical problems: witness such propositions as that ‘the universe consists of bodies and the intangible,’ or that ‘the elements are indivisible,’ and all such statements in circumstances where there is only one explanation which harmonizes with phenomena. ***For this is not so with the things above us: they admit of more than one cause of coming into being and more than one account of their nature which harmonizes with our sensations.***”

“[87] ***For we must not conduct scientific investigation by means of empty assumptions and arbitrary principles, but follow the lead of phenomena:*** for our life has not now any place for irrational belief and groundless imaginings, but we must live free from trouble.

“Now all goes on without disturbance as far as regards each of those things which may be explained in several ways so as to harmonize with what we perceive, when one admits, as we are bound to do, probable theories about them. ***But when one accepts one theory and rejects another which harmonizes as well with the phenomenon, it is obvious that he altogether leaves the path of scientific inquiry and has recourse to myth.*** Now we can obtain indications of what happens above from some of the phenomena on earth: for we can observe how they come to pass, though we cannot observe the phenomena in the sky: for they may be produced in several ways.” EF version, based on Bailey; my emphases.

I just found that "niggling" in the back of my mind as I read through the thread. 😞🤔😊 It really is, it seems to me, an early paean to empiricism -- and keeping open-minded about plausible hypotheses and theories that might fit the known facts (have not been falsified), with whatever uncertainty that might entail.