

Epicurus, gods and God

Post by “Joshua” of October 16, 2019 at 7:45 AM

This subject is always pleasant to contemplate, for its power to suggest something of grandeur and perspective, apart from anything else. I proposed a few months back in another thread that an advanced artificial intelligence might fit the description of an undying and untroubled divinity figure.

And other figures present themselves for consideration. There is in Utah, for instance, a clonal colony of a single quaking aspen tree, called Pando (I spread out, in Latin) all sharing one individual's DNA, whose branching grove spans 106 acres. An extremely venerable tree, the root system of this trembling giant is said to be 80,000 years old. To call Pando a god would require us to expand our conception of pleasure and happiness, and there are other problems besides. But this patriarch among trees does serve to illustrate the point; there are natural marvels even in this world. Surely in the infinite reaches of space greater wonders await discovery.

In supersaline lagoons in Australia there are ancient colonies of cyanobacteria quietly bubbling away on the same pillared altars of sediment that they began to wrought when the earth was young. These stromatolites are sustained by the finest viands, drinking a little sunlight in each single photo-synthesizing cell, and splitting off an O² molecule here and there as if in compensation. Without their kind, the atmosphere of this planet would have remained oxygen-poor and unable to sustain higher life. These structures were ancient beyond memory even when Pando was a sapling; the two elders have been trading oxygen and carbon dioxide with each other for over a thousand lifetimes of men.