

What Is Happiness? How Does Our Conception of It Derive From Eudaemonia and Felicitas? Should Happiness Be The Goal of Life?

Post by "Cassius" of December 18, 2025 at 11:21 PM

I've always been fascinated by this chicken-or-egg line of reasoning:

[Quote from Lucretius 5:181](#)

Further, how was there first implanted in the gods a pattern for the begetting of things, yea, and the concept of man, so that they might know and see in their mind what they wished to do, or in what way was the power of the first-beginnings ever learnt, or what they could do when they shifted their order one with the other, if nature did not herself give a model of creation? For so many first-beginnings of things in many ways, driven on by blows from time everlasting until now, and moved by their own weight, have been wont to be borne on, and to unite in every way, and essay everything that they might create, meeting one with another, that it is no wonder if they have fallen also into such arrangements, and have passed into such movements, as those whereby this present sum of things is carried on, ever and again replenished.

I interpret the meaning of this to be that there was never a necessity for gods to have a pattern because the universe and its process have always existed.

As for intelligence and concepts, paraphrasing the deWitt quote Joshua likes to cite, a universe with no design or intention or concepts of its own naturally produced beings who do have concepts and designs and intentions.

Sextus can argue that:

Hence in order to grasp human happiness we must first have the idea of god and deity, but in order to have the idea of god we must first have a conception of a happy man. Therefore each, by presupposing the idea of the other, is unthinkable for us.

But there's no reason to think that there was ever a "first" example of such a being, given that the universe's processes have been operating eternally. So the issue isn't "unthinkable" as Sextus alleges. In fact it's the contrary. What is unthinkable is that the processes we observe today of biological beings developing over time to produce intelligence and concepts and designs ever had a beginning. These processes are natural and therefore the "conceptions" we are talking about have always existed at innumerable places and times in the past, and will continue to do so eternally into the future.

It's Sextus and the intelligent designers who are starting from an unthinkable premise -- divine creation from nothing.