

Collecting Ancient Instances of the Argument: "Pleasure Cannot Be The Highest Good Because It Has No Limit"

Post by "Joshua" of December 29, 2021 at 4:34 PM

Quote

"The ability to increase is proof that a thing is imperfect."

In my recent reading of [Philebus](#), I found myself wondering why the interlocutors so readily agreed with Socrates on that point: why *is* it so necessary for the *telos* to be perfect, and admitting of no increase? It comes from the same school of thought that held that the Heroic past was Golden or, as we imply by its grammatical tense, "perfect". John Keats gave ironic expression to this idea in his *Ode on a Grecian Urn*, where he found the vessel's artistic engraving enchanting, *perfect* even, but lifeless in its perfection; so still was that still-life that it was still-born.

"Fair youth, beneath the trees, thou canst not leave

Thy song, nor ever can those trees be bare;

Bold Lover, never, never canst thou kiss,

Though winning near the goal yet, do not grieve;

She cannot fade, though thou hast not thy bliss,

For ever wilt thou love, and she be fair!"

-John Keats

I suppose I struggle to agree with Epicurus on this point; all that mindless numb tranquility, all that confusion about pleasure and pain---we could have avoided the whole troubling mess!

But it's questions like these that keep me going back to the texts, though too infrequently.