

persons stand apart from what makes sense as the of reflecting, they perform (113).
practical wisdom? Accord- gained through a good es associating with good mples of good actions and d way. It is important to act with good people, but the same kinds of things

VIRTUE

in mind that Aristotle was in history in a flourish- where the community (the component of the social in- (Hinman 1998: 330-335) amounted to a community that used today, and as a social component in teachings. For the Greeks, an essential part of well- is therefore important to is historically and not to the cultural and social he lived and thought Aristotle spoke as an ex- pressing the best citizen- belief that the city-state form in which the virtues fully realized and the Athenian gentleman excellence, and were not available to all as magnanimity and to people of great wealth (82).

Adair MacIntyre (1984: 2-233) carries on the in his exploration of virtue and the commu- of possible links that

are located in the literature on virtue, including notions that virtues can be learned only within forms of social life like families; that virtues can be sustained only in communities because members of the community are able to support moral strengths and identify weaknesses; that since the communities in which we live shape the way we apply our moral principles, without communities, we would not know how to act ethically in our social lives; and that some virtues such as trust and tolerance are particularly appropriately exercised in communities.

The notion of the golden mean has been criticized because, although the idea of finding a mean seems reasonable and plausible initially, there will be situations where this notion does not work. For example, what is the middle course between keeping a promise and not keeping one? It is obvious that there is no middle course because one either keeps a promise or does not, and we tend to feel that those who keep promises are moral and those who do not lack morality. The same argument can be applied to truth telling because one either does or does not tell the truth. Thus, it seems that certain virtues such as promise keeping and truth telling are absolute and not relative to various people and situations. It might be argued, however, that keeping promises and truth telling are actions rather than virtues. The virtues of loyalty, dependability, and honesty could collectively equate to promise keeping and truth telling, and these virtues do have a middle course.

A further criticism of the teachings of Aristotle is that he is, for all intents and purposes, proposing the notion that happiness will result from moderate behavior. While this may be true in some cases, there are other cases in which behavior in excess of the mean is proper for an individual. For example, a man who is by temperament passionate and zealous may find that moderate behavior does not suit him, and that person cannot be happy if forced to exercise control by acting in a moderate way. Therefore, for those who have this temperament, Aristotle has little to offer.

Aristotle has been criticized for his account of virtue ethics because it is said that his is an ethics for the ruling class—that is, for the privileged,

free, adult, Greek males whose main concerns were politics, war, and leisure. At the time Aristotle was writing, women, foreigners, and slaves were excluded from many of the activities of life in Athens, despite the fact that the privileged class enjoyed benefits that were largely generated by these excluded groups. Certainly, the audience for his ethics was composed fundamentally of those who had benefited from a noble upbringing, had some experience of life, and had reached a certain level of maturity (Tessitore 1996: 17). Aristotle considered that the good life and the happiness of an adult, male citizen of noble birth differed from that of a woman or a slave (Kopperi 1999: 28). Women's natures as well as slaves' were seen as different from those of men of noble birth, and, therefore, the form of human life appropriate for them also differed. Significantly, what was best for a woman or a slave was not for them to decide for themselves; the appropriate conception of the good life for women and slaves was based on what was thought to be their human nature, and they were expected simply to accept this conception.

It is a common criticism of Aristotle that his list of virtues is arbitrary, and it is certainly constructed by reference to Aristotle's cultural boundaries and shaped by the values prevailing in ancient Athens. However, Lawrence Hinman (1998: 334-335) argues that there are some universal elements in his list of virtues. He suggests that we all need to develop certain attitudes to cope with our lives, such as the way we react to the suffering of others. Here, Hinman suggests that the excess is pity or bleeding heart, the deficiency is acting callously, and the mean compassionately. Similarly, he proposes that we all need to develop an attitude toward our friends where the mean would be loyalty, the excess flattery, and the deficiency indifference. Hinman offers the table shown in Table 14.1 to illustrate the mean (the most virtuous response) to various attitudes or spheres of existence. Hinman draws our attention to the fact that when we attempt to develop virtuous responses to these attitudes we must focus on the patterns in our behavior because these, rather than specific acts, reveal our character (2003: 279).

Table 14.1 Virtues and Spheres of Existence

Excess	Mean	Deficiency	Attitude Toward Self	Servility Self-deprivation	Proper self-love Proper pride Self-respect	Arrogance Conceit Egoism Narcissism Vanity	Revenge Grudge Resentment	Over-indulgence	Toxic guilt Scrupulosity Shame	Self-righteousness	Attitude Toward Our Own Good Deeds	Belittling Disappointment	Sense of accomplishment Humility	Pity "Bleeding heart"	Envy	Attitude Toward the Achievements of Others	Self-satisfaction Complacency Competition	Admiration Emulation	Courage	Foolhardiness	Attitude Toward Our Own Desires	Anhedonia	Temperance Moderation	Lust Gluttony	Attitude Toward Our Friends	Indifference	Loyalty	Obssequiousness	Attitude Toward Other People	Exploitation	Respect	Deference
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A central criticism of Aristotle's approach to ethics is that it fails to tell us how to act (Hinman 1998: 359). Notwithstanding what he tells us about good character, Aristotle does not provide us with answers to moral questions like those of the death penalty and euthanasia. Proponents of deontologi-

cal and consequentialist theories argue that virtue ethics has no ethics of action and is incomplete. In answer to this charge, some argued that an ethics of action need not be character, such as that provided by virtue ethics. One reason, a person with a morally virtuous character is more likely to apply a moral theory with insight, and without good character