

Finding the Golden Mean

| Vice of Deficiency | Virtuous Mean | Vice of Excess |
|------------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------|
| Cowardice | Courage | Rashness |
| Insensibility | Temperance | Intemperance |
| Illiberality | Liberality | Prodigality |
| Pettiness | Munificence | Vulgarity |
| Humble-mindedness | High-mindedness | Vaingloriness |
| Want of Ambition | Right Ambition | Over-ambition |
| Spiritlessness | Good Temper | Irascibility |
| Surliness | Friendly Civility | Obsequiousness |
| Ironical Depreciation | Sincerity | Boastfulness |
| Boorishness | Wittiness | Buffoonery |
| Shamelessness | Modesty | Bashfulness |
| Callousness | Just Resentment | Spitefulness |

Aristotle is quick to point out that the virtuous mean is not a strict mathematical mean between two extremes. For example, if eating 100 apples is too many, and eating zero apples is too little, this does not imply that we should eat 50 apples, which is the mathematical mean. Instead, the mean is rationally determined, based on the relative merits of the situation. That is, it is "as a prudent man would determine it." He concludes that it is difficult to live the virtuous life primarily because it is often difficult to find the mean between the extremes.