Reading / EN

Measure beyond averages.

Aristotle · Nicomachean Ethics

Measure beyond averages.

Why acting appropriately requires more than a midpoint between extremes.

The mean depends on the situation

Aristotle describes virtue as a disposition shaped through practice. What is appropriate depends on the person and the particular situation; it is not simply a numerical average. Practical judgement is needed. His account invites attention to the occasion, timing, people involved and manner of acting. This guide uses that idea to examine everyday decisions.

Nicomachean Ethics II.1, II.6; VI.5

An example: honest feedback

Fictional example: a shared draft contains an error. Silence leaves it in place. Publicly humiliating the other person can damage cooperation. Useful feedback names the error, explains its consequence and proposes a correction. Immediate danger requires clear intervention. A minor stylistic issue may need only a quiet suggestion. Appropriateness comes from the circumstances, not a fixed volume halfway between silence and shouting.

From impression to a reasoned measure

Our exercise starts with four questions: what should be protected or achieved, who bears the consequences, what conditions limit the options, and how will a useful effect be recognised later? Write down two possible actions and justify your choice. Then review the outcome against actual feedback. Repetition here means refining judgement through experience, rather than performing the same reaction every day.

Where a midpoint is not enough

Aristotle does not treat the mean as permission for every action. For contemporary use, we therefore set a boundary first: a compromise about harm does not become right merely by occupying a middle position. Protection and responsibility need their own justification. The exercise supports judgement rather than a mechanical balancing rule. The historical ethics can itself be read critically; this selection does not automatically adopt every social assumption of the ancient work.

Nicomachean Ethics II.6

Questions

What effect should my action have?

What boundary must be respected?

What feedback would change my choice?

About this edition

An independent Bib editorial introduction to selected ideas from the work. Examples, exercises and the AdL reading are editorial additions. The linked source editions are in English.

An editorial AdL reading treats the project as an order with participants, relations and conditions. The question of measure becomes an examination of effects across levels. A correction must consider both the draft and the cooperation. The reference and boundary are stated explicitly. This connection is a contemporary application; it does not identify the two approaches as the same.

Sources

Aristotle · Nicomachean Ethics · D. P. Chase
Book II, chapters 1 and 6; Book VI, chapter 5

Aristotle · Nicomachean Ethics, Book II · W. D. Ross

Book II, sections 1 and 6

Aristotle · Nicomachean Ethics, Book VI · W. D. Ross

Book VI, section 5