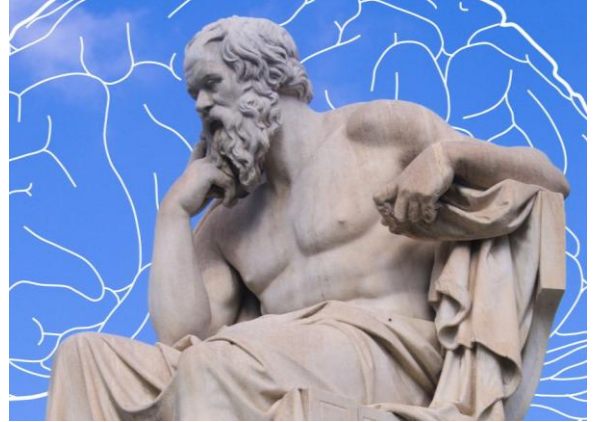


Balancing the Extremes: Aristotle's Guide to Real Life

How do you know if you're a good and virtuous person? Aristotle tries to answer this question with his Theory of Virtue. He believed that being a good person isn't just knowing what is right, it comes from doing it, until it becomes a habit and part of who you are. Aristotle described it as the "habit of virtue." He said that we should always try to find the balance between the two extremes in our choices. For example, courage is the balance between cowardice and recklessness. You shouldn't just run away from everything, but you also don't want to rush into danger for nothing.



I find I use this in my life all the time, although it is very hard and I often don't do it well. In school I use this often. I, like almost everyone I know, want to get good grades and learn, but I also want to have a life. Putting all my energy into school and having nothing else in life be more important than grades and learning isn't healthy or good. But on the other hand, failing all your classes because I'm too busy with other things is also not good. I try to find a balance between the two and know when and how best to prioritize these things in my life. In other more abstract things I also strive to do well, like in being honest. I want to always be honest and good, but I don't need to be always pointing out people's mistakes. I believe strongly that life is a balancing act in all we must do, and sometimes I balance things well and sometimes not so much, but I try.



When I think about my future, I kind of know what I want to do as a job and in my personal life. I want to get a good job in my field and I want to raise a family. I think Aristotle would say that if I want to do that well, I need more than just skills I can learn from a textbook—I need to be a good and moral person as well. He would probably say that that means I'd need to build habits like honesty, patience, and self-control, especially when it's hard. I know I'll face situations where I have to decide between what's easy and what's right. But, like Aristotle said, virtue is about finding the middle ground, or the balance in life, and practicing and doing it until it's natural and automatic response for you. I definitely won't always get it right, especially at first, but I believe the type of person I become matters just as much, if not more, as the job I'll get or any other worldly accomplishments.