

The Aristotelian virtue and the golden mean (Nikomachaeon Ethics II.6-7)

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Regarding the golden mean in the Aristotelian virtue, most people in philosophy interpret the word "mesotis" used by Aristotle as "mean"

Original: . περί μὲν οὖν φόβους καὶ θάρρη ἀνδρεία μεσότης (II.6-7)
. Peri men oun fovous kai tharrei andreia "mesotis"

This is a wrong interpretation for three reasons:

1. "mesotis" = "mid-space" not "mean"
2. "Mean" without its pertinent variance has no scientific meaning (I may say that the mean distance between Empire State Building and the Status of Liberty is 1000 miles which makes no sense but if I say that the standard deviation - square root of variance- is 2000 miles it will make sense). However, the Greek word "mesotis" includes both the mean and the variance. Aristotle at that time did not know about statistics and for this reason is using an extensive discussion about how much a person eats, etc. Today we know about statistics and we can quantize the amount of food a person needs by analyzing a sample of people and getting the mean and the variance. In a similar way can be quantized most of human behavior, i.e. exit polls, etc.
3. Interpreting mesotis as a mean we actually destroy virtue by eliminating its degrees of freedom, thus making virtue impossible which is not what Aristotle says (μεσότης μὲν ἐλευθερότης - mesotis men eleftherotis – mid-space is freedom), II.6-7

It must be noted that Aristotle, considering virtue as a mid-space between two opposite extreme locations or badness, he actually is modeling the human error which if carefully studied, it can help human sciences to define precisely within human dimensions the boundaries of wrong and right. You may find more analysis on this in the links:

http://www.aegean.gr/environment/labs/Remote_sensing/EnglishBlock/publications/Hatzopoulos-Hsss-Us.pdf

<http://www.webmazine.org/issues/bull237/documents/rightWrong.pdf>

Any comment on the material presented in these links will be greatly appreciated.