

24.200: Ancient Philosophy
Prof. Sally Haslanger

TEXT ANALYSIS PRESENTATION

Assigned Text
for
Monday, November 17, 2004

By virtue I mean virtue of character; for this <pursues the mean because> it is concerned with feelings and actions, and these admit of excess, deficiency and an intermediate condition. We can be afraid, e.g., or be confident, or have appetites, or get angry, or feel pity, in general have pleasure or pain, both to much and too little, and in both ways not well; but <having these feelings> at the right times, about the right things, towards the right people, for the right end, and in the right way, is the intermediate and best condition, and this is proper to virtue. Similarly actions also admit of excess, deficiency, and the intermediate condition.

Now virtue is concerned with feelings and actions, in which excess and deficiency are in error and incur blame, while the intermediate condition is correct and wins praise, which are both proper features of virtue. Virtue, then, is a mean, insofar as it aims at what is intermediate.

Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* II:6 (1106b17-28)