

# Aristotle argumentative essay example

[Economics](#), [Money](#)



In this essay, I will make a critical discussion about Aristotle's analysis of virtues and vices regarding correct attitude towards material good, services and money. I will begin by presenting Aristotle's virtue about generosity, a virtue that talks about how people should spend their money, and I will continue by researching how this issue reflects into contemporary virtue of generosity. I will argue that Aristotle's ethics are the starting point regarding a good life for a human being, the middle point between deficiency and excess, both being vices. Furthermore, I contend that, even if Aristotle's virtues were right, we should adapt them to the contemporary life.

According to Aristotle, generosity is giving money “ to the right people, the right amount at the right time.” (Aristotle, book IV). Generosity is a virtue where we can see how people react regarding their money, how they spend it or who are more likely to give them money. If the balance isn't leaned correctly, people tend to fall into two extremes: wastefulness and stinginess. A wasteful person is an unrestrained person, who is destroyed by his acts and has more than one vice at a time. Aristotle considers that it is better to be wasteful than to be stingy because wasteful people can be foolish or could run out of resources but they always helps other people, giving them what they needed, and in Aristotle's point of view they are considered generous people. The other extreme is represented by stingy people that are taking money too serious, having a lot of vices, and they are badly brought up.

For Aristotle, the perfect balance regarding generosity is to treat money just like other useful things and can know how to share them and with whom. Aristotle also goes further with his statement saying that generosity is not a

virtue associated with making money because a virtuous person is someone who creates beautiful things, not someone who is a recipient. The generous people are loved by the others for their gift on giving, even if they are not good on maintaining their wealth.

Contemporary virtue ethics has a lot in common with Aristotle's ones.

Modern thinkers approve of Aristotle's wisdom words which are saying that virtues are flexible character traits shown on various types of actions, also depending on the cognitive and emotional state. This virtue could be explained by analyzing each diverse component in turn.

The first important component is to think that virtues are states of a person's character. When we judge someone by bravery or wisdom, we judge their character behavior rather than their actions. When you say that one person is generous, you refer to a certain virtuous trait of his character.

The second component makes the reference to a person's character disposition. The disposition has the tendency to change when it enters in contact with emotions, perceptions and actions. You can say a man has the virtue of generosity, not judging only by the actions from the past, but by his generous behavior in every situation when generosity is needed. This pattern should be followed on characterizing a person when he is in a situation of any given type.

The third component is about how easily the person who possesses a virtue can deal with their actions, perceptions, attitudes and emotions regarding that virtue. In Aristotle's perception, there exist two types of people: the virtuous persons and people with a strong will. The second category acts correctly, but they must control their true emotions and desires which are

not regarding the virtue in question. A virtuous person is already in harmony with his emotions and attitude and the virtue required.

According to Aristotle, a generous person is praised for taking and giving wealth, and by wealth he means anything that can be measured with money.

Generous people give money because they want to help the others; they don't give money because they know that is the correct way to proceed. The person who gives the money wouldn't be considered generous if the money was given with pain or to a wrong person also the person that inherited money tends to be more generous than the person who worked hard for it.

Stingy people are the ones that give money and take money from the wrong sources. Aristotle thinks that stinginess is the opposite of generosity

because: " it is a greater evil than wastefulness, and because people go wrong more often with it than from the sort of wastefulness described."

(Aristotle, Book IV). This kind of people could also be wasteful and stingy at the same time, and when they try to be generous they take money from bad sources like loan sharks, gamblers and thieves.

The causes of stinginess have its own roots; one of the causes could be related to the idea that a person doesn't have enough money for itself and starts to develop feelings of insecurity. This problem could have its origins in childhood as a result of believing that parents don't have enough money to spend with their children, and this could lead to the forming of a stingy grown-up.

A relevant experiment was made in that way; during the experiment, half of the participants could eat as much as they needed, and the other halves weren't allowed to eat. After that, both groups were asked to give money for

charity. The persons who had eaten were more generous than the persons who didn't eat; the conclusion was that a person that had an unmet need could develop an emotional or financial stinginess.

I had devise an example which require considerable practical wisdom to decide whether this person should be helped or not, and if the answer is to help him how will be the best method. A person had an amount of money, which he collected to buy a home. After seeing that he can raise that kind of money, he began to save increasingly more and more until he made a small fortune. He never bought a house and he lived all his life in misery but achieved a big fortune.

A virtue very similar to generosity is magnificence, the only exception is that magnificence is dealing with spending a large amount of wealth. The vices that come with this virtue are, on the one hand, paltriness, and on the other, vulgarity. Moral dispositions is influenced by the activity we perform, and after the looks of how things go on considering how they act or what they are buying is easier to recognizing if a person is magnificent or has other vices.

According to Aristotle, the vices that result from magnificence, paltriness and vulgarity " do not bring serious discredit, since they are not injurious to others, nor are they excessively unseemly."(Aristotle, Book IV) In other words, the aim of magnificence is presented as a beautiful thing, not released to hurt others but in the sense of helping them. Pure people couldn't have this virtue, but they could be helping by it.

One of the most admirable person for her generosity is Angelina Jolie; she dedicated a part of her life to help the people in Cambodia. After filming Lara

Croft: Tomb Raider there, Angelina was impressed by their suffering so she contacted United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees to find out how she could be helpful. Demonstrating bravery, she took a two-week trip to where the Afghan refugees were kept; almost putting herself in danger, even risking her life, she succeeded in helping those people.

Angelina is beyond admirable for her courage and generosity. She founded the Maddox-Jolie-Pitt Foundations and also financed many charity organizations. A record was achieved in 2009, when the couple Jolie-Pitt gave seven million dollars to charitable causes.

In Aristotle's words, Angelina could be called a native with a virtuous ethic of generosity; she admitted to feeling fulfilled after giving that money, and said that she never looked back or regretted something.

A good example of extravagance is given by the richest man of India, Mukesh Ambani, who built in 2010 his skyscraper, where he moved in. The building had 27 floors, a ballroom, a fitness room and a cinema with 50 seats. The construction took seven years to be finished and cost around 1 billion dollars, and Ambani moved in his giant house, measuring 400, 000 square feet only with his wife, three children and her mother. In this case, the extravagance is vicious and not necessary. It's a condition of people who have too much money and spend it on themselves, a selfishness in regards to people who really needs money.

Opposite to this selfishness we have another case of viciousness that refers to stingy persons. There are a lot of characters who are miserable, but are millionaires in fiction literature, but the most famous one is Ebenezer Scrooge from " A Christmas Carol", by Charles Dickens. However, stinginess

is not a character created by literature, film or television. In the real world, we have plenty of cases where people made huge fortunes by not spending a penny. The English politician who inspired Dickens to create the character Ebenezer Scrooge was John Elwes. He had a fortune amassing 21 million, but he lived like a pauper in a dilapidated house. John had rag clothes and went to bed when the nightfall came to avoid spending money on candles.

Contemporary world raised a different perception regarding virtues that are slightly different from Aristotle's conception. There are some differences between Ancient Aristotle's Athens and living in Toronto today, based on the facts that civilization evolved, the technology developed and people have become more independent.

Returning to the past, an important thing to know is that art in the Greek's world was translated as virtue; the sense of the world wasn't a representation of exclusively moral virtue and included a lot of other moral states such as courage and wisdom. Another difference regards teleological ethics; according to Aristotle, the sense of life was to achieve happiness and well-being, and for this scope to be reached people had to have their virtual ethics to the highest level. Nowadays, by contrast, people are no longer interested on reaching that level. The third difference regards the influence of historical factors. An example of this theory is greatness of soul, something that Aristotle regarded as a virtue but contemporary theorists don't recognize it as being one.

I agree with Aristotle regarding generosity as a virtue, and I believe that virtues were created so that people would better understand themselves and for creating a path in life, and for taking away prevalent mistaken

tendencies. Maybe people are not morally perfect but if they have some models to follow, they will try to identify themselves with their virtues. It is a challenge that comes from Aristotle for greater self-understanding and increasing self-awareness.

The virtue of generosity is about dealing with money, nowadays equivalent with food, clothes, a house and all goods which a person needs to live in proper conditions. These goods are limited to us because if we make excesses, they can harm us. A good example can be with food: too much of it ruins our health, too little of it also ruins our health. It's the same with building; we construct bigger houses and then we have bigger responsibility for our properties and we live in fear, to not been robbed by thieves and this also affects our health. It's like running in circles, so if we have so much then why don't we share it with others, to help them? New friends can be made this way, and self-satisfaction can be achieved.

It's hard to choose who you should help; it can be a family, friends or even strangers, but a generous person will always find the right people to give them what they need. A generous person has a really good instinct of who deserves his money or what amount of money should they give it, they have this virtue, and just as Aristotle said, they will always find the right person; this is not something that requires a criteria.

Families seem to have a sense of generosity more developed when it comes to a member of their family. Mothers tend to be more generous with their children, the emotional factor intervening here. Money isn't the only way through which families can demonstrate generosity, it can be various other things like time, attention, courage, emotional availability, non-financial aid



and all of the things that can be useful to a person in need.

The line that Aristotle has drawn between stinginess and generosity is placed in the right place. Normally, we say that virtue is the middle state between excess and deficiency, at one side of the other but, in this case, the two vicious dispositions tend to have vices that connect with this corrective. So, a person that is stingy has a deficiency on giving and also an excess on taking; they do wrong things to get money, they tend to focus more on what they're getting and not on what they lose in the process. Aristotle says that excess is staying in the vices box, also he draws the line at the middle and manages to create a perfect balance even it is only in our head, and only a few people are able to reach it.

I think Aristotle's concept on the virtue of generosity should inspire a lot of people, to be more opened and good with others but only if they feel the need to do it, to create a better world; if people don't feel the virtue of giving it's better to do nothing because it will create only pain, it will be an act against their will and it will lead them to frustration, which isn't the idea from which it started. If making the right thing leads to feel pain then it will transform into a vice, and this is just pure torture; it's like robbing yourself, cheating your expectations and limiting your pleasures, just like a miser, but at least a miser enjoys his stuff.

Generosity can be applied in a lot of different situations; it can be about money and all the things related to money, like gifts and charity, or it can be about the relations that we have with the people from who we purchase services. For me, generosity is the virtue of giving good things to others freely and abundantly. Sure, it's a rarely seen thing in the contemporary

world but it's worth looking for and appreciated for its true value when it's found.

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