The formal article on this topic will be Everything is a Spectrum, or perhaps a more specific Personality Traits - Spectrum which would dive deep into Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* and examples of the Golden Mean*.* In commonplace English the idea is known as Weakness of Strength theory.

However, the formal *theory* article takes too long and is too difficult, as usual, that I'm freeforming here today.

It's a tragic time when you fail a personality test.

It cannot be understated the difficulty in changing oneself. Because it is such a difficult endeavor it can be worth charting out the end goal and whether one is improving or regressing.

Enjoy.

### **Level Zero - None**

In the beginning we are created as a clean slate – formless and without void; *tabula rasa*.

### **Level One - Default**

We develop differing characteristics to adapt to our environment. This is common, natural, and necessary for our survival and success in the environment we have little control over.



For example someone might grow up in a strict, conservative, hidden family. This type of person might have different emotions, but in terms of behavior they will be rule-breakers and the opposite archetype of the 'class clown'.

On the spectrum let us chart how they would act in every scenario by default.



### **Level Two - Vision**

We grow up and our behavior set works for a majority of use-cases. And even when it doesn't work it isn't *particularly* harmful. Only true edge cases reveal deficiency.

Most people go about their **entire** lives without developing any sense of whether their behavior was optimal or healthy. This is natural and common and this conceptualize of Vision is more adequately discussed and advocated for in [How We Learn - An Introduction To Abstractions](https://spencers.dev/posts/theory/2021-12-31-abstractions1/).

However let us discuss here how someone might acquire this Vision.



To have vision, or learn anything, requires contrast. To make it concrete let us use our original spectrum characteristic above – humor.

You are among close friends and a friend's loved one has just passed away. It is a serious time, however one friend makes a joke that is normally hilarious except it's terrible timing and not the right mood.

What is illuminating is that you had the exact same joke but decided not to voice it because it is insensitive and offensive and rude. However another friend has a different view and says the same joke you were thinking. Incredulously the friend who lost their loved one laughs, calls him an asshole, and everything moves on.

The ten times before this has happened you believed it was better to keep quiet, after all thoughts are meant to be voiced even if they are jokes. However this one time sticks out and begins the introspection. Perhaps it's because you respect your friend and their judgment, perhaps it's because the output was acceptable and no harm was done.

Regardless, the conclusion is that for the first time in one's life there is a conceptualization of behavior – further, a valid conceptualization. We have an opinion and someone else has another opinion, and instead of knowing they are incorrect, this time we aren't necessarily certain anymore.

After some time of self-reflection we conceptualize this pattern and give it a name, language, an idea. For the first time we are now aware that we are at a -5. Of course there is no third-party confirmation, more likely we conceptualize ourselves at a -3, given we likely have no conceptualization of -10.



However once one has the vision, we begin to question whether we are behaving correctly, healthily, or if perhaps there is a better balance or default than the current one we are employing.

We know we are on the right-hand side of the spectrum (negatives), Level Two is consciously choosing to move to the right-hand side of the spectrum (positives).

**The Journey**

This likely comes up because we hate our default behavior. We hate that we mask ourselves, are boorish and censor our jokes and opinions. We want to be engaging and free – and it's not that we aren't these things – it's that we fail to express ourselves. We self-censor and we want to change that about ourselves. It was useful as a default growing up, that was how our family is – that is how our parents and culture is – but that is not how we want to be anymore.

We want to make the joke we thought of with our close friend in the dark times and be the light for people.

We underemphasize the pros of our current behavior/default and we overemphasize the pros of an alternative behavior (our friend's/positive). The grass is always greener on the other side of the spectrum.

**The Journey Continued**

The Journey is long and arduous and seemingly impossible. The delta of -5 to +5 is 10 which is enormous. What one finds when they begin this process is they constantly revert back to their default behavior – because it's comfortable, because it's natural.



Because pushing to the right of your default is uncomfortable. It feels wrong and awkward and even immoral.

Change is incremental and progressive. While inevitably we act as -5, there are countless more times where we are acting as -4, or even -3. This progression is almost impossible to see, certainly so by any external observers which can be discouraging; external change is mostly viewed as binary.

### **Level Three - Agency**

After incredible, impossible work we have made it. We now are behaving at +5.



Now that we have the ability to act at +5 we are able to achieve different results than beforehand when we could only act at -5. Early on we despised acting as -5 and idealized +5, however with first-hand experience we are no longer as naive. Our improved agency leads to better, more objective decision-making, not less.

More knowledge and information leads to more conscious, intentional decisions. Contrast is a prerequisite for vision and choice. It is impossible to reject the fruit in the Garden of Eden, or more actually there is zero choice - the decision-tree is linear.

With our newfound ability of +5, we learn that certain scenarios +5 are useful and produce better results, however our old ability of -5 was also not without its merits. Some scenarios call for a +5 response, others are better suited for -5. For example, performing stand-up comedy or when someone challenges you +5 leads to more charisma and enjoyability for all those involved, however with family, an older generation, or a funeral perhaps -5 is more proper.

Our newfound skill isn't the savior of all our problems, but it is a savior for some of our problems. In short, it's a new skill – an ability that we did not have previously and when used appropriately, is a huge asset.

By default we have one tool which we solve our problems – and it works for a majority of the use-cases in our lives. Let's call this default tool a Hammer. Most of our problems in our life is a nail, so a Hammer is incredibly effective and we are proud of our talents – and other's with lesser tools aren't as efficient and we think we are better equipped than they are – and this is accurate.

We Hammer many nails. One day we even come across breaking a car window – our Hammer does well. One day we come across climbing a tree, our Hammer is reasonable.

Eventually as we explore the world there are various other problem-sets which a Hammer doesn't seem to get the results we want – and other people seem to achieve better results. With this newfound vision we begin flexing a different kind of tool muscle. Ultimately we have progressed from -5 (hamme) to +5 (bowl).

Now when we come across a problem we open our toolbox – and there are two tools, instead of only one. For any task related to drinking, measuring, or dealing with any liquids we use our new bowl tool.

Agency requires insight. It allows you to take a step back and third-person think about the problem you are solving and reach for the proper tool in your tool box. The proper severity by which to respond leads to the best result. This is a difficult skill and not to be underestimated – everything about our history and past leads us to respond immediately and without thought. This makes sense however efficiency is at one end of the spectrum and accuracy is at the other. If one is well calibrated sometimes they are negligible, but for the important scenarios with significant deviance it is best to be aware of one's internal subconscious trade-offs.

**Level Four - ?**

**There are different attributes which drive character development.**

**Observation**

**Introspection**

**Motivation**

**Effort**

**Results**

I think your inside is your best side

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Kv3yIv9nwf8>

SOPHIE - Immaterial