

# Dialectical model of character and Franklin's method

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**Abstract:** The study analysis three personalities who generated self-records for a long period of time on their personality development and especially on character questions. The autobiographies\*\* of Franklin, Gandhi and Thoreau's Walden experiment are studied as paradigmatic modes of enhancing intentionally one's own autonomy as a necessary condition to increase the personal ability to cope with major social conflicts for the sake of common good. The educational value of Franklin's methods for character training is based on practical exercises carried with students.

**Keywords:** Autonomy consistency/inconsistency, self-control, character-construction

## Autonomy across three cases — Franklin, Thoreau, Gandhi — and across levels of social complexity

Based on the major autobiographical documents of the three personalities and on other documents and letters the study explored the similarities and dissimilarities of these tree personalities across three major levels of social complexity: intra-individual, interpersonal and societal. At each level have been used a number of indicators that are presented in Table 6.

It is expected that in major life-instances the activities of Franklin, Thoreau, Gandhi satisfied the criteria listed

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Table 1. However, in addition were used the following criteria: levels of social complexity (individual, interpersonal, and macro-social), principles, character. All three tried to maintain a healthy body and practiced exercises of different types. Franklin's observations on physical exercises are doubled by objective measures (time, length, weight) and by innovative criteria such as the "*quantum* ...the degree of warmth it [physical exercise] produces in the body"<sup>1</sup>.

In this section the task will be used a limited number of criteria for three levels of social complexity: personal level, interpersonal level/small group level, macro-social level (social categories, nation, cultural). The specific indicators are: types of motives, techniques of self-control under external pressure, and character (individual level); motives and principles for interpersonal relationships, coping with enemies or persons with opposite attitudes or choices in relation to major social trends and moral values. For the sake of brevity I will present in more details Thoreau's case and will indicate similarities and especially the differences between him Franklin and Gandhi. Because autonomy is approached within the life context of each personality and because each of them faced huge pressures it is useful to recall Grolnick's conception on "autonomy supportive events"<sup>2</sup>. She defines as autonomy supportive those events that "lead a person to experience his or her behavior as initiated from within" while controlling events lead the person to experience one's own behavior as "being initiated from without"<sup>3</sup>. The fact that the focus is on "experience" and not on the event as such, which is useful for exploring autonomy in the cases of Franklin, Thoreau and Gandhi who achieved autonomy despite aversive external conditions. The expression and development of autonomy within a controlling context seems to start with individual decision and will to non-participate, to separate oneself from

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<sup>1</sup> B. Franklin, *The completed autobiography by Benjamin Franklin*, compiled and edited by Mark Skousen, Washington 2006, p. 73.

<sup>2</sup> W. S. Grolnick, *The psychology of parental control. How well-meant parenting backfires*. Mahwah, New Jersey 2003.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 15.

the controlling forces. An authentic participation is possible if and only if the individual has the right, the ability and the will of non-participation. This is in fact a principle established by Thoreau that is at the heart of civil disobedience.

All of them respected strict behavioral rules, relational norms. They displayed different orientations toward hedonism, as it is defined in Waterman's model<sup>4</sup>. Franklin was the most inclined to accept hedonism and Gandhi the least inclined, and all of them had a strong eudaimonic orientation striving to achieve goals that had a high moral value.

Table 1. Areas and types autonomy across life-span based on autobiographical documents. An overview of autonomy at the main levels of social complexity in the case of Franklin, Thoreau and Gandhi

Areas of autonomy and autonomous self-control at different levels of social complexity	<i>Benjamin Franklin (1706-1790)</i>	<i>Henry D. Thoreau (1817-1862)</i>	<i>Mohandas Karamchand (Mahatma) Gandhi (1869-1948)</i>
I. Individual level 1. Basic needs: – Diet	Practiced vegetarianism, gave up, practiced frugality	Vegetarianism preferred and practiced in a relaxed mode	Vegetarianism practiced in a strict mode, giving up even milk
– Body needs: Physical exercises	Regular exercises (swimming; running while carrying two loads of lead); “degree of warmth”	Long walks, physical activities around the house (clearing	Long walks, physical work (such as spinning the wheel) and physical postures (asana)
– Sleep/awake cycle	Regular, early morning	Regular, early morning ( 6 am is a self-recorded time)	Regular, very early morning

<sup>4</sup> A.S. Waterman, “When effort is enjoyed: Two studies of intrinsic motivation for personally salient activities”, *Motivation and Emotion*, 2005: 29, 3, pp. 165-188.

– Care for one's own health	Used air bathing, and personal procedures against cold	Considered care for one's body as a sign of prudence	Self-applied traditional medical remedies
– Alcohol and other addictive substances	No alcohol use while colleagues used to drink during work	No alcohol, no stimulants	No alcohol, no smoking
– Sexual drive	Permissive and controlled	?	Adopted celibacy
2. Emotional control	Control of negative emotions (anger, disgust) and expression of positive feelings, humor	Control of negative emotions (anger, disgust) Politeness	Control of negative emotions (anger, disgust) expression of positive feelings, smiling
3.1. Motivation – hedonism and eudaimonia	Intrinsic motivation in self-rewarding activities (play, scientific inquiry) and ability to find intrinsic rewards in social duties; prefers eudaimonia	Intrinsic motivation in conducting his life, observations & Walden experiment, including the chores implied by his mode of living, moral duty & eudaimonia	Ability to do chores with joy, to find intrinsic rewards in hard tasks (cleaning chamber pots). Rejects art for the sake of art, guided by moral duty
3.2. Universal psychological needs: Autonomy Competence Relatedness	– high autonomy – high competence – high relatedness	– high autonomy – high competence – high non-mediated relatedness	– high autonomy – high competence – high relatedness
3.3. Motivational intelligence	– good reader of other's motives	– balance of basic needs and higher needs	– good reader of other's motives
4. Speech self-control, Silence	Reducing unnecessary talk, use of letters and written self-expression	Retreat (solitude), use of letters and written self-expression	Silence strike, letters and written self-expression

<p>5. Cognitive, rational self-control: – Personal methods or procedures</p>	<p>– Franklin's matrix for training virtues – Moral algebra – Self-examination procedure</p>	<p>– Introspection guided by principles – Personal test of basic needs' threshold, Walden experiment, civil disobedience</p>	<p>– Meditation – Experiments with truth</p>
<p>– Focus on facts, rejection of stereotypes, prejudices</p>	<p>– Rejection of speculation (Mesmer's case)</p>	<p>– Unobtrusive observation, friendly relations between observer and observed</p>	<p>– Collecting direct data (Indian villages, etc.), participative observation</p>
<p>– Experimentally oriented</p>	<p>– Use of experiments for testing personal, interpersonal and physical processes</p>	<p>– Use of the self-experiment for testing personal limits and social beliefs.</p>	<p>– Systematic analysis of one's own experiences and</p>
<p>– Executive attention and effortful self-control in conflicting situations</p>	<p>– Distinguish between wrong choices of friends and correct solutions of enemies</p>	<p>– Reject misconceptions of closed one</p>	<p>Distinguish between wrong choices of friends and correct solutions of enemies</p>
<p>6. Moral and spiritual self-control</p>	<p>Regular evaluation of one's deeds and plans by the help of moral and religious standards, use of spiritual models</p>	<p>Regular evaluation of personal actions and goals by the help of high moral principles, use of spiritual models, "life with principles"</p>	<p>Strict application of the principle of axiological consonance between means and goals, too good goals only by good means</p>
<p>7. Ability to accept and cope with personal sacrifices</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>Yes</p>
<p>8. Cultivation of character goodness and strengths (see appendix 2)</p>	<p>Yes, developed a technique to cultivate character</p>	<p>Yes, character formation can be cultivated in the "stream of the world"</p>	<p>Yes, character cultivation considered at least as important as Math, grammar etc.</p>

<p><b>II. Interpersonal level</b> – Self-control in relation with opponents and enemies</p>	<p>– Control of negative interpersonal feelings and conversion into positive ones (Franklin's method to ask favors from enemies)</p>	<p>– Polite, respectful behavior toward the tax collector</p>	<p>– Concern to be fair toward enemies, identifying the areas in which the enemies are right and acknowledging it</p>
<p>–Self control in intimate (including sexual) relationships</p>	<p>– Expressed and as goal, engaged in many intimate relationships but without producing</p>	<p>– Failure to establish intimate long term intimate relationships</p>	<p>– Pre-arranged marriage, adaptation, celibacy after debating his decision with wife</p>
<p>– self-control and mutual respect</p>	<p>Use of interpersonal (psycho-social) tests to solve conflicts – Ability to cope with a wide range of relationship</p>	<p>– Friendly, polite relationships</p>	<p>– Ability to cope with a wide range of relationships</p>
<p>– Resistance on rational and factual grounds to opinions and group pressures</p>	<p>Ability to remain calm and close to the facts and his beliefs regardless pressure from others, and groups</p>	<p>Ability to remain calm and close to the facts and his beliefs regardless pressure from others, and groups</p>	<p>Ability to remain calm and close to the facts and his beliefs regardless pressure from others, and groups</p>
<p><b>III. Societal and cultural level:</b> – Autonomy in relation to societal views and personal action aimed to increase societal autonomy (groups, nation)</p>	<p>Serving through one's own agency the autonomy of larger social groups (even the entire nation): – stamp-act – America's independence</p>	<p>Serving through one's own agency the autonomy of larger social groups (even the entire nation): – relations between individuals and government – anti-slavery movement</p>	<p>Serving through one's own agency the autonomy of larger social groups: – the rights of Indians in South Africa; – the autonomy of untouchables – India's independence</p>

<b>-Self-reliance</b>	Self-reliance of the individual and of America (Colonies)	Self-reliance of the individual, of communities, and learning communities	Self-reliance of the individual, of villages, of India
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It seems that Franklin and Gandhi had a high ability to achieve self-control in strong social conflicts due to their ability to remain focused and especially to their ability to perceive value, real merits and valid critical comments in the actions generated by their adversaries. This was especially the case of Gandhi who trained himself to observe and recognize publicly the merits of his enemies. These abilities seem to be associated with control over negative thoughts and feelings and with the ability of reading in the enemies' behaviors positive side/signals<sup>5</sup>.

Franklin, Thoreau and Gandhi had a strong experimental and experiential orientation and a strong tendency to check information and opinions. This tendency was used for solving social problems, tensions and strong conflicts. It could be said that the behaviors of Franklin, Thoreau and Gandhi could be characterized by what Jonas and Brandstatter defined as "Zivilcourage" (moral courage) expressed in relationship of a wide range of civil rights<sup>6</sup>.

How Franklin practiced self-direction and self-control for serving high moral goals within an extremely stressful situation? Historical records that can help to answer have been produced and preserved due to the features of democratic cultures.

<sup>5</sup> W. von Hippel, K. Gonsalkorale, "That is bloody revolting. Inhibitory control of thoughts better left unsaid", *Psychological Science*, 2005: 17, 7, pp. 497-500.

<sup>6</sup> K. J. Jonas, V. Brandstatter, „Zivilcourage – Definitionen, Befunde, Massnahmen [Moral courage – definition, findings and intervention]“, *Zeitschrift Fur Sozialpsychologie*, 2004: 35, pp. 185-200.

## Real life episodes that ask for high levels of autonomous self-regulation: Franklin's interrogation regarding the Repeal of stamp act in the British Parliament

A strong empirical question emerges: are all these methods and practices that aim to develop character, autonomous self-control and self-reliance paying off in real-life-situations? Franklin faced many difficult situations in his life as it is his efforts to repeal the STAMP-ACT. *Description of the material:* The material used here is provided by "The EXAMINATION of Doctor Benjamin Franklin by the AUGUST ASSEMBLY, relating to the Repeal of the STAMP-ACT, &c"<sup>7</sup>. The actions against the Stamp-Act are grounded in the principle that people of one land cannot be taxed and their trade restrained by legislature in which they are not represented and have no saying about it. This is a problem of a greater autonomous self-control of the colonies, which at the same time display higher levels of self-reliance. Franklin dedicated himself to this specific goal of the colonies.

Franklin took great care to make copies of the records, to number the questions and to indicate who asked the questions, especially if the person was a friend or an enemy of us (the American colonies). There were 174 questions asked to Franklin, but the meaning of his answer remains intact.

Assumptions: it is assumed that the mode of answering questions under a close examination on a vital personal, group or societal issue that has also high moral ramifications, could be used to identify the degree of the autonomous self-control, including one's moral autonomy, of the questioned person.

The major indicators of autonomous self-control are the following:

1) Consistency of the provided answers with the main goal of Franklin's action: repeal of the Stamp Act (greater autonomy for the people represented by him).

2) Keeping his focus on the major goal in the face of hypothetical and suggestive questions that were intentionally designed to trigger answers that favored the STAMP-ACT.

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<sup>7</sup> B. Franklin, *Writings*, Vol. 13, 1757-1775, (February 13 1766), London 1987, p. 129-159.

3) Answers focused on the epistemic merit of the questions regardless the social origin of the questions (expressed by enemies or by friends),

4) Pro-active orientation aimed to point out the misrepresentations of the British representatives about the people and the situation in the colonies.

5) Use of counter-questions addressed to the examiners. From, previous studies it suggested that the tendency to generate questions and counter-questions are a sign that the user feels safe and consider that the roles of the questioned and questioner are reversible on an equal basis<sup>8</sup>.

6) Refusal to answer to the same questions or to questions considered improper and to repeated questions.

All of these indicators are considered valid for autonomous self-control if and only if the person succeeds to maintain its calm in the respective instance. As a general observation it has to be mentioned that under this highly stressful Franklin displayed a perfect self-control of his emotions and on his cognitive abilities. He remained focused on the task as such. Also it has to be mentioned that Franklin was never interrupted and even the trickiest (highly suggestive) questions were stated in a polite mode. The interrogatory mode of the examination is evident from the prevalence of yes/no questions and of hypothetical and suggestive questions.

Examples of a few types of questions and answers:

*Yes/No questions:* Q “Are not all the people very able to pay those taxes?” A “No. The frontier counties, all along the continent, having being frequently ravaged by the enemy, and greatly impoverished are able to pay very little tax...”<sup>9</sup>

Q “Is there a power on earth that can force them [the assemblies of America] to erase them [their resolutions]?”- A “No power, how great soever, can force men to change their opinions”<sup>10</sup>.

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<sup>8</sup> C. Mamali, *Oracle-Sphinx complex: Oedipus's quest for truth and love*, Manuscript: University of Iowa, Project on Rhetoric of Inquiry, Iowa City – Dubuque 1992/2000.

<sup>9</sup> B. Franklin, *Writings*, Vol. 13, 1757-1775, (February 13 1766), London 1987, p. 130.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 170.

*What questions (seven word-questions):* Q “What are the present taxes in Pennsylvania, laid by the laws of the colony?” A “There are taxes on all estates real and personal, a poll tax, a tax on all offices, professions, trades and businesses, according to their profits... and a duty of Ten Pounds per head on all Negroes imported...”<sup>11</sup>

Q “What used to be the pride of the Americans?”- A “To indulge in the fashion and manufactures of Great-Britain.” Q “What is now their pride?”- A “To wear their old cloths over again, till they can make new ones”<sup>12</sup>.

*Suggestive question with an implied answer:* Q “Can anything less than a military force carry the stamp-act into execution?” A “I do not see how a military force can be applied to that purpose.” Q “Why maybe not?” A “Suppose a military force sent into America, they will find nobody in arms; what are they then to do? [counter-question] They cannot force a man to take stamps who chooses to do without them. They will not find a rebellion; they may indeed make one”<sup>13</sup>. Q “Is it not necessary to send troops to America, to defend the Americans against the Indians?” A [counter-question include] “No, by no means; it never was necessary. They defended themselves when they were but a handful, and the Indians much more numerous... without any troops sent to their assistance from this country. And can it be thought necessary now to send troops for their defense from those diminished Indian tribes, when the Colonies are become so populous, and so strong?”<sup>14</sup>.

*Hypothetical question without answer:* Q “if the stamp-act should be repealed, and an act should pass, ordering the assembly of the colonies to indemnify the sufferers by the riots, would they obey it?” A “This is a question I cannot answer.” (Q no. 132)<sup>15</sup>

*The explicit relations between human needs and self-reliance:* Q “Is it their interest not to take them [Americans interest to buy British goods]?” A “*The goods they take from Britain are either necessities, mere conveniences,*

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., p. 130.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., p. 159.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., p. 142.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., p. 152.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., p. 153

*or superfluities*. The first, as cloth, &c with little industry they can make it at home; the second they can do without, till they are able to provide them among themselves; and the last, which are much the greatest part, they will strike off immediately. They are mere articles of fashion, purchased and consumed, because the fashion in the respected country, but will be now detested and rejected..."<sup>16</sup>

## Findings:

Types of questions	Answers	
	No = 178	Autonomy Consistent AC Autonomy Inconsistent (I)
1. Yes/no questions	23.5	AC
2. The seven word-questions (what, who, which, where, when, why, how)	29.6	AC
3. Do you know?	8.4	AC
4. Do you think?	3.3	AC
5. Clarification	1.1	AC
6. Opinion	2.7	AC
7. Can (it/we)?	4.5	AC
8. Means	1.6	AC
9. Hypothetical & suggestive	25.3	AC

All Franklin's answers were consistent with the autonomy principle at societal level and personal level.

Franklin, Thoreau and Gandhi worked for the achievement of self-reliance and moral autonomy not just at the individual level but also at societal level. Their individual moral autonomy is intertwined with their work for the autonomy of large social groups. However, there is a difference between Franklin on one side and Thoreau and Gandhi on the other side regarding: while Thoreau and Gandhi did not circumscribed their work for societal self-reliance to their group of origin and made programmatic efforts to help other groups such as American Indians, Black, Muslim, Untouchable people while Franklin limited his efforts to the America's colonists, mainly people of Western European extraction

<sup>16</sup> B. Franklin, *January 1 through December 31, 1766*, Yale University Press. New Haven 1969, p. 143.

during his time. Franklin was an official representative of America in relation with Great Britain and his support of the collective self-reliance was focused on a specific objective. Franklin was ahead of his time but the major goal and mentality of the society represented by him restricted his pro-autonomy actions to the society he identified with. Within Franklin's mode of being this was just a step toward a much wider self-reliance and moral autonomy at societal level. He was convinced that in matters of principles the compromise is not a solution: "no middle ground could be well maintained: that Parliament had a power to make all laws for us, or that it had a power to make no laws for us"<sup>17</sup>. Also the fact that Franklin was not considering in his answers the self-reliance of African-American and Indians is a result of his pragmatic and step-by-step approach of self-reliance. As a matter of fact Franklin "while supporting a petition to the Congress against the slave trade, he wrote one of his most appealing hoaxes. In a letter to the Federal Gazette he offered a letter purportedly written a hundred years earlier by a fictitious Muslim statesman" against slavery<sup>18</sup>. His strategy implies the assumption that only self-reliant actors that have also moral autonomy could help others to reach self-reliance. It seems that Gandhi did not use the same strategy at the societal level, and at the individual level he considered that the self-reliant could be just an example for others and does not the right to force them to follow his way.

During the entire examination Franklin's autonomous self-control was impeccable at least in relation with the following three areas: a) cognitive focus (in all answers provided); b) emotional control (in all answers provided); c) explicit assertion of the autonomy potential of the people represented by him. The mode in which Franklin prepared for this examination, the mode in which he behaved during the examination, and the mode in which he approached the

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<sup>17</sup> B. Franklin, *The completed autobiography by Benjamin Franklin*, compiled and edited by Mark Skousen, DC: Regnery Publishing Inc., Washington 2006, p. 65.

<sup>18</sup> E. Morgan, *Benjamin Franklin*, Yale University, New Haven 2002, pp. 38-39.

outcome of this examination (including its records) suggest that he was mainly intrinsically motivated. Long after the examination was over his interest in the issue remained high. However, besides it there are a few other elements that could be considered as factors that increased his autonomous self-control. For instance, the habit of systematic self-examination and the procedure used to cultivate one's own character, as Franklin designed these, are assumed to be causal factors of an increased autonomous self-control. These techniques designed by Franklin as his social experiments put in to the service of good goals are strong signs of his "*moral imagination*" as Tuan defined this concept<sup>19</sup>. These techniques are discussed in Appendix 1.

Franklin's case, as well as the experiences lived by Thoreau and Gandhi, do reveal some advantages and limits of the dialectical model of character. First of all Franklin's experiences reveal that even in the paradigmatic cases of good and strong character that had a major role in achieving societal goals that served the wellbeing of the entire community not all the components of the model must take a positive direction all the time. For instance, *transparency* that is an essential component for understanding the sense of one's own integrity has, many times during Franklin's life, a zigzagging trajectory because Franklin used cover-up and even deceiving strategies. He did it by signing with a pseudo-name certain articles sent to the newspaper directed by his own brother and turned himself into a direct witness of the reactions of the editors to the content of his own article without giving to the editors the chance even to imagine that he might be the author whose work is judged by them. He designed experimental situations to assess objectively the judgment of his own friends about the poetic talent of a colleague by resorting to *epistemically grounded lies*, as in many modern psycho-social experiments on stereotype and prejudice. He proved many times an efficient social imagination in order to reveal a truth that was obscured by denial. Franklin even impersonated, in his writing, a Muslim in order to plead publicly efficiently against slavery.

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<sup>19</sup> Y.F. Tuan, *Morality and imagination. Paradoxes of progress*, University of Wisconsin Press, Madison 1989.

He covered his intentions and actions to unmask a British collaborator who worked against the American interests. However, in all these cases, his opacity, manipulative techniques and even deceptive strategies have been strongly and ultimately subordinated to serve truth, social justice and the vital interests of his country. The model helps to identify such deviations from integrity (mainly transparency) by taking into account the role of self-selected moral principles. But, the exact connection between these high self-selected moral principles still remains an question to be solved.

### **Some findings gathered by the application of Franklin's matrix, conclusions and proposals**

I applied Franklin's method to over 700 volunteers. From this convenience sample 422 have been nontraditional students (71% females, age range 18 to 56) Just two observations that need to be explored in a systematic mode by future research: a) 92 participants did complete from the first request the exercise during the time limit (2 weeks). From this 21.8% of the entire sample almost half (39) did add personal traits to the provided matrix. These participants have been also students that did provide always the class work on time, no later work; b) 116 participants did postpone, at least three times, the completion of Franklin's matrix. Out of these 27% participants of the entire sample 73 did provide at least on time late work for mandatory tasks. The category (62.9%) of participants who did not complete Franklin's matrix and at the same time had had late mandatory class work represent 17.3% from the entire convenience sample (N=422). However, if we contrast the category of those participants who did complete on time Franklin's matrix (N=92) with those participants who have been late at least one time (N=116) it is evident that the attitude toward Franklin's method informs us about other character dimensions such as order, resilience, respect for the time rule. Of course these findings have a preliminary nature that must be checked by experimental studies.

At the same time the model as well as these orienting findings invite the assumption that Franklin's method for constructing ones' own character has not only an informative

value but it can have a positive transformative value. In order to verify this hypothesis a longitudinal study combined with an experimental design is needed.

The model of the “Dark triad”<sup>20</sup> which has been developed into the more comprehensive model of “**Dark tetrad**” including Narcissism, Machiavellianism, psychopathy and Sadism<sup>21</sup> establishes a new area of research that has been approached before only partially (Christie and Geis). It strongly suggests that it is necessary to explore the dangerous sides of personality that are many times systematically exercised by many people; this approach is theoretically fertile, morally significant and practically useful. Malevolent behavioral patterns and tendencies are not rare and, as you point out might have even, within specific social and cultural contexts and adaptive role in what you called “**dark niches**”. At the present stage of the research both on character and on the dark tetrad of personality it is still extremely difficult to identify under what conditions the dark dimensions of personality and evil sides of character are the result of self-training and societal training and turning into self and socially-constructed character features. One of the most difficult questions is that character goodness/evilness and strengths are the result of long-term processes that should be studied longitudinally. From Franklin’s case and method it emerges the idea that he was mainly focused on his character’s failure, and kept a daily record in order to correct and improve it. Character is the complex outcome of a self-construction under specific life conditions but this construction takes a very long time and almost never ends. One’s own character is built in relationships with others who might try to help the self or they might try to use their character strengths to deceive, manipulate and even degrade the self.

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<sup>20</sup> D.L. Paulhus, K.M. Willimas, “The dark triad of personality: narcissism, machiavellianism and psychopathy”, *Journal of Research in Personality*, 2002: 36, 6, pp. 556-563.

<sup>21</sup> A. Furnham, S.C. Richards, D. L. Paulhus, “The dark triad of personality: a 10 year review”, *Social and Personality Compass*, 2013: 7, 3, pp. 199-216. H. Chabrol, T. Melioli, N. Van Leeuwen, R. Rodgers, R. Goutaudier, “The Dark Tetrad: Identifying personality profiles in high-school students”, *Personality and Individual Differences*, 2015: 83, pp. 97-101.

## Appendix 1 (Application)

*Franklin's method to learn about and to develop one's own character: An exercise in self-knowledge and self-improvement of character.*

You are invited to participate to a practical exercise during a few weeks that aim to increase your knowledge of your own character and to improve it. The exercise is based on Benjamin Franklin's method practiced by him in order to increase the virtues and the strengths of his own personality, especially of his own character. Of course if you like this exercise you might continue. Also it might be possible that you might have used some of its elements prior to this exercise. Please read carefully all the information and instructions.

### Meaning of character

Character is understood as a dynamic part (sub-system) of our personality that is closely related to all other sub-systems such as: cognitive abilities, motives, emotions, moral traits, habits and temperament. It is useful to remind that in a sample of over 400 introductory textbooks (some textbooks having 10 editions) for psychology (including developmental psychology and social psychology) published in the U.S.A. the concept of character is missing (it is not even in the subject index).

In contrast to temperament, which is mainly biologically rooted and present at birth, character is an acquired sub-system (a self-construction) that depends mainly on the individual's choices and actions, on the environment and on the relationships between individual and environment. Within the present exercise character is defined by a series of 4 (four) major components that are interrelated. These are:

1. **Character Virtues:** they help to distinguish between a good character (**character goodness**) and a bad character (**character evilness**). Among such virtues are: love, justice, charity, sincerity, humility and others.
2. **Character Strengths (or character power)** that help us to distinguish between a strong character

and a weak character. Among such strengths are: endurance, will power, perseverance, resolution, self-control (thinking flow, speech, emotions, and behavior).

3. **Character integrity** it helps to distinguish between a unitary and a contradictory character. The major components of character integrity are: the inner thoughts and feelings, the speech and what is expressed, and the acts (the deeds). When there is agreement among all these components one could say that that a given character has positive or negative integrity. It includes; transparenance versus opacity.
4. **Orienting principle (major guiding principle).** Some people might have dominant guiding principles: such as love of the other (neighbor and enemy); non-violence, any means are justified if we reach our goals, etc.

One has to have in mind that **each and every individual has character.** The question is: what type of character? Good or bad? Weak or strong? And of course any combinations such as a good and strong character, or a strong and evil character. Also one must ask oneself what type of character one would like to develop?

### *Benjamin Franklin's method to learn and develop character.*

Based on his readings, including ancient Greek, including Pythagoras advices for a daily exercise of virtues, and on his own experience Franklin has identified the following Virtues and their Percepts:

1. **TEMPERANCE:** eat not to Dullness, Drink not to Elevation.
2. **SILENCE:** speak not but what may benefit others or yourself.
3. **ORDER:** Let all your Things have their Places..and Business have its Time.
4. **RESOLUTION:** Resolve to perform what you ought. Perform without fail what your resolve.
5. **FRUGALITY:** Waste nothing.
6. **INDUSTRY:** Lose no Time. – Cut off all unnecessary Actions.-

7. SINCERITY: Use no hurtful Deceit. Think innocently and justly and if you speak; speak accordingly.
8. JUSTICE: Wrong none
9. MODERATION: Avoid Extremes.
10. CLEANLINESS: Tolerate no Uncleaness.
11. TRANQUILITY: Be not disturbed by Trifles, or at Accidents.
12. CHASTITY: Rarely use Venery but for Health and Offspring.
13. HUMILITY (H): Imitate Jesus and Socrates. -

In order to know and train the virtues mentioned above Franklin established a set of tasks:

a) He **selected that virtue/strength he considered to be the most important**; b) He **focused his “Attention”** on that first choice; c) He **worked on the selected Virtue for a time** and was able to go during **13 weeks on all the Virtues/Strengths and repeat the cycle 4 times per year**; d) At the end of each and every day **he will mark with a black Spot every Fault** in a matrix/table, recording his efforts and observations.

Form used as an example:

Days of the Week

Virtues	S	M	T	W	Th	F	Sa	Total Fail
Temperance	**	*		*	*	*		
Silence	*	***	*		*	*	**	
Order		*			**			
Resolution								
Frugality								
Industry			*					
Sincerity								
Justice						*		
Moderation						**		
Cleanliness								
Tranquility		*						
Chastity						**		
Humility		*	*	*	*			

**What is your task?** You may use the **same** Virtues/Strengths as those used by Franklin, **add** a few more, or you may **work out a complete new list**. In each of these situations you must:

1. **Indicate the Virtue/Strength** selected by you now to be **the MAIN focus** of your **ATTENTION** (mark it with letter A).
2. **Mark on it during the next 7 days, at the end of each day, how many times you failed to achieve it during the day by using the sign \*.**
3. **You may use Franklin's list as it is, you may add a few components, but you indicate the MAIN Focus**
4. **You may create your own list (Personal list) Franklin's list (include additions) and the traits added by you-**

*Days of the Week*

Virtues	S	M	T	W	Th	F	Sa	Total Fail
Franklin's list								
Temperance								
Silence								
Order								
Resolution								
Frugality								
Industry								
Sincerity, etc.								
Traits added by you								

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