

CYBERNETICS & ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE LABORATORY

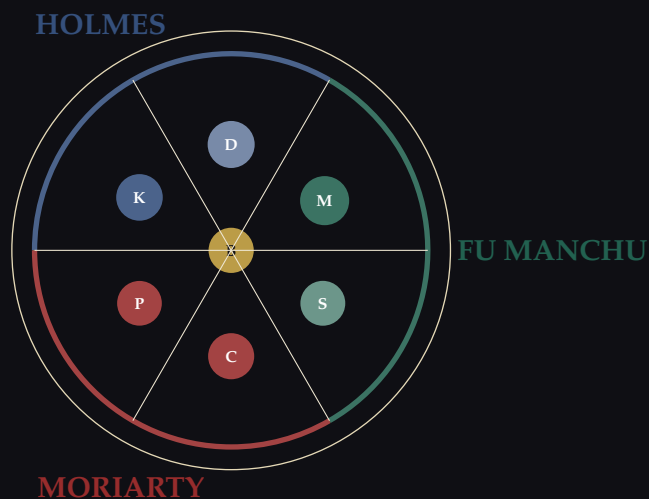
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The Fiction to Action Decision Manual

A Framework of Knowledge, Cunning, Stealth,
Power, Mysticism, and Inner Fortitude

*Finding Inferential and Existential Dimensions
with Connections to Plutarch's Parallel Lives*



Abstract

This paper introduces the **Fiction to Action $\mathcal{F}2\mathcal{A}$ Decision Framework**, a novel methodological architecture for decision-making under complexity, uncertainty, and adversarial pressure. Drawing upon three of the most compelling archetypes in the canon of crime and detective fiction—Sherlock Holmes, Professor James Moriarty, and Dr. Fu Manchu—the framework synthesises seven structural pillars: *Knowledge, Data, Cunning, Stealth, Power, Mysticism, and Inner Calmness & Boldness*.

The framework operates along two orthogonal dimensions. The **inferential dimension** formalises reasoning under incomplete information, belief updating, and abductive logic. The **existential dimension** addresses the agent’s orientation toward risk, identity, mortality of choices, and the meaning embedded in action. Together, these dimensions produce a unified decision space in which analytical rigour and existential depth are jointly maximised.

The concluding section establishes systematic correspondences between each $\mathcal{F}2\mathcal{A}$ pillar and the classical virtues recorded in Plutarch’s *Parallel Lives*, anchoring the framework in a two-and-a-half-thousand-year tradition of practical wisdom.

Keywords: decision theory, abductive reasoning, existential risk, Plutarchan virtue, archetypes, adversarial intelligence, $\mathcal{F}2\mathcal{A}$ framework



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1. Prolegomena: On Archetypes as Methodological Instruments

“The world is full of obvious things which nobody by any chance ever observes.”

ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE, *The Hound of the Baskervilles*

EVERY great methodological framework requires, at its foundation, not merely a set of axioms but a set of *vivid imaginative anchors*—figures whose very names evoke a complete constellation of cognitive and moral dispositions. In the Western tradition, this role has long been played by mythological or historical exemplars: Achilles for martial courage, Odysseus for cunning, Solon for legislative wisdom. The modern equivalent is to be found, unexpectedly but convincingly, in the rich archive of crime fiction.

Holmes, Moriarty, and Fu Manchu are not merely entertaining characters. They are fully articulated *cognitive models*—ideal types in the Weberian sense. Each is embodying a distinct, internally coherent philosophy of intelligence, action and power. Their author-architects constructed them with sufficient depth that they have survived more than a century of cultural change not only intact but amplified: they are now, incontestably, archetypes.

Definition 1.1 – Archetype (Methodological)

An archetype, in the present sense, is an irreducible cognitive-behavioural template—a compact representation of a coherent set of epistemic virtues, practical strategies, and existential orientations—that can be abstracted from its narrative origin and deployed as a formal decision-theoretic module.

The Holmes–Moriarty–Fu Manchu framework ($\mathcal{F}2\mathcal{A}$) treats these three figures precisely as such modules. It does not reduce them to caricatures. It reads them philosophically, extracting what is most systematic and generalisable from each while preserving the productive tensions between them.

The claim is not that a good decision-maker should *impersonate* one of these figures, but that a complete decision-maker must, in some measure, *internalise all three*: the disciplined epistemic machinery of Holmes, the structural-mathematical boldness of Moriarty, and the patient, mystically grounded long term vision of Fu Manchu. To operate exclusively in any one mode is to be brilliant but incomplete, for even in the figures of villains of fiction one can find lessons of strategy and cunning. The sovereign intelligence operates in all three simultaneously,

switching register as the decision landscape demands.

The framework also operates along two irreducible axes—one **inferential** (concerning the structure of belief under uncertainty and the induction process) and one **existential** (concerning the agent’s orientation toward risk, identity, and the meaning of choice)—producing a genuinely biaxial decision space. The final movement of the paper connects this space to the classical tradition via Plutarch’s *Parallel Lives*, demonstrating that the virtues distilled from fiction have ancient, cross-culturally validated antecedents.

2. The Three Archetypes: Portraits in Strategic Depth

“He is the Napoleon of Crime, Watson.”

ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE, *The Final Problem*

2.1. Sherlock Holmes: The Architecture of Knowledge

Archetype I — Sherlock Holmes

Core orientation: Epistemic mastery through observation, inference, and relentless data integration.

Primary virtues: *Knowledge, Data, Inner Calmness*

Colour: Prussian Blue **Element:** Air (the transparent medium of inference)

Sherlock Holmes represents the purest instantiation of the **epistemic agent**. His genius does not reside in exceptional native intelligence so much as in a total *architecture of knowledge*: systematic, hierarchical, pruned of irrelevance, and permanently coupled to real-world observation. Holmes famously classifies his mind as a “brain-attic,” refusing to admit facts whose retention would not serve deductive efficiency. This is not intellectual arrogance; it is *disciplined epistemic economy*.

The Holmesian method is properly understood as **abductive inference** (inference to the best explanation), not mere deduction. From a set of observed traces—a tan line, a worn heel, a particular posture—Holmes constructs the most parsimonious explanatory hypothesis consistent with the evidence. He then subjects this hypothesis to rapid empirical falsification. The process is iterative, dynamic, and fundamentally Bayesian in spirit.

Principle 2.1 – The Holmesian Epistemic Principle

When all that is impossible has been eliminated, whatever remains—however improbable—*must* be the operational hypothesis. Eliminate noise before reasoning; reason before acting; act decisively once the inference is sufficiently stable.

Holmes's inner calmness is a direct function of this epistemic architecture. He is not calm because he is emotionally cold (the violin and the cocaine refute this) but because uncertainty, for him, is never a permanent condition: it is a temporary state to be resolved by the application of method. The calmness is the *phenomenology of methodological confidence*.

2.2. Professor James Moriarty: The Mathematics of Power**Archetype II — Professor James Moriarty**

Core orientation: Strategic domination through mathematical structure, network control, and audacious system-building.

Primary virtues: *Power, Cunning, Boldness*

Colour: Deep Crimson **Element:** Fire (the transformative power of structured intention)

If Holmes is the epistemologist, Moriarty is the **strategic architect**. He is introduced by Holmes himself as “a mathematician of the first order”—and this is the key to his entire character. Moriarty does not experience the world as a series of puzzles to be solved but as a *system to be mastered*. Where Holmes reads evidence, Moriarty reads *structures*: webs of causality, networks of agents, flows of power and information.

His famous treatise on “The Dynamics of an Asteroid” is not a whimsical biographical detail. It signals that Moriarty thinks in dynamical systems, in orbital mechanics, in the long-run equilibria of complex interactions. His criminal empire is, by Holmes's own admission, run with a precision that leaves “no evidence.” This is not luck; it is the product of a **systems-theoretic approach to organisation**.

Moriarty's boldness is qualitatively different from mere recklessness. It is the boldness of the mathematician who, having proved a theorem, acts on it with complete conviction even when the empirical world appears to contradict him. He tolerates no ambiguity in implementation because he has resolved all ambiguity in the design phase.

Principle 2.2 – The Moriartian Power Principle

Power is not seized; it is *structured*. The supreme strategist builds systems that make outcomes inevitable before any single action is taken. The decisive move is made not at the moment of conflict but at the moment of *architecture*: when the network, the incentives, and the constraints are designed so that all roads lead to the intended conclusion.

2.3. Dr. Fu Manchu: The Sovereignty of Patience**Archetype III — Dr. Fu Manchu**

Core orientation: Long-horizon mastery through patience, stealth, esoteric knowledge, and the cultivation of inner sovereignty.

Primary virtues: *Stealth, Mysticism, Inner Calmness, Boldness*

Colour: Jade Green **Element:** Water (patient, formless, penetrating all things)

Dr. Fu Manchu introduces a dimension that neither Holmes nor Moriarty fully occupies: the **dimension of time as a strategic resource**. His intelligence is not primarily analytical (as Holmes's is) nor structural (as Moriarty's is), but *temporal and existential*. He operates on timescales that defeat the short-horizon thinking of his adversaries; he is willing to wait decades for the fruition of a plan initiated in a single afternoon's conversation.

His "mysticism" is not superstition. It is the systematic cultivation of knowledge that lies at the margins of the conventional: pharmacology, hypnosis, ancient texts, obscure psychology, the deep knowledge of human weakness. Where Holmes maps the visible world with surgical precision and Moriarty maps social structures with mathematical rigour, Fu Manchu maps the *invisible*: motivation, desire, fear, and the hidden architecture of the human will.

Principle 2.3 – The Fu Manchu Temporal Principle

The longest preparation purchases the most decisive moment. Stealth is not the absence of action but the *discipline of invisible preparation*. The agent who is not seen preparing cannot be countered, and the agent who cannot be countered has already won—whether or not the moment of decision has yet arrived.

Fu Manchu's inner calmness is of a different quality from Holmes's. Where

Holmes’s serenity is methodological, Fu Manchu’s is *ontological*: it derives from a profound acceptance of time, contingency, and the cyclical nature of power. He is, at his core, a philosopher of impermanence who acts with absolute precision *because* he holds his goals lightly, without the anxious attachment that undermines most agents’ judgment.

3. The Seven Pillars of the F2A Framework

“It is a capital mistake to theorise before one has data.”

ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE, *A Scandal in Bohemia*

The F2A framework is constituted by **seven structural pillars**, each corresponding to a fundamental dimension of superior decision-making. Let $\Pi_1, \dots, \Pi_7$ denote these pillars formally. The complete framework state of an agent is a vector:

$$\Pi = (\Pi_1, \Pi_2, \Pi_3, \Pi_4, \Pi_5, \Pi_6, \Pi_7) \in [0, 1]^7$$

where each component measures the agent’s current activation level in the respective dimension. A decision is **F2A-complete** if and only if all seven components exceed a context-dependent threshold τ .

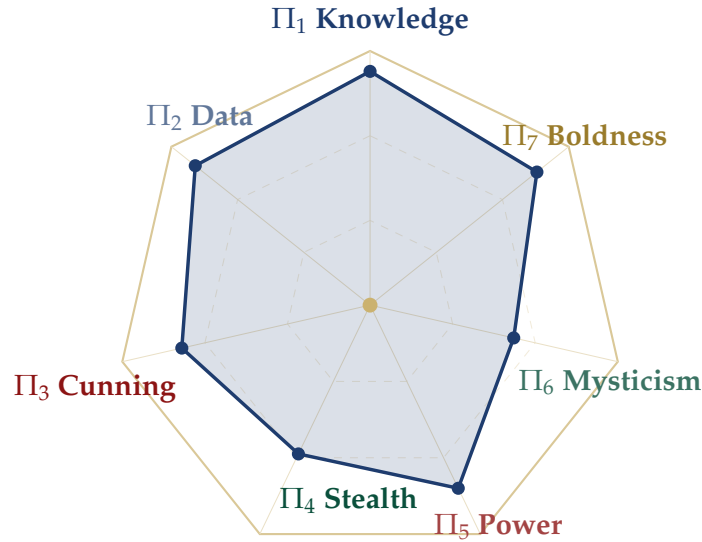


Figure 1: The F2A heptagonal framework: radar representation of an agent’s activation profile across the seven pillars. The shaded polygon illustrates a hypothetical high-performance profile.

3.1. Pillar I: Knowledge (Π_1)

Primary archetype: Holmes **Classical correspondent:** Solon

Knowledge in the F2A sense is not the mere accumulation of facts. It is *structured, retrievable, weaponised* understanding—the brain-attic principle applied systematically. The agent who scores high on Π_1 has constructed a personal ontology: a hierarchically organised map of the relevant domain in which every element is tagged by its inferential utility, its reliability, and its connections to adjacent knowledge nodes.

Crucially, F2A knowledge is *differential*: the agent knows what she knows, knows what she does not know, and knows the boundary between these territories with precision. This meta-level awareness—epistemic cartography—is at least as valuable as the first-order knowledge it maps.

Definition 3.1 – Structured Knowledge Capital

The knowledge capital $K(\mathcal{A})$ of agent $\mathcal{A}$ is:

$$K(\mathcal{A}) = \sum_{i \in \mathcal{D}} w_i \cdot \kappa_i \cdot r_i$$

where $\mathcal{D}$ is the relevant domain, w_i is the inferential weight of fact i , $\kappa_i \in [0, 1]$ is the agent's command of fact i , and $r_i \in [0, 1]$ is the reliability score of its source. An F2A-complete agent maximises $K(\mathcal{A})$ subject to cognitive-budget constraints.

3.2. Pillar II: Data (Π_2)

Primary archetype: Holmes/Moriarty **Classical correspondent:** Themistocles

Where Knowledge (Π_1) is the *structural* representation of what is known, Data (Π_2) is the *dynamic, real-time input stream* that continuously updates that structure. Holmes's practice of reading a room in seconds—registering tan lines, postures, calluses, and ink stains—is the prototype of high-bandwidth data acquisition under time pressure.

The F2A agent treats all perception as data collection and all data as provisional evidence. The discipline lies in the coupling: data must flow directly into the agent's belief-revision process, triggering immediate updates without delay or distortion. The failure mode is **data hoarding**—collecting without integrating—which produces the illusion of epistemic power without its substance.

Axiom 3.1 – The Data-Belief Coupling Axiom

Let β_t be the agent's belief state at time t , and let δ_t denote new data received at time t . A high- Π_2 agent maintains:

$$\beta_{t+1} = \mathcal{U}(\beta_t, \delta_t)$$

where $\mathcal{U}$ is a Bayes-consistent update operator. Any systematic deviation from this coupling constitutes a *data-belief decoupling failure* and reduces effective Π_2 to zero regardless of the volume of data received.

3.3. Pillar III: Cunning (Π_3)

Primary archetype: Moriarty (dominant) / Holmes (latent) **Classical correspondent:** Alcibiades, Lysander

Cunning is the capacity to generate *asymmetric advantage* through non-obvious strategic moves. It is the quality Aristotle partially captured in the concept of *mêtis*—practical intelligence applied to the unexpected, the indirect, the transformative gambit. In the F2A framework, cunning is distinguished from mere cleverness by its *structural* character: cunning does not merely outwit an adversary in a single exchange but reshapes the entire exchange environment so that future adversarial moves become systematically disadvantaged.

Principle 3.1 – The Cunning Asymmetry Principle

A cunning move is not a smart move; it is a move that *changes the payoff structure* of all subsequent moves. Effective cunning satisfies:

$$\frac{\partial V(\mathbf{a}_{\text{cunning}})}{\partial \Omega} > 0$$

where $\mathbf{a}$ is the action, V is the agent's value function and Ω is the state space of future opportunities. Cunning *expands* the opportunity landscape for the agent while *contracting* it for all others.

3.4. Pillar IV: Stealth (Π_4)

Primary archetype: Fu Manchu **Classical correspondent:** Fabius Maximus, Sertorius

Stealth in the F2A framework is not merely *concealment*—it is *invisible prepara-*

tion. The stealthy agent does not merely hide her current position; she constructs the entire preparatory apparatus of her decisive action in such a way that no adversary can identify it as preparation. This requires a profound discipline of *apparent irrelevance*: the ability to pursue significant ends through actions that appear trivial, unrelated, or even counterproductive.

Definition 3.2 – Stealth Quotient

The stealth quotient $S(\mathbf{a})$ of an action sequence $\mathbf{a} = (a_1, \dots, a_T)$ is:

$$S(\mathbf{a}) = 1 - \frac{1}{T} \sum_{t=1}^T P(\text{adversary detects intent} \mid a_t)$$

A stealthy sequence maintains $S(\mathbf{a}) \approx 1$ throughout the preparatory phase and transitions to decisive, visible execution only at the moment of maximum adversarial disadvantage.

3.5. Pillar V: Power (Π_5)

Primary archetype: Moriarty **Classical correspondent:** Caesar, Pompey

Power in the F2A framework is understood not as domination but as **structured option value**: the capacity of an agent to generate, retain, and exercise a range of decisive possibilities unavailable to unstructured agents. Moriarty's power is the power of the network architect: he derives leverage from controlling *positions* in information flows, resource channels, and dependency structures rather than from any individual capacity.

Axiom 3.2 – The Structural Power Axiom

Let $G = (V, E)$ be the strategic interaction graph. The structural power of agent $\mathcal{A}$ is:

$$\Pi_5(\mathcal{A}) = \sum_{\substack{s, t \in V \\ s \neq t}} \frac{\sigma_{st}(\mathcal{A})}{\sigma_{st}}$$

where σ_{st} is the total number of shortest paths from s to t , and $\sigma_{st}(\mathcal{A})$ is the number passing through $\mathcal{A}$. Maximising Π_5 corresponds to maximising betweenness centrality under resource constraints.

3.6. Pillar VI: Mysticism (Π_6)

Primary archetype: Fu Manchu **Classical correspondent:** Numa Pompilius

“Mysticism” in the F2A framework requires careful definition. It does not refer to supernatural belief or irrational cognition. It refers to the *systematic cultivation of knowledge at the margins of the conventionally known*—what we might call **liminal intelligence**. Fu Manchu’s mastery of pharmacology, psychology, hypnosis, and the ancient texts of multiple civilisations represents an intelligence that works precisely *at the frontier*: where the adversary has no maps, where conventional analytical tools produce only noise, and where the deep reader of human nature has decisive advantage.

Principle 3.2 – The Liminal Intelligence Principle

The highest-value knowledge is knowledge that is *just beyond* the frontier of the adversary’s mental model. Let $\mathcal{F}_A \subset K(A)$ denote the knowledge frontier of agent A and $\mathcal{F}_B \subset K(B)$ that of the adversary. The liminal intelligence premium is:

$$\Lambda(A, B) = \mathcal{F}_A \cap \overline{\mathcal{F}_B} \cap \mathcal{R}$$

where $\mathcal{R}$ denotes the set of decision-relevant domains. The agent who consistently maximises Λ possesses permanent informational advantage regardless of the absolute size of $K(A)$.

3.7. Pillar VII: Inner Calmness & Boldness (Π_7)

Primary archetype: Fu Manchu / Holmes (synthesis) **Classical correspondent:** Epaminondas

The seventh pillar unifies two qualities that appear temperamentally opposed—*inner calmness* and *boldness*—into a single, irreducible disposition. Calm without boldness produces paralysis: the agent sees clearly but never acts decisively. Boldness without calm produces recklessness: the agent acts decisively but on the basis of distorted, anxiety-driven perception. The F2A ideal is the **calm-bold**: decisions executed with maximal conviction because they emerge from a state of minimal internal turbulence.

Definition 3.3 – The Calm-Bold State

An agent is in the *calm-bold state* $\mathcal{CB}$ if and only if:

- (i) $\text{Var}(\beta_t) \leq \varepsilon$ (belief variance below anxiety threshold ε), and
- (ii) $\|\nabla_{\mathbf{a}} V(\mathbf{s}, \mathbf{a})\| \geq \delta$ (action gradient above commitment threshold δ).

The agent holds a *stable* belief and acts on it *decisively*. Simultaneous satisfaction of (i) and (ii) defines the optimal execution state for any high-stakes decision.

4. The Inferential Dimension

“It is a capital mistake to theorise before one has data. Insensibly one begins to twist facts to suit theories, instead of theories to suit facts.”

ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE, *A Scandal in Bohemia*

The inferential dimension concerns the *epistemic machinery* by which an agent moves from incomplete observation to justified, actionable belief. The architecture of inferential reasoning in the F2A framework has three distinct stages.

Stage 1. Observation and Data Acquisition. The agent receives a stream of observations $\{o_1, o_2, \dots, o_n\}$ from the environment. Holmes’s practice of *full-spectrum observation*—noticing the dog that did not bark, the letter not on the mantel-piece, the shadow’s angle—models this stage: nothing is filtered out before it is evaluated for relevance.

Stage 2. Abductive Hypothesis Generation. From the observation set the agent generates candidate hypotheses $\{H_1, H_2, \dots, H_k\}$, where each H_i is a possible explanation for the observed pattern. Fu Manchu adds a crucial modifier: the set must always include at least one hypothesis drawn from *outside* the adversary’s expected hypothesis space—the liminal possibility that conventional thinkers will not have considered.

Stage 3. Bayesian Updating and Decision. Given prior beliefs $P(H_i)$ and likelihoods

$P(o \mid H_i)$, the agent computes posterior beliefs:

$$P(H_i \mid o) = \frac{P(o \mid H_i) \cdot P(H_i)}{\sum_j P(o \mid H_j) \cdot P(H_j)}$$

Moriarty's contribution is that the *prior itself is a strategic object*: a well-designed agent does not passively receive priors but *structures the environment* to generate informative observations, actively shaping the likelihood landscape.

The inferential dimension also includes a recursive loop: **modelling the adversary's inference**. The $\mathcal{F}2\mathcal{A}$ agent models how the adversary is reasoning about the world, and reasons about how the adversary models *her* reasoning. This produces the characteristic depth of the Holmes-Moriarty dynamic: two agents each modelling the other at multiple levels of recursion.

Axiom 4.1 – The Recursive Inference Axiom

Let $\mathcal{M}_{\mathcal{A}}^{(k)}(\mathcal{B})$ denote agent $\mathcal{A}$'s k th-order model of agent $\mathcal{B}$'s belief state. A complete $\mathcal{F}2\mathcal{A}$ inference process maintains:

$$\mathcal{M}_{\mathcal{A}}^{(k)}(\mathcal{B}) \neq \emptyset \quad \text{for all } k \leq K$$

for some depth parameter $K \geq 2$. First-order reasoning ($K = 1$) is necessary but never sufficient for $\mathcal{F}2\mathcal{A}$ -complete decision-making in adversarial environments.

5. The Existential Dimension

"I am the most dangerous man in London."

ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE, *The Adventure of the
Bruce-Partington Plans*

If the inferential dimension addresses *how* an agent should reason, the existential dimension addresses *who* the agent must *be* in order to reason and act well under conditions of genuine danger, irreversibility, and ultimate consequence.

5.1. The Orientation toward Risk: Mortality of Choices

The existential dimension begins with the recognition that **all significant decisions are irreversible at some level**. The truly bold agent is not the one who does not fear irreversibility but the one who has *incorporated it into her cognitive architecture*: who makes each decision as if it were, in principle, final. This is Heidegger's *Sein-zum-Tode* applied to strategic action—a being-toward-the-end-state of the current strategy.

Principle 5.1 – The Existential Commitment Principle

The quality of a decision is not primarily a function of its *expected value* but of the *depth of the agent's authentic commitment* to it. An action executed with half-hearted conviction at expected value V is strategically inferior to the same action executed with complete existential commitment, as commitment functions as a *multiplier* on execution quality and a *deterrent* to adversarial countermeasure.

5.2. The Orientation toward Identity: Who Acts?

The second existential orientation concerns the *stability of the agent's identity under pressure*. The F2A framework holds that effective decision-making requires a **secure identity**—not rigidity, but a stable foundation from which flexible, adaptive action can proceed without disintegration of the self that acts.

Each archetype exemplifies this distinctly. Holmes's identity is secured by his *method*: as long as the method is intact, Holmes is intact, regardless of emotional distress or physical exhaustion. Moriarty's identity is secured by his *vision*: his sense of the system he is building provides a centre of gravity that external setbacks cannot displace. Fu Manchu's identity is most radical: it is secured by the *renunciation of attachment to any particular version of himself*, a disposition that paradoxically produces the most impregnable inner fortress.

5.3. The Orientation toward Meaning: Why Act at All?

The third orientation is the most philosophically profound. It addresses the *teleological horizon* of strategic action: what, ultimately, gives a decision its significance? The purely instrumental agent acts to maximise a utility function whose ultimate foundations are never examined. The F2A agent, by contrast, maintains what we call **existential transparency**: a continuously updated account of *why the strategic*

enterprise matters, in terms that go beyond instrumental success.

Definition 5.1 – Existential Horizon Depth

The existential horizon depth $\mathcal{E}(\mathcal{A})$ of an agent $\mathcal{A}$ is defined as the number of levels of purpose-nesting the agent can articulate:

$$\mathcal{E}(\mathcal{A}) = \max\{n \mid \exists p_1 \succ p_2 \succ \cdots \succ p_n, p_n \text{ is non-instrumental}\}$$

where $p_1 \succ p_2$ denotes “ p_1 is pursued in service of p_2 .” A well-formed $\mathcal{F}2\mathcal{A}$ agent maintains $\mathcal{E}(\mathcal{A}) \geq 3$.

6. Plutarchan Connexions: Ancient Virtue and Modern Archetype

“It is not histories I am writing, but lives; and in the most glorious deeds there is not always an indication of virtue or vice.”

PLUTARCH, *Life of Alexander*

Plutarch’s *Parallel Lives* constitutes the ancient world’s most systematic attempt to distil practical wisdom from exceptional lives. The method is comparative and narrative rather than axiomatic; but the underlying project is identical to the F2A framework’s: to identify *transferable cognitive and moral dispositions* that produce consistent excellence under high-stakes conditions.

The table below maps the seven $\mathcal{F}2\mathcal{A}$ pillars to the Plutarchan lives that best illuminate and validate each dimension.

Pillar	Plutarchan Life	Connexion and Virtue
Π_1 Knowledge	<i>Solon of Athens</i>	Solon's constitutional wisdom rested not on native genius but on the systematic cultivation of knowledge across law, philosophy, commerce, and statecraft. His famous travels to Egypt and Lydia exemplify the F2A epistemologist's compulsion to extend the structured knowledge frontier. His retreat into silence after the reforms mirrors Holmes's famous recharging periods: knowledge in repose accumulates depth.
Π_2 Data	<i>Themistocles</i>	Themistocles is Plutarch's exemplar of <i>kairos</i> —the capacity to read a situation so rapidly and accurately that others are still processing when he has already acted. His reinterpretation of the Delphic oracle's "wooden walls" as naval power is the canonical act of superior data-to-inference conversion in the ancient record. His pre-Salamis intelligence operation is pure Holmesian data-weaponisation.
Π_3 Cunning	<i>Lysander of Sparta</i>	Plutarch treats Lysander with deliberate ambivalence, acknowledging that his cunning (<i>dolos</i>) exceeds conventional Spartan virtue while producing results that blunt force never could. His manipulation of the Persian satrap Cyrus, his theatrical deception at Aegospotami, and his restructuring of Greece through puppet oligarchies are textbook Moriartian structural cunning: reshaping the game itself, not merely outwitting individual opponents.

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Pillar	Plutarchan Life	Connexion and Virtue
Π ₄ Stealth	<i>Fabius Maximus</i>	The <i>Cunctator</i> —the Delayer—embodies F2A stealth more completely than any other figure in Plutarch. His entire strategy against Hannibal was premised on invisible preparation: steady attrition of supply lines, avoidance of decisive engagement, gradual shifting of force balance through actions that appeared, to his impatient contemporaries, as mere inaction. Plutarch records with relish that Fabius was more vilified in his lifetime for this caution than almost any Roman general— and more vindicated by history.
Π ₅ Power	<i>Julius Caesar</i>	Caesar’s power was structural in the Moriartian sense: he built patron-client networks of extraordinary reach before possessing any formal military command; he used the consulship not for its constitutional powers but as a node from which to extend his personal network into every province; and the <i>Commentarii</i> are, among other things, a masterwork of public narrative—the construction of a brand that made his eventual dominance feel, to contemporaries, not like a seizure of power but like an inevitability.

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Pillar	Plutarchan Life	Connexion and Virtue
Π_6 Mysticism	<i>Numa Pompilius</i>	Numa's cultivation of religious institutions, his claimed conversations with the nymph Egeria, and his deployment of ritual to pacify and organise a war-prone people constitute the ancient world's most sophisticated use of liminal intelligence: the weaponisation of knowledge at the frontier of the adversary's comprehension. Numa's adversaries could not counter sacred law because they could not even perceive it as a strategic instrument.
Π_7 Boldness, Calmness	<i>Epaminondas of Thebes</i>	Plutarch's most admiring Life is also the perfect synthesis of Π_7 . At Leuctra (371 BCE), outnumbered and facing Sparta's invincible reputation, Epaminondas deployed the oblique attack with an absolute calm that his own officers found more terrifying than the Spartan phalanx. His dying words—"I leave two daughters: Leuctra and Mantinea"—are the utterance of a man whose existential horizon ($\mathcal{E} \geq 4$) encompassed the entire arc of Theban history, not merely the moment of personal extinction.

6.1. The Plutarchian Synthesis: Virtue as Pillar Alignment

Plutarch's deepest methodological claim is that *great lives are coherent lives*: lives in which capacities, orientation, and circumstances have been aligned into a unified expression of virtue. The tragic Lives—Alcibiades, Coriolanus, Marius—are tragic precisely because one or two exceptional pillars coexist with catastrophic deficits in others. Alcibiades has magnificent Π_3 but catastrophic Π_7 -deficit; Coriolanus has Π_5 and Π_7 -boldness but zero Π_3 and Π_4 ; Marius has Π_2 and Π_5 but loses Π_7 -calmness entirely in the final acts of his life.

The $\mathcal{F}2A$ framework thus provides, if seen retrospectively, a formal grammar

for Plutarch’s comparative biographical judgments. What Plutarch was doing intuitively across 46 paired biographies was precisely the construction of a multi-pillar decision profile: diagnosing which pillars were strong, which weak, and how the imbalances produced the characteristic modes of each figure’s failure or triumph.

Classical Canon 6.1 – The Plutarchan Completion Theorem

A life (or strategic enterprise) is Plutarchian-complete if and only if:

$$\min_{i \in \{1, \dots, 7\}} \Pi_i \geq \tau_{\text{context}}$$

The great lives in Plutarch are not those with the highest maximum pillar value but those with the highest *minimum*. Excellence is not single-peak but floor-constrained: the weakest pillar determines the ultimate fate of the enterprise more reliably than the strongest.

7. The F2A Decision Protocol: Integration

“Elementary.”

APOCRYPHAL, but definitively Holmesian in spirit

We now synthesise the seven pillars, the two dimensions, and the Plutarchan validation into a practical **decision protocol**. The F2A protocol is not a checklist; it is a *cognitive choreography*—a structured sequence of attentional and analytical moves that the disciplined agent performs before, during, and after any significant decision.

The F2A Decision Protocol

Phase 0: Orientation

Fu Manchu mode

Before engaging with the decision, enter the calm-bold state *CB*: a brief practice of existential grounding that reduces cognitive noise and ensures the subsequent analysis proceeds from a stable identity foundation.

Phase 1: Full-Spectrum Observation

Holmes mode

Observe everything; filter nothing. Record the full set of available observations $\{o_1, \dots, o_n\}$ without premature hypothesis commitment. Consult Π_1 (structured knowledge) to contextualise observations. Activate Π_2 (data coupling) to begin belief-state update.

Phase 2: Hypothesis Generation*Holmes/Fu Manchu mode*

Generate a hypothesis set $\{H_1, \dots, H_k\}$ that includes at least one *liminal hypothesis* (Π_6): an explanation outside the adversary's expected model space. Weight hypotheses by prior probability and compute initial posteriors.

Phase 3: Structural Analysis*Moriarty mode*

Map the interaction graph $G = (V, E)$. Identify power nodes (Π_5), information chokepoints (Π_3), and structural vulnerabilities (Π_4). Compute the structural power profile and identify the maximum-leverage intervention point.

Phase 4: Existential Check*all three modes*

Verify that the contemplated action is consistent with $\mathcal{E}(\mathcal{A}) \geq 3$: that it serves purposes nested at least three levels deep. An action justified only instrumentally (level 1) does not qualify for execution under the F2A protocol.

Phase 5: Decision and Execution*Moriarty/Fu Manchu mode*

Select the action that simultaneously maximises the structural cunning criterion, maintains stealth quotient $S(\mathbf{a}) \approx 1$ in the preparatory phase, and is executed from the calm-bold state $\mathcal{CB}$. Commit *completely*.

Phase 6: Post-Decision Review*Holmes mode*

After execution, perform full Bayesian update on all hypotheses in light of observed outcomes. Update structured knowledge capital $K(\mathcal{A})$ and revise the interaction graph G . Never attribute adverse outcomes to irreducible bad luck before exhausting explanatory hypotheses.

7.1. The F2A Pathologies: Seven Failure Modes

Every framework is as well-defined by its failure modes as by its ideals. The F2A framework identifies **seven characteristic pathologies**, each corresponding to the malfunction of a specific pillar:

- P1. The Watson Trap** (Π_1 deficit): Observing accurately but lacking the structured knowledge to interpret correctly. Data without theory; competence without wisdom.
- P2. The Empiricist's Paralysis** (Π_2 excess without action): Perpetually seeking more data before committing to inference. The agent who needs one more observation before deciding never decides.
- P3. The Mycroft Pathology** (Π_3 without Π_4): Superior cunning deployed without stealth—the brilliant analyst who cannot be bothered to act invisibly and therefore destroys his own advantages through premature revelation.

- P4. The Moriartian Hubris** (Π_5 without Π_7 -calmness): The structural architect who becomes intoxicated by the elegance of his own construction and loses the calm that would allow him to dissolve it when circumstances demand.
- P5. The Alcibiades Syndrome** (Π_3 and Π_5 without Π_4): Brilliant, powerful, and visible in all the wrong moments. The agent who cannot resist demonstrating his own superiority and thereby telegraphs every move.
- P6. The Mystic's Solipsism** (Π_6 without Π_2): Liminal knowledge pursued so deeply that the agent loses contact with observable reality. Mysticism without empirical grounding produces magnificent theories about worlds that do not exist.
- P7. The Reckless Noble** (Π_7 -boldness without Π_7 -calmness): The agent who mistakes adrenalin for conviction and noise for signal. Every decision becomes a gamble because the boldness is uncoupled from the stillness that should inform it.

8. Conclusion: The Sovereign Intelligence

"Solon used to say that speech was the image of actions; that laws were like cobwebs—they would catch, it is true, the weak and poor, but would be torn in pieces by the mighty and powerful."

PLUTARCH, *Life of Solon*

THE $\mathcal{F}2\mathcal{A}$ framework offers something rare in the literature of decision theory: a genuinely *complete* account of the ideal decision-maker that is simultaneously formal and humanistic, modern and ancient, analytical and existential.

The framework's completeness derives from the complementarity of its three archetypes. Holmes alone produces the brilliant investigator who cannot build lasting structures. Moriarty alone produces the terrifying architect who cannot survive his own construction. Fu Manchu alone produces the patient sage who acts too late, if at all. The **sovereign intelligence**—the $\mathcal{F}2\mathcal{A}$ ideal—is the agent who has internalised all three: who can read a room with Holmesian precision, design a system with Moriartian audacity, and wait with Fu Manchuan serenity for the moment of perfect execution.

Plutarch knew this, without these names. His *best* Lives—Solon, Themistocles, Fabius, Caesar, Epaminondas—are Lives of agents who achieved, for limited periods and in specific domains, precisely this integration. His *tragic* Lives are case studies in the absence of one or two pillars, whose deficits ultimately overrode the compensating excellence of the rest. The lesson of Plutarch, restated in $\mathcal{F}2\mathcal{A}$ terms, is the Plutarchan Completion Theorem: the floor, not the ceiling, determines the ultimate fate.

The two dimensions—inferential and existential—are not in tension but in symbiosis. The deepest inferential work requires existential stability: an agent who is anxious about her identity cannot evaluate evidence without distortion. The richest existential orientation requires inferential honesty: an agent who refuses to update beliefs in the light of evidence cannot maintain a purposive life. Holmes and Fu Manchu, at their finest moments, are each other’s mirror: the detective who achieves inner peace through methodological mastery, the sage who achieves methodological mastery through inner peace.

Moriarty is the framework’s great warning. He had every pillar activated at maximum intensity—and was still destroyed. His error was not cognitive but *existential*: his horizon depth $\mathcal{E}$ was exactly 1. He built a magnificent structure in service of nothing beyond the building itself. The Reichenbach Falls is the fate of every intelligence, however brilliant, that has not asked the fundamental question: *for what, ultimately, does all this serve?*

The answer to that question is not given by the framework. It never is, in any framework worth trusting. But the $\mathcal{F}2\mathcal{A}$ framework equips the agent to ask it with full cognitive resources assembled, all seven pillars activated, and the calm-bold state intact—which is, perhaps, the best that any methodological instrument can do.

“The game is afoot.”

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