

At the most general, abstract level the enneagram symbol can be seen as a kind of choreography - it maps out the dance of interactions of a pair of forces, each of which has three styles of dance. One might think of atoms, which can occur as positive ions, negative ions, or neutral atoms. There must certainly be an Enneagram of the Dance of the Elements which could bring a new perspective to the nine-column Periodic Table. I would wager with confidence that if this atomic enneagram were to be worked out, one would find that the arrows encode well-known chemical principles.

In the case of the dramatic story, the two forces are readily apparent: they are protagonist/hero and antagonist/fate. The interpretation of the energy states is also not difficult to work out: a character is active when he is taking the initiative in the drama; he is responsive when he is responding to pressure and events; he is neutral when he's not involved in the current drama.

As I found in the two previous investigations, and as I will show below for the dramatic story, two-force analysis is a very powerful aid in properly applying the enneagram to any system for which the enneagram is an appropriate modeling tool. You can readily divide any system or process into nine aspects - but how do you know you've divided it correctly? And how do you even know that the enneagram paradigm is appropriate to the particular system or process? Two-force analysis answers both of these questions: the identification of two system-determinative tri-state forces is the key to knowing that the enneagram is applicable at all, and the fixed-position energy-configurations enable the system to be precisely factored to reveal the underlying enneagram dynamics.

Case study: "A Few Good Men"
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As the next step in developing the enneagram of the dramatic story, we'll take a particular film and step through the nine phases of the enneagram diagram. At each phase, we'll consider the energy states of the two characters and see how that relates to the unfolding drama.

This exercise serves as an illustration of how two-force analysis is used in formulating a new enneagram application by factoring out the nine inherent enneagram components.

Terminology note: Although "neutral" seems to be the best single abstract term for the third energy state, the state can only be fully appreciated by combining the connotations of several terms, including: "neutral, away, avoid, alone, withdraw". In the dramatic-story application, "away" turns out to be the most descriptive term, and will be used in what follows.

The film is "A Few Good Men", with Tom Cruise (hero) and Jack Nicholson (fate/antagonist) as the primary actors. For those who haven't seen the film - don't worry, I'll describe the plot enough here for our purposes. I'll use Cruise and Nicholson to refer to the characters.

Phase 9 - (+, 0) - fate active; hero away

The beginning of the drama, as we learn eventually in flashback, is a sequence of events on a US Marine base leading up to the death of a Marine. The defendants in the case are two other Marines, but the ultimately responsible perpetrator turns out to be Nicholson - a tough, high-ranking Marine officer.

Phase 9 generalization: Fate initiates a chain of events which will eventually impact the hero.

Fate sows seed of conflict

Phase 1 - (+, -) - fate active; hero responsive

The opening of the film deals with Cruise (a Marine lawyer) being assigned to represent the two defendants. Cruise expresses reluctance to undertake trial work, as his previous experience has been outside of court. He is encouraged to enter a guilty plea (avoiding trial) for the defendants - indeed his aversion for trial work is why he was selected for the assignment: the Corps wants the case played down to avoid embarrassment to the Corps and to Nicholson. Tension builds around Cruise's decision of how to approach the case, as he begins to suspect that the defendants are not the real perps.

Phase 1 abstraction: Hero begins to respond to the impact of fate's actions.

Hero is drawn toward conflict

Phase 2 - (0, -) - fate away; hero responsive

We learn of a deeper reason for Cruise's reluctance to engage in trial work - he is haunted, it turns out, by the sceptre of his deceased father - a renown trial lawyer - with whom he is afraid to (symbolically) compete. A second level of tension builds around Cruise's wrestling with how to resolve this internalized relationship with his father.

Phase 2 abstraction: Hero begins to respond to his own internal personality conflicts, conflicts which have been aroused by the pressure of fate, but which are apart from it.

Hero is drawn into internal doubt

Phase 3 - (0, 0) - fate away; hero away

The pressure on Cruise to make a decision reaches a fever pitch. It has become clear that the "right" choice would be to enter a not-guilty plea, and it has become equally clear that such a path

would be extremely problematic and possibly detrimental to Cruise's career. Yet we are made aware that it is not the fear of external consequences that gives Cruise pause, but rather his internal doubt. At the point of maximum tension, Cruise storms out of a late-night meeting and goes on a drunk (symbolically: an internal quest). When he shows up the next morning, he has momentarily decided to enter a not-guilty plea.

Phase 3 abstraction: Hero resolves his inner doubt by facing and conquering his own demon - an internal act which is away from both the drama and immediate fate, but an act which frees the hero to engage fully in the drama.

Hero chooses to fight

Phase 4 - (0, +) - fate away; hero active

Cruise bursts into action, preparing his case with intense energy, creativity, and determination. Cruise knows that the only way to exonerate the defendants is to prove Nicholson's culpability - a formidable task given Nicholson's prestige and the fact that he is not the one on trial. Cruise realistically appraises the formidable strength of Nicholson's position, and begins to prepare an imaginative approach to ensnaring him. This preparation is carried out away from Nicholson - indeed secrecy and surprise are critical to the success of Cruise's strategy.

Phase 4 abstraction: Hero, freed from his internal demon, acts to prepare himself for confrontation with fate, a preparation which occurs away from fate/antagonist.

Hero prepares for battle

Phase 5 - (-, 0) - fate responsive; hero away

Nicholson becomes aware that he is the target of investigation. He responds by taking stock of his vulnerable points and beginning to prepare his defense. This planning takes place away from Cruise, and again, secrecy is paramount.

Phase 5 abstraction: Fate/antagonist, in response to hero's anticipated attack, begins to plan his defense, away from the hero.

Fate prepares for battle

Phase 6 - (-, -) - fate responsive; hero responsive

Nicholson and Cruise are now intensively implementing their strategies. This is the chase scene: Cruise is working 18-hours a day tracking down evidence and meticulously working out his trial tactics; Nicholson instructs his men as to what they should say in court, destroys certain flight records, plans how he'll present himself on the stand, etc.

Phase 6 abstraction: Hero and fate are both responding to the requirements of the upcoming battle: they are, as it were, deploying their troops, launching their thousand ships, marching to the battlefield.

Engagement begins

Phase 7 - (-, +) - fate responsive; hero active

The parties are gathered in court, the judge's gavel comes down, and Cruise initiates the final confrontation. Nicholson begins to respond on the witness stand, and the events on the Marine Base are recounted for the jury. Nicholson's strategy is based on maintaining his cool composure and meeting Cruise with

disdain. Cruise's strategy is to taunt Nicholson into unsheathing his sword - to enter the battle in anger and lose his composure and good sense. As Cruise backs Nicholson into a psychological corner, the courtroom drama builds to an intense pitch.

Phase 7 abstraction: Hero actively begins his final attack on fate/antagonist, who begins to respond.

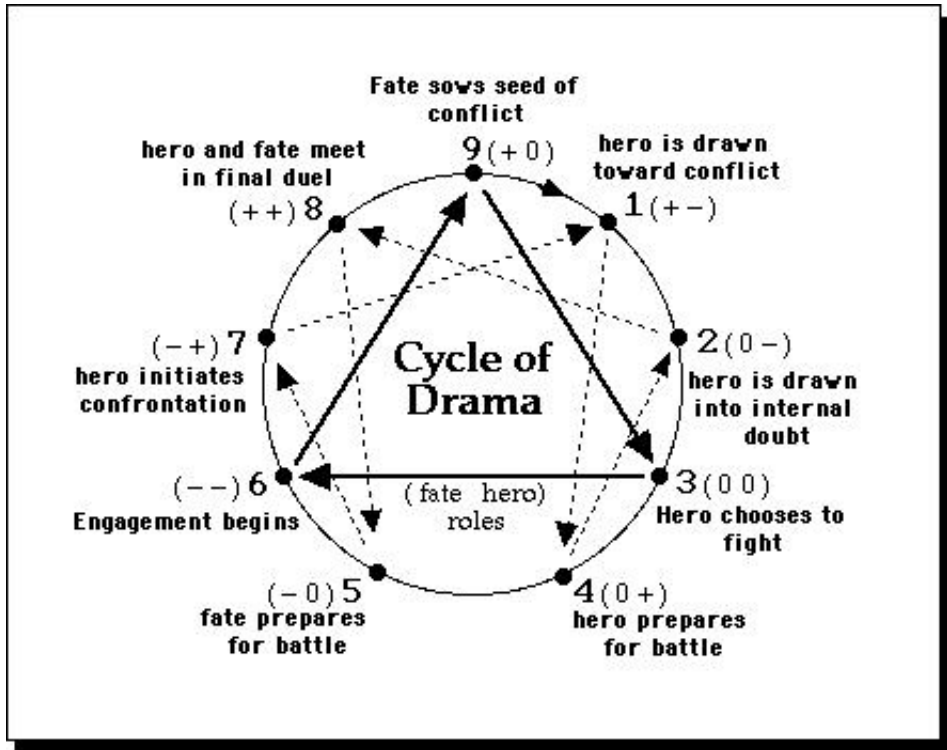
Hero initiates confrontation

Phase 8 - (+, +) - fate active; hero active

In a sequence of dramatic interrogations over two days, during which Cruise probes and learns from Nicholson's responses, Cruise finally gets Nicholson's goat and Nicholson - fire in his eyes - lashes out in active battle. There follows an intense but brief all-out duel: Nicholson's core of internal power is unleashed - his raw energy as a proud fighting Marine. Unfortunately for him this is inappropriate to his goal of defending himself in the case, and he inadvertently, in the heat of passion, reveals his culpability. Cruise's adaptive tactics pay off: he entices Nicholson into engaging in the wrong battle - a battle for his symbolic honor instead of for his real survival.

Phase 8 abstraction: Hero and fate meet one another in the final, decisive duel.

Hero and fate meet in final confrontation



The interpretation of the arrows

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Just as the main triangle (9-> 6-> 3) in the Life Cycle model shows the unfolding of a trivial endeavor (a mere task), so the main triangle here marks out a trivial story, where there is only initiation, decision, and confrontation - a simple barroom fight, not a full-blown story. The other arrows, as in the Life Cycle model, reveal subtle

relationships among the phases.

Arrow 1-> 4

When Cruise learns of his assignment (in phase one), his first consideration is to think ahead as to how he might structure his case (phase 4). That anticipation, and the problems thus uncovered, builds the story's initial tension.

Abstraction: Hero considers his response to fate by anticipating the requirements of battle.

Arrow 2-> 8

When Cruise thinks ahead to the climax (phase eight) of the trial - a dramatic confrontation with Nicholson - he sees himself inheriting his father's sword, which fuels his crisis of doubt.

Abstraction: Hero anticipates the climactic confrontation, forcing him to re-assess his personal power.

Arrow 4-> 2

As Cruise prepares his case (phase four), he keeps in mind his doubts regarding personal power (phase 2), and focuses his strategy on adequately arming himself for combat.

Abstraction: Hero is mindful of his recent personal doubt, and undertakes to gird his loins appropriately.

Arrow 5-> 7

As Nicholson prepares his battle plan (phase five), he focuses on how Cruise will address him in court (phase seven), and determines that cool mastery is the appropriate cloak to wear.

Abstraction: Fate anticipates attack by hero, and selects the most favorable defensive position.

Arrow 7-> 1

Once court opens (phase seven), past is prolog. Preparation was essential, but prosecution of the case is an entire new sub-drama, whose outcome cannot be guaranteed. The two adversaries must in some sense RETURN TO PHASE ONE, and play out the story again from the beginning for real - for the jury. Judgements are sharpened by the preparation, but it is wits and adaptability that will determine the outcome in the final rounds.

Abstraction: Adversaries, armed and prepared, enter into the final-confrontation sub-drama. Together they re-improvise their dramatic interactions from the beginning, only this time in direct face-to-face combat.

Arrow 8-> 5

As Cruise presses his attack on Nicholson (phase eight), Nicholson is limited by the aloof-posture strategy he adopted earlier (phase five). Cruise ultimately defeats Nicholson by hammering on that inflexibility until it cracks and, so to speak, the castle is breached.

Abstraction: Fate/Antagonist is ultimately limited by the defenses he laid down early in response to his anticipation of hero's strategy. Hero's key to success is to identify fate's strategic limitations, and to then improvise an opportunistic

final assault. (One might note that great generals are characterized by their flair for breaking all the rules when responding to specific adversarial conditions).

Variations on a theme - plot twists around phase two doubt
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When one reviews various other films from the perspective of the dramatic story diagram, one finds that the archetypal structure has many interesting variations. Consider for a moment the Hollywood classics "Casablanca" and "To Have and Have Not". A special quality of these films arises from the fact that Bogart's internal resolution is delayed until near the end of the film - the early phases (one and two) are in slow motion, so to speak, while the subsequent phases are in fast-forward. The audience is kept in moral limbo for most of the film, waiting for Bogart (whom they know is the star/hero) to take a stand. When he finally does - and the camera goes tight on his face to capture a suddenly hardened expression (the phase 3 decision to fight) - the release of tension is palpable and the rest of the film becomes a rushed climactic chase.

In the case of "Casablanca", we are seeing in allegory the US involvement in WW II - which was characterized by a prolonged crisis of decision, a late entry into the drama, and the eventual playing of an historically heroic role. An allegorical story line was developed by the writer, quite artfully, to echo the tempo and symbols (overseas Yanks, Nazis, collaborators, partisans, nationalism) of the referent real-world events. In "To Have and Have Not", on the other hand, we simply see a mechanical re-exploitation of a dramatic technique that proved itself to be a crowd pleaser in the first film.

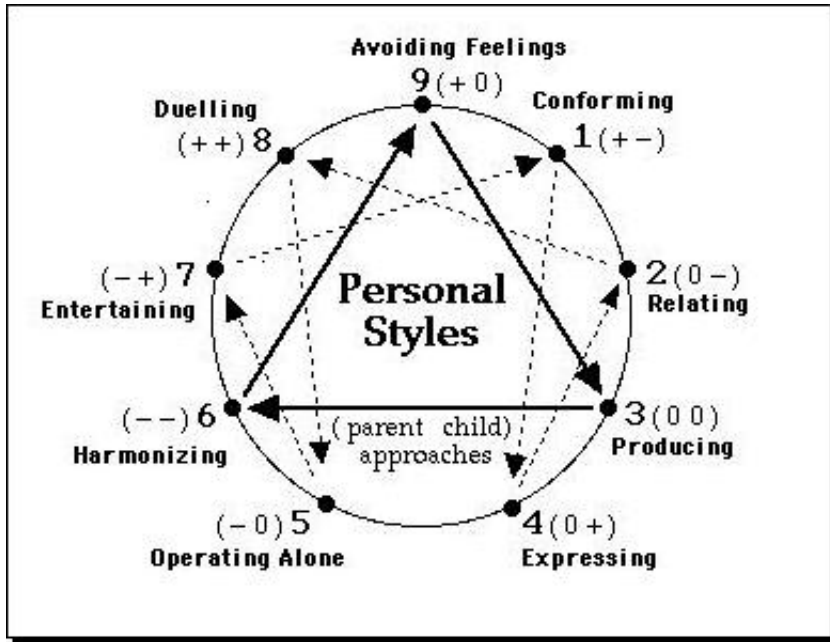
Returning to "A Few Good Men", allow me to bring in a minor sub-plot that shows another variation on this theme. Nicholson had a junior officer who had decided to become a whistleblower - to testify against his boss and clinch Cruise's case. At the eleventh hour, the would-be witness donned his dress Marine uniform and shot himself. This hapless officer's sub-drama exemplifies yet another twist on the phase-two internal-decision episode: in this case the internal conflict (between honor as a citizen and honor as a Marine) was so great that a choice simply couldn't be made, and suicide seemed to be the only possible resolution.

Using different enneagram applications together:
multi-dimensional insights
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Consider that a hero in a dramatic encounter with fate, can simultaneously be viewed as being the pursuer of a creative endeavor - an endeavor whose goal is the overcoming of fate/antagonist. This means that at each phase of the process, we can get a stereo (two-dimensional) perspective by looking at both models together, and interpreting the protagonist's situation from both perspectives. For example, in phase one, the hero is being "drawn into the drama", while the pursuer is "formulating his goal". Each of these interpretations sheds light on the other: the hero is also setting a goal, as he contemplates his response to fate, and the pursuer is also having his attention pulled into the endeavor, as he struggles to formulate his goal. The two spotlights illuminate one another's shadows.

We can even triangulate our phase-one position in three-dimensions by bringing in the personality enneagram. This spotlight shows us that the appropriate mindset for phase one activities is fixation one - "reformer/pursuer-of-rightness". Recall that Cruise's phase-one

activity was looking into the actual justice of the case - what was the right interpretation of the evidence. Similarly, phase one of an endeavor (goal setting) is the time when rightness of an endeavor should be called into question - after that the momentum of the project itself takes over. Using our spotlights in the reverse direction - looking at the one fixation - we can see that "goal setting" plays a central role in the one's continual "striving for improvement", and that "entering into drama" may well characterize the one's frequent experience of "subordinating themselves to an abstraction" (Riso's characterization).



Similar cross-application observations shed light on each of the enneagram positions.

Phase five: endeavor enlightens drama:

 When a hero prepares for battle, he should use his active imagination to anticipate all possible problems fate might pose.

Phase three: processes enlighten personality:

 A type-three individual runs his life efficiently because of his expertise in making choices about the struggles he chooses to engage in, and the endeavors he chooses to undertake. He develops his choice-making skill into an automatic and dispassionate process - involving a minimum (0,0) of imagination, reason, or drama. A three makes decisions quickly and efficiently, with little fuss or fanfare - by focusing on the most critical question: "Is this *particular* challenge appropriate for *me* to undertake at *this* time?"

All processes illuminated by personality:

 A person's success in carrying through a struggle, or in pursuing any endeavor, is greatly enhanced if the person has the flexibility to "switch hats" - to become each personality fixation in turn, as each phase of the process is carried out. Even a "shy academic five", so to speak, must learn to become a "bold combative eight" when defending his paper's thesis at a conference ("presentation" being phase eight of the "paper-writing" endeavor).

All processes enlightening personality transformation:

As you participate in the many processes and struggles of life - many of which turn out to follow the cycle of the enneagram - you are challenged repeatedly to develop the personal flexibility required to perform competently the various phases of those experiences. Thus, if you are mindful, everyday life offers you countless courses in systematic personality transformation - you are encouraged to consciously practice each fixation's behavior and attitudes at the appropriate time, and thus, eventually, to transcend your childhood fixation on a primary adaptive strategy. "Enneagram-consciousness", one might express in Buddhist terminology, can illuminate the "fourth way" to personal liberation: the way of the householder, the path of everyday life.

An appeal to the enneagram research community

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Consider for a moment how very much was learned from this exercise. I've never written a play or story, and have never studied dramatic structure (other than the one brief course), and yet from what the enneagram has revealed, I'm sure I could write a script-writing manual that explained dramatic imperatives with exemplary clarity and in a way that could be readily applied by beginners. The "dramatic story" diagram, posted by a writer's desk, would provide handy reference to the entire dramatic formula in all its richness.

I have found two-force analysis to be a powerful tool in helping develop and understand enneagram applications. It precisely and straightforwardly factors an application domain, revealing the underlying enneagrammatic structure. Even when an enneagram application has been previously worked out (as with personality), two-force analysis sheds light on the underlying mechanisms which generate the observed systemic results. Physics and the Enneagram, using these tools, presented for the first time, I believe, a psychologically-grounded theory as to why there are exactly nine fixations and why each has the specific characteristics that have been empirically observed.

I appeal to the enneagram research community to give some collective attention to two-force analysis. If this methodology can be validated by others, it could represent a major community breakthrough in understanding how the enneagram functions, and in understanding how it can be readily applied to a very wide class of systems. Gurdjieff and others have claimed that the enneagram applies to all phenomenon - which is perhaps an exaggeration - but the small number of applications which have been published to date certainly do not reflect the full potential of the paradigm.