

The Regret Story and the Tempted Story

ever succeed one another. Should Tempted have been listed first? In some forgotten era in each individual life no doubt it once did, but today's temptation draws on the experience of having been singed by guilt to keep impulse and desire at bay. Wish and fear polarities confront one another. When regret empowers the fears, wish must rise to the occasion. When wish comes through, the fear alarm sounds, and memories of regret return, shoring up the fear. So the temptation power struggle continues. Thus it is clear how guilt raises the stakes, establishing control, but when desire triumphs, the regret stockpile gets refueled, for desire is not content to remain perpetually frustrated. Note how **Approach-Avoidance** operates between adjacent story positions. As if that were not enough, 'Approach-Avoidance' also operates from **within** almost all the story positions.

Story 3. Tempted=Take!

Affects: anguish, distress, anxiety

The King James version of the Bible speaks the archaic form of Genesis 3, faithfully following the Hebrew text. Modern translations remove the sting.

Now the serpent was more subtil than any beast of the field, which the Lord God had made. And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden? And the woman said unto the serpent, We may eat of the fruit of any tree of the garden: But of the fruit of the tree in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die. And the serpent said to the woman. Ye shall not surely die. For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes will be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.

And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband, and he did eat. And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew they were naked, and they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons.

And they heard the voice of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day: and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God and amongst the trees of the garden. And the Lord God called unto Adam, Where art thou?

And Adam said, I heard thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked and I hid myself. And he said, Who told thee that thou wast naked? Hast thou eaten of the tree whereof I commanded thee thou shouldst not eat? And the man said, the woman thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree and I did eat.

And the Lord God said unto the woman, What is this that thou hast done? And the woman said, the serpent beguiled me and I did eat.... Unto the woman he said, I will greatly multiply thy sorrow, in sorrow ye shall bring forth children....And unto Adam he said, cursed is the ground for thy sake... In the sweat of thy brow shall thou eat bread, till thou return to the ground for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art and unto dust thou shalt return....Wherefor the Lord God sent him from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from which he was taken. So he drove out the man.

Thus the Bible story of Genesis 3 sets forth the major elements,

- a) A state of interdependence between male and female is a given. When intact, shame is inoperative.
- b) A condition of abundance prevails where there is sharing.
- c) But there are boundary situations, requiring self-limitation over time, for nurturers do not supervise us constantly.
- d) We are inclined to test the limits, and fall an easy prey to those who'd encourage us to do just that, for imagination triumphs over will.
- e) Disobedience of the rules leads to confrontation and consequences which cannot be reversed. There can be no return to innocence. That loss is the price of knowledge. From an ancient point-of-view, when one knows the difference between *good and evil* one knows everything (that is, we learn to distinguish between better and worse)
- f) So we graduate to adult expectations and responsibilities. And is this not as it should be?
- g) Our Nurturer knew it all along, and prepared us to care properly for those who would come after us.

In 'mounting the ladder of abstraction' I've pointed out the lessons of universal truth there. Let us hope this shows there is nothing reprehensible about being tempted. It is an essential ingredient of the human condition without which we couldn't learn nearly so well. Yielding to temptation has consequences which become increasingly predictable in the light of collective experience. The rules given save us from the costly hardship which comes with starting from scratch.

Temptation stories tend to follow chronological order.

- 1) Life before the challenge,
- 2) Desire makes its claim upon us,
- 3) We fear retribution.
- 4) Often with encouragement, we act upon our desire,

5) We anticipate and try to cope with consequences.

6) How this episode ends.

The whole sequence turns upon the inner balance of our desire and our fear, determining whether we resist or yield to the temptation. This is *the paradigm for approach-avoidance scripting*, making it ubiquitous among all the other stories. We face the same situation, whether we couch the story in the abstract form above or in the traditional concrete form. Religious persons have cited Genesis 3 as showing the history of sin in every human heart. Even though we have a talking animal as do most children's stories, the serpent has been presented as one who puts the soul in jeopardy, so children come to believe that a great contest between the satanic and the divine is being waged in every decision. Unless they feel the support of a benevolent Presence's this becomes a grievous burden for little ones to bear. Too often religious authorities fail to take this into account, with the result that guilt grows exponentially, of which every therapist may bear witness. Dare we stand by while the powerful continue to abuse the powerless in the name of discipline?

Voice Modes:

Here are three voices within the tempted plot:

1. Passive protagonists say, I've been led astray. I see it all now.

2. In the spirit of misery loves company, the passive becomes active, as if to say *I'll lead you astray. I'll get you into trouble.* Iago in *Othello* and the hero's 'friend' in *Carousel* are examples of this attitude. Directors move us toward reflexive appraisal: *I've played with fire and gotten burned.*

3. On the Reflexive level: When one resists temptation, conscience approves. The story of the testing of Jesus in one New Testament version ends with *The angels came and ministered unto him.* Roy Schafer says that *The Loving and Beloved Superego* rewards the one who obeys the rules, functioning like loving persons from our childhood. Conscience has been given a bad name by those who treat neurotics. It is good to be reminded of its positive value.

Approach-Avoidance Script for Story 3

WISH: I want it. I'll take it.

FEAR: Internalized parent-figures turn their backs on me.

DELAYED DECISION: I'll relish fantasy but forego action.

GAIN: I sneak in some satisfaction without suffering.

TEMPTED or Tested. The seduced role, or the role of the weak one belong here. A common psychodrama sequence includes enacting the situation of desire, representing fears, and exploring options. Ready examples may be found in *Garden of Eden. Faust. Our Lady's Child. Pinocchio. Grand Inquisitor. Job. Baby Snooks, and Basic Instinct.*

The antagonist is the **tempter**. The one acted upon, as **the tempted**, is the protagonist. This can be interpersonal and external, but the terms in which we usually think of it, it is intrapsychic. Some persons interpret both the Garden of Eden story and Jesus' temptations in the wilderness in precisely that way. We enact the inner struggle through external staging. In reality the tempter is the protagonist himself. Today it is the mentally ill who are more likely to attribute temptation to supernatural causes. Persons who say, *The devil made me do it*, still hold themselves accountable (as they should) for letting the devil get away with it. Many more protagonists imagine God tracking and influencing the outcome. If the protagonist yields to temptation, the felt presence of the Deity reinforces the sense of being judged and condemned. If on a spiritual quest, we may see God as threshold guardian or as main contender in the supreme ordeal. Except for the occasional inclusion of supernatural powers, this story resembles No. 2 above, and may be dealt with as in No. 1 above. We represent God and the devil with auxiliaries. Protagonists don't see a structural complication here.

At some point the observer of the protagonist's misbehavior says, *Enough already. I forgive you.* When protagonists resist this, we reverse them into the role of the antagonist. In that role protagonists are freer to look at themselves from another, more generous, perspective. The director reverses them back to themselves, so they can hear from the auxiliary how mercy has mitigated judgment. The protagonist makes a new start, but he remembers what he's gone through, even when he believes his evil deeds are no longer remembered against him. Notice how these three stories mutually reinforce one another. Review the options of the voices chart here:

Table 6, Voices of the 24 story system

Active= x /	Passive= /x	+reflexive=x/x	-reflexive=x\x
1. I free you	You free me	I free myself	I dont need it
2. I make you feel guilty	My situation produces guilt	I'm responsible for my guilt	My guilt doesn't matter
3. (tempt) I'll lead you astray	I'll follow you anywhere	My eyes were wide open	It's not my fault
4. (own) I seek feedback on me	I'm shocked at what I've seen	This is me. I can accept it.	No way! This is not me
5.(confused) I just don't know	You stress me I'm deceived.	The role I play is me. Recover.	The role is not me. I languish
6. (appeal) I ask for help	Yours is the final word	I'll help myself if I need to	I can't help myself at all
7. (waste) I take the easy way	I can't resist temptation	Not like this. I fight slippage.	It's all there is for me.
8. (hooked) Will this work again	Now I've seen the magic work	I'm in recovery from this trap	I can quit any-time I want to
9. (betrayed) I excite you too	Not bad to take this for now	I can accept this no longer	What's the harm?
10 (excluded) I leave you alone	I'm bereft, deserted	I face pain and endure it	Nothing fills the void in me
11 (afflict) I harm, oppress	I'm a victim of disaster	I wont let this destroy me	Somehow I deserve this
12. (rival) I'll pass you by	I'm an also ran I take leftovers	I'll give it my best shot	Dont look to me to do anything
13. (punish) I show my anger	I'm the target of your anger	Anger at me OK I seek options	I hate myself. I'm suicidal
14. (control) I'm always in charge	I cooperate or I'm on the street	Self in control Half way there.	No room for both of us
15. (sacrifice) Do without, let go	Having less, it doesn't matter	I'll pay the price to achieve good	seize at any cost to you or me
16. (hunt) quest, capture, to court	Run and hide, let me alone	Ready to know me. Move ahead	Delight in my dark side.
17. (risk) plunge into the untried	I follow you for I can trust you	Draw line if I cant afford loss	Take chances with a winner
18. (ascent) I'm a doer, initiate	I join power. It empowers me.	Extend myself, earn what I get	Empire builder, bend the rules.
19. (save) I'll get you going again	You showed how I follow through	Survive with me. I do as I say.	Save self first, then followers
20. (nurture) care for, protect	You're for me. Value guidance	Conserve, create for everyone	Market my hoard self serve limits
21.(healed) seek dramatic change	Transformed, I come alive.	Trust process, it serves me too	It's my destiny to do this
22. (join) I like your company	Welcomed. We belong together	To be with you I strive for us	What I deserve. Do you?
23. (love) Persist in love with you.	love gives me hope. Hold on.	Take initiative to sustain relations	Fair and right is all that's needed
24(praise) honor celebrate good	Thankful we've gained so much	Value each other Good to be me	I deserve it all. Do you also?