

Selection on Scene Setting from the DISCOVER YOUR STORY book in process.

### Prologue

I've come to recognize the crucial difference between story and plot. Given that, I now understand the resistance to the 28 plots. Even though I tried to make my usage clear, the common literary understanding of the difference prevented persons who otherwise may have been interested to look no further, because specific plots seem unspontaneous, creating burdens for the director and perhaps unconsciously leading one to pigeon hole a protagonist presentation into this category or that.

I developed the categories, not for the protagonist, but for the director. And the more misleading mistake was using the word plot. The 28 plots were intended as specific examples, not as recommendations for a protagonist to follow. The director must personalize the system in order to own it.

We offer here only five categories of stories, keyed to manifest affect. Four of these are immediately familiar. The fifth, MOBILIZED, which I invented, put the emphasis on energy, the readiness to make a move, but without prejudging the director that may take. Indeed, in my experience, protagonists have moved beyond blaming and lethargy, and are ready to commit themselves to a direction, once they have clarified that this is where they want to go. They may have already advanced that far, but still founder, and it is the task of the director to aid in the reexamining of their options, and disposing of the intrapsychic processes which continue to get in the way of their executing the program they've chosen. Often this requires returning to stories 1, 2 and 3 in order to reach story 4. See the chart characterizing the 24 stories. What is required is a careful exploration of the source of anxiety and fear and facing up to the internal danger. Affects are, after all, danger signals. Observers do not recognize immediately what all the fuss is about.

When they do, given the first half of the psychodrama, then they are better able, through surplus reality, to join in and support the protagonist in blazing a new trail, thereby paving the way to taking the risk which leads to the resolution of the approach-avoidance dilemma.

Professionals are familiar with Freud's dream analysis, whereby he distinguishes between the manifest dream and the latent dream. The manifest dream is the dream as it has been remembered, consisting of fleeting episodes. The latent dream is the unconscious meaning, according to Freud. The distinction has been with us at least since the Biblical story of Joseph, where he took the Pharaoh's manifest dream and interpreted it as predictive of the future.

We have been too much in a hurry to attach our meaning to the protagonist's presentation. Like the manifest dream, it involves a sequence, which answers the context questions of what, when, where, who, and how? but we do well to hold back till the information is in, to come up with the WHY.

If we ask that question too soon, we put the protagonist into his head and we prejudice the outcome. Now the protagonist may regard the story as if it were a plot. He sees causal connections from one episode to the next. We admit an overarching theme may dictate the selection of episodes, but themes do not normally specify causal explanations.

The problem is that the protagonist's plot usually serves defensive purposes. He sees others, individually or collectively, bad luck, bad health, or the devil as the obstacles, but fails to address the obstacle within himself. The goal is to get him to take responsibility for his own decision making and behavior. On the other hand, some have not accepted their own limitations and take more responsibility than is realistically possible. This is where the group comes in to provide a more realistic perspective.

We help the protagonist go beyond the blame game, to accepting the situation as one's own problem and opportunity. The world may have changed while he stood still, or he may have retreated into his own fantasy world. Inasmuch as this is not shared by his environment, his relationships suffer. Others will not let him control them. They won't let him in.

Or if they do, the healthy part of themselves protests, leading to conflict, and hopefully separation, till someone grows up. Learning to respect boundaries is essential, but this can be done only when I accept and know who I am. Identity opens the door to intimacy. Full maturation requires this. Otherwise we flounder, work under a handicap, which impairs our ability to relate with others and find our place in the common world.

The psychodrama director has reached this level, and as a spontaneous human being, develops spontaneity in others, giving the protagonist's story as happy an ending as may be realistically possible. This includes developing a plot to serve as a guide for the foreseeable future.

What good is the 24 story system? Giving heed to the protagonist's affect presentation, he finds himself within the ballpark of only a few sample stories. This suggests which questions may lead somewhere, as he rules out this and that, and having come upon the more likely fit, he **ABSOLUTELY DOES NOT SHOEHORN** the protagonist into it. Rather he finds it a useful guide sorting out similarities and differences from the close pattern, that the protagonist's identity may stand out in bold relief.

As the director mirrors back to the protagonist his perception, and the protagonist sees himself, together they can review options which the situation requires, and the protagonist makes a choice. Director and protagonist explore the viability of the chosen option, and as a conclusion anticipate the successful resolution to the protagonist's predicament, worth trying out the individual's plot in life beyond stage, group and theater.