

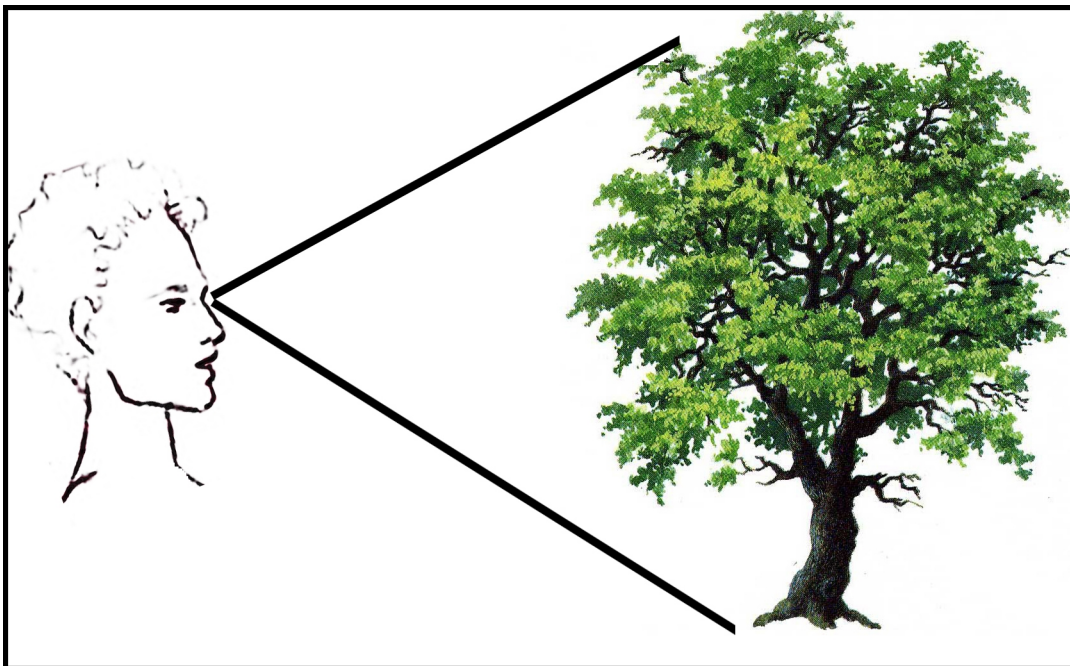
Self Locus

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Introduction: Out There and in Here

The concept of Self Locus was first introduced by Arnold Trehub (1991, 2006) in his study of visual perception. When we look at a tree, we look at it from our own point of view. It's very simple. But we will see how this basic geometric model – the world is **out there**, I am **in here** – can lead us into complex reflections regarding *who we are and our position in the world*.

Self Locus: A Point of View, "Out there and in here"



Infractions

When people talk to each other, the Self Locus of the other is often **not respected**. And this creates problems. Here are some frequent examples.

“But you've been acting so stupid I don't know what's got in to you.” (said in the couple) “You know that your room shouldn't be kept in such a mess! Really, you don't know anything!” (parent to adolescent) “Sometimes I wonder what I've done to have such ungrateful children.” (older parent to adult daughter) “You should stop seeing Larry. He's ruining your life!” (one friend to another)

Many people would find these phrases normal and acceptable. Other people, however, find “something oppressive” in these phrases. The reason is simple; they are impositions. In each case, **a person is expressing his point of view as if this must also be the case for the other.** The difference between Self and Other is being obliterated. (See Laing, **The Self and Other**) But this imposition can be dismantled very easily. We need only ask ourselves, “From whose point of view is this true?” (See Karl Mannheim, **Ideology and Utopia**; also Liss, "Yiddish Humour").

Filtering the Message: "This is coming from *his* Self Locus, and not from *mine*."

Therefore, in ordinary conversation, the Self Locus of each person is often not recognized and respected. (See Appendix I on the use of the term, “egocentric,” as a disqualification of Self.) It is as if “the truth” is somewhere out there and the person who talks is claiming, “What I am saying is right!” When we hear such things, we can easily feel misunderstood and disoriented; but clarity undoes the confusion in a brief moment. **“That is *his* (or *her*) idea, but it's not *mine*.”**

When we have different points of view, it is natural to feel, “I'd like to show that I am right.” The other person's position and outlook, different from our own, may get under our skin; but we can bear the discomfort and develop an inner space in which the other is **permitted** to have his position, which is different from our own, while we need **not** take this point of view as an inner truth for oneself. Thus, with psychological and cultural maturity, we learn to tolerate differences of opinion without squelching the other.

Going further, we can develop an inner map in which we understand how will it be almost inevitable that there would be a clash of opinions. (See Liss, “The Deep Differences Between Self and Other.”) This inner map can give us a larger inner space within our stream of consciousness in order to tolerate our differences from others. The inner thought may be, **“Of course he would think in this way, but that does not mean in any way that I have to accept this!”** What situations are we talking about? We can see it in everyday life: the parent’s concern about the adolescent who must study, the expectation of older parents to receive more contact from their adult children, the judgment of one friend toward another friend’s relationships. Sometimes, our minds can quickly evaluate the Self-Other difference, even during the heat of a dispute, and conclude, “This person has just said, and will continue to say, things that are **very different**, and sometimes even the **opposite**, of what is true for me, and this is happening right now!”

Therefore, the clarity of Self Locus – “That person is speaking from *his* Self Locus, but I must live from *my own* Self Locus” – is a powerful tool to keep us in equilibrium and to allow us to remain oriented to our own goals.

Thoughts that Need Not be Expressed

An objection is that the other will not understand that he is offering a truth from his own point of view, even though this truth is not valid from our own position. But Self Locus awareness easily removes us from this quandary. “When I understand *his* Self Locus, which means the other person’s attitudes, experiences, learning, evaluation of the world, family history, etc., it becomes immediately clear that the other person is not **ready** to be disillusioned or disappointed by hearing the truth of my own Self Locus truth.” So we can enlarge our inner space: “These are thoughts that I can have for myself, but I need not tell the other.”

I'm Understanding Better My Refusal

In the article, “The Deep Differences Between Self and Other,” an analysis was made to highlight that our understanding of Self and Other differences must include a number of factors: Our emotional proclivity toward either sympathetic or parasympathetic reactions, our differences in family experience, our differences in learning when we each left our family of origin, and our general mode of treating Self Locus differences from person to person. For example, it is frequently the case that parents do not have this clarity regarding “differences of point of view” and do not understand that such differences must be respected. But how could they have learned otherwise? Their culture of “*one truth is right for everyone*” also **dominates the world culture** and the mass media; from this perspective, our parents are in the same position as the majority of mankind. Therefore we can better understand their automatic tendency to impose their point of view on other people. **But such understanding in no sense means to submit, internally, to their incorrect evaluation and disrespectful attitude.** It means only to avoid upsetting them and pitting ourselves against them with ceaseless arguments that never finish with a satisfactory conclusion.

In fact, to make this jump in consciousness in order to understand the other from his own point of view, his own Self Locus, represents a new state of mind which should occupy our thoughts for only a moment. Longer than that and we we can feel ourselves drowned by the other's reality. This means that it is best, after understanding the other, to return to one's own Self Locus with more clarity and determination than ever. “Of course they will think like that! And that's even more reason than ever to maintain my own inner orientation and follow my own inner decision.”

A Natural Perplexity for Undoing the Knot

There is a delicate question that arises at this point. “If my parents (or others) are used to my arguing with them over their opinions about me, and it’s now clear to me that this is useless, because I know for myself what is right for me -- and that is very different and sometimes the opposite of what they say – and I know as well that there is really nothing to say to them about this because they are in no way **ready** to see another person’s Self Locus different from their own, it’s not in their culture -- then how in the world am I going to talk to them the next time we bring up an issue that typically starts us fighting?”

This article cannot answer that question. Sometimes to just try and withdraw from a useless battle will enrage the other still more because of our “distance,” or for however our withdrawal is interpreted. Therefore Self Locus theory does not say how we can remove ourselves from another person’s judgments, but it shows as clear as the light of day that the other is speaking from a position which is not compatible with our own. Furthermore, even if **we do not and cannot know** what we can say to the other in a real encounter during dyadic consciousness, we can **certainly** know what we can think to ourselves when alone, that is, during monadic consciousness. For many of us, this is the most important point! **Uncertainty** can create ruminations when we are alone; the brain searches **certainly** to finish with "closure". But it is not necessary to be victimized by this need of the brain. It is possible to create "closure" or "completion", even during monadic consciousness, by being trained to think, each time we are ruminating on a conflict with another person, “Of course this person will speak from his own Self Locus and not agree with me!” Therefore we can conclude, "It is **certain** that I will be **uncertain** regarding how this person will respond to me in the future". (To understand the **necessary uncertainty** that comes from Self-Other “interaction,” and the problem that this creates for the brain, see the article, Liss, “Two Basic Brain processes: Feedforward Thinking and Calibration with the Other.”)

The Challenge Self Locus Consciousness and New Habits

The article, “Habits,” proposes an idea that could make us impatient with ourselves if our mind gets too caught up by **ruminating on our disappointed expectations with others**. In other words, if our inner world of monadic consciousness is excessively filled up with the echoes of these polemic exchanges, then we have lost a basic thread, namely, “What am I doing for myself, and what can I do better?” We have lost our Self Locus. The article, “Habits,” says that **we will need to have a great deal of our mental energy and attention available so that we can focus on creating a new habit**, and all this excessive concern about “me and the other” only disperses our attention from the more important task at hand. A new inner message is necessary in order to help us get on with the job and stop procrastinating with obsessions regarding inevitable Self-Other incompatibilities that no arguments will change.

The Reality of Self - Other Conflict

Self Locus is a key of analysis for better understanding what is happening in the world. As we look at the injustices, exploitations, international tensions leading to war, increasing competition over the availability of primary resources, and we perceive the use of dogmatic ideologies regarding “saving democracy,” on one side, or “saving the honor of our religion,” on the other side, we can easily understand these unfortunate events. Each person and each nation, each government, each special interest group, each ethnic group, and so on, has developed a Self Locus position that says, “I am right! The others are wrong, misled, stupid, ignorant, uncivilized, criminal, barbarian, pagan, dangerous, and violent!” Thus a limited Self Locus consciousness too often negates the right of others to have their own Self Locus, and so history is filled with “justified” war and invasions of foreign lands. (A more complete analysis declares that the *elite* profit from the war, in terms of maintaining their power and increasing their economic and political dominance, but the *people* fall into the trap of national, tribal or religious *us-them* thinking.)

In other words, Self Locus awareness can increase our appreciation of the rights and dignity of all people. Everyone is pulling ahead from his own point of view. Even if some people are in error by not respecting the Self-Other differences in the world, their job is, nevertheless, to carry forward their own tasks of survival, and so their ideology represents their means to give themselves vision and group unity. We can find this offensive. "I don't like it, it brings destruction," can be our own personal evaluation. "I don't want guns, tanks and bombs falling!" **But a Self Locus analysis concludes with reality.** "This is what's happening, and they think they are right, whether I like it or not!"

"In their times things were different." "That world is gone!"

Self Locus theory is a means of personal empowerment. Michael Gorbichov said, "Each person must carry his own suitcase." It is an individualist perspective that perhaps was not necessary during the generation of our parents, and certainly that of our grandparents, when the family organization was usually connected to an economic situation requiring a **collective response**: the family farm, the family store, the family house that sisters and brothers and aunts and cousins could live in together. That world is gone! Whether the stress is the economic crisis and difficulty in finding a job, or seeking out and maintaining friendships when everybody is living at a distance and stressed out from work, and so too exhausted to see their companions, or the need to understand Internet opportunities of knowledge and contact, which is different from the previous television era of our parents, or the need to establish time for physical exercise, and for that, where to go? run in the traffic? -- **all of these very real conditions of modern life mean that we must wake up and make correct initiatives.** Therefore we can rightfully become impatient with old habits, understanding that this language of the past comes from a disappearing reality, and knowing, finally, that to appreciate Self Locus does not come like a flash of lightening from some omnipotent God, but comes from studying, learning, reflecting and hard inner work.

Appendix I: Self Locus replaces the term, “egocentric.” The term, if we take the word apart, “egocentric,” which has dominated us, creates many misunderstandings. It means that our mental focus is “centered” on the “ego”. This is quite different from Self Locus consciousness, which means our attention originates from our Self but is oriented toward the outer world. In addition, the term, “egocentric” is connected to “narcissism,” which means an exaggeration of consciousness oriented toward the Self. This is a negative state, especially from an outsider’s point of view, and people can criticize the tendency as irritating and exasperating. Therefore, “egocentric” is a disabling term, blocking empowerment, and pulls the carpet out from under our feet at the very moment that we need to “move ahead” from our Self Locus in order to resolve our problems with new initiatives that other might not agree with. To sum it up, the attribution, “egocentric,” is a trap that must be refused.

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