

## **The New Johari Window III: Interpersonal Relationships and the Locus of Control**

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Many years ago, Sigmund Freud discovered (or did he invent?) the Ego. Freud had already discovered that the human psyche profoundly influences how we view our world – and in particular our relationships with other people. However, Dr. Freud was not satisfied with just examining intrapsychic processes. He also wanted to analyze the relationship between internal and external events. While we are growing up, Freud proposed, we must confront the fact that the external world doesn't always meet our immediate needs. The wise Viennese doctor suggested that we require some mechanism (which he called the "Ego") to balance off intrapsychic impulses and needs with the realities of life in a demanding and restrictive society (and Vienna society was certainly demanding and restrictive). In recent years, we have come to see that the Ego which each of us has formed often comes with a bias. For some of us, this bias is toward the intra-psychic demands and potentials of life. For others, the external demands and potentials hold great sway. In the former case, we often assume an *internal locus of control*, while in the latter case we assume an *external locus of control*.

What exactly do these two terms mean? In brief, an internal locus of control is based on a cluster of assumptions (often untested) that lead us to believe that we are capable of strongly influencing or even controlling our own behavior and the impact which our behavior has on the world in which we live. We are ultimately responsible for the impact of our decisions and our actions in the world. By contrast, an external locus of control is based on a cluster of assumptions (often unacknowledged or unconscious) that suggests our thoughts, feelings and actions are strongly influenced – perhaps even dictated – by external forces over which we have little or no control. We can not be held wholly responsible for our decisions and actions, nor for the consequences of these decisions and actions, for we are the recipients (benefactors)

or victims (at least in part) of fate. This external fateful force may be identified as the vicissitudes of life or as God's will. It can be identified, instead, (through use of social-psychological terms) as a powerful stimulus in our environment, a powerful societal force, or an all-determining shift in the economic, political or cultural reality of life. Freud or his sometime colleague, Carl Jung, would remind us that we are influenced or controlled by the physiologically based (Freud) or collective (Jung) thoughts, feelings and images that seem to operate like alien, occupying forces within our personal psyches.

### **Internal Locus of Control**

I will use a rather simplistic (and perhaps nautically naïve) metaphor to distinguish an internal locus from an external locus. When an internal locus is assumed, we declare that we are captains of our ship. Furthermore, we declare that we are often (if not always) the motor that propels our ship through the water. We are not sailboats that depend on the fickle influence of the wind, nor are we whitewater kayaks that must cooperate with the powerful forces of turbulent water. As captains and ship's motors we power ahead, oblivious to our environment. We expect external forces to capitulate to our will (captain of the ship) and energy (motor of the ship). This compelling, forceful and ultimately optimistic orientation is uniquely American. It rests firmly on the ideology of pragmatism and activism: "All right! What can we do about it! Let's roll up our sleeves and get started!" It also resides firmly on the democratic (and individualist) assumption of free will and personal freedom. Emphasis is always being placed on the right of all citizens to exert an influence over – even determine – the course of their personal lives and the path being taken by their society.

We find that the assumption of internal locus of control resides in many different ideological camps. At one extreme, we find entrepreneurial capitalists who proclaim an internal locus through their emphasis on free markets, dog-eat-dog competition and individual achievement. Several recent studies suggest that corporate executives who are highly successful will usually hold an internal focus: they attribute much greater importance to their own role in achieving success than seems warranted.<sup>i</sup> This bias is widely evident in books written by highly visible

corporate tycoons who identify “the ten reasons,” “five keys” or “seven secrets” that have enabled them to make their company successful – usually ignoring fortuitous marketing conditions, favorable governmental rulings, or independent efforts made by their subordinates and predecessors.

At the other extreme, we find humanists and existentialists. They also are inclined toward an internal locus of control and focus on the isolated and courageous human beings who must acknowledge and live with the consequences of their individual actions and free will. An internal locus for these philosophers, novelists and psychologists translates into something much more profound than that offered by corporate tycoons. Humanists and existentialists honor the dignity and responsibility that accompany free will and relate this engagement of free will to the fundamental processes of thought. Rollo May (1969, pp. 204, 230), for instance, indicates that:

I have had the conviction for a number of years . . . that something more complex and significant is going on in human experience in the realm of will and decision that we have yet taken into our studies. . . . Cognition, or knowing and conation, or willing . . . go together. We could not have one without the other. . . . If I do not will something, I could never know it; and if I do not know something, I would never have any content for my willing. In this sense, it can be said directly that man makes his own meaning.

Humanists, such as Rollo May, see human beings as constructivists, who create their own meaning and purpose in life. In parallel fashion, they identify an internal locus of control as an opportunity (and challenge) to act in an ethical manner. We are architects of our own fate and soul. We can't assign blame to anyone else in the world – past or present. We stand convicted of our own actions and the consequences of our actions.

There are many critics of the internal locus of control, both within and outside American society. An all-consuming arrogance is often associated with the internal locus. It is evident not only in the indifference of many corporate executives to those who work for and with

them, but also in disdain for the environment that is evident among many Americans (and non-Americans). An internal locus of control requires that we have access to information from inside ourselves – especially with regard to personal values and life purposes. People who assume full responsibility for their actions need time for reflection. However, depending on our personal preferences and styles, we may not choose to take time for this reflection. People with an internal locus often are inclined to “power” ahead in an unreflective manner, assuming that they are in control. They run over other people, other species, and the natural world in which they live. Those of us with an internal locus are inclined to be defiant: we know we are right and force others in the world to come around to our point of view. It’s “man against nature” or “man over nature.” It’s “every man for himself.” Many of our global problems can be attributed in part to rampant individualism and an attendant assumption that we have the right to control or change anything in our world.

There is a second level of criticism regarding internal locus of control. It concerns the existential despair that can accompany individualism and the courage of autonomy and responsibility. Soren Kierkegaard (1980) describes this as sailing alone on a stormy sea, with many fathoms of dark and unknown water beneath us. We ultimately live in isolation from other people and from the assistance of an external benevolent force when we assume an internal locus of control. Kierkegaard was able to find an external, caring God in the midst of his existential analysis. Victor Frankel (1997) similarly found this external divine presence – in the midst of a grotesque, externally dominated experience of the World War II concentration camp. Many other proponents of existentialism can’t find this balancing presence of an external spiritual presence. They sink inevitably into despair or a nihilistic perspective on life that is pure internal locus, but also pure hell.

### **External Locus of Control**

There are other forces that propel our ship and we must contend with and interact with powerful, external forces that have something to say about our course of travel and our destination. We live on sailboats – not motorized boats. The winds, currents, tides and weather

have much to say about the direction and speed of our travel. Our ship has many co-captains. Many external forces move our ship. Someone or something else is pulling us [God/Fate]. We are like the ship coming into the harbor that is being pulled by a tugboat. The tugboat (and its captain) provides both the energy and the direction. Energy and direction are both derived from external sources.

There is a second option regarding the nature of external forces impacting on our ship. Someone else is coming on board our ship and steering it into the berth. This is the harbor captain (or the parent or mentor). We are dependent on someone else for direction, though we provide the energy. Thus, there is a mixture of internal and external locus of control. A third option concerns the setting in which someone or something else is offering information to us. This person or object operates like a lighthouse. It doesn't control us or even tell us what to do. It only provides information (that is hopefully accurate). We must decide what to do with this information. We might choose to ignore the information and crash on the rocks. That is our choice. It is up to us to discern and interpret the external information. This is an even more powerful and complex blending of internal and external locus of control. The external world is influencing us, but we are still in charge.

As in the case of an internal locus of control, there are multiple perspectives regarding external locus. One of these perspectives is offered by the behaviorists. From a thoroughly behavioral perspective, one would conclude that our actions are primarily determined by the settings in which we find ourselves and the events in which we participate.<sup>ii</sup> Reward systems (state) rather than enduring personality characteristics (trait) predict behavior. Variations among individuals in similar settings are minimal (error-variance). Show me what is being rewarded and I'll show you what people are going to do.

In his widely read book, *The Tipping Point*, Malcolm Gladwell (2002, p. 160) moves this statement further, by pointing out that many of us are vulnerable to the Fundamental Attribution Error that I mentioned above:

. . . a fancy way of saying that when it comes to interpreting other people's behavior, human beings invariably make the mistake of overestimating the importance of fundamental character traits and underestimating the importance of the situation and context. We will always reach for a "dispositional" explanation for events, as opposed to a contextual explanation.

While Gladwell's observations are well-taken, I would like to note that he fails to mention the other half of the Fundamental Attribution Error. The second half of the error concerns our tendency to attribute our own personal behavior not to character or disposition, but rather to context. I assume that I act like I do not because of some enduring personality trait, but because of the specific setting in which I am operating and specific role I am asked to play or have chosen to play. In other words, we are inclined to external locus of control when observing and analyzing our own behavior and to internal locus of control when observing and analyzing the behavior of other people.

Back to the external locus of control. Even when we are captains of our own ship, we need other people to help us operate the vessel – unless it is very small. Furthermore, if we choose to venture very far from port, we must be mindful of winds, tides, currents, changes in the weather and so forth. Only the very foolish mariner will proclaim his independence from the environment into which he is venturing. Unless we will never leave port or choose to remain very isolated and "small," we must be mindful of our external world – both human and nonhuman. From this vantage point, an external locus of control seems to be very appropriate.

Taken to the extreme, the external locus of control leaves us eternally vulnerable to the exigencies of the world in which we live. As people with an external locus of control, we hunger for information about the outside world. We are consummate readers of newspapers each day – or we look at our daily horoscope. Our ship often seems to lack a rudder or even a compass. The wind, tide or current carries us to an unknown destination. We have very little influence. We are cast adrift and, like Ishmael, are at best the fortunate survivors of great, often

tumultuous events (the Moby Dicks in our lives). We survive not because we are competent, but because we are fortunate. We get where we want to go not because we plan ahead of time, but because we seize on the opportunity to mount our sails when the wind happens to be blowing in the right direction.

Just as the internal locus of control is very American (a country that has never experienced a successful invasion from an external army), the external locus is prevalent in societies that have often experienced massive, traumatizing invasions – and this includes most non-American societies in our world. Repeated, intrusive life events leave one skeptical about the capacity to influence that which is occurring around us. There is an old saying that life is a bit like “sitting on the edge of the dock, trying to control the flight of the seagulls fluttering around us.” A colleague of mine, who comes from a country in Eastern Europe which was invaded eight times during the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, strongly aligns with this saying. He feels like he can control very little in his life. He can’t control the people or events who are fluttering (like seagulls) around his head.

My colleague finds it absurd to plan for the future. When I asked him (soon after the collapse of the Soviet Union) what he hoped his son would do when he grew up, my colleague said that he had “no idea” and no longer even had “hopes” for his son. He knew (or at least assumed) that these hopes would soon be shattered by massive world events over which he (and his son) have no control. Those of us who live in the United States gained a more intimate sense of this pessimism (or at least a passive perspective on life) after the September 11, 2001 attack on the World Trade Center. We glimpsed a reality which frightened us. We weren’t in control. We probably will never again, as a society, feel like we can control either our personal or collective destiny – or at least be certain of our personal and collective security.

The external locus of control, at one level, seems more “realistic” than the internal locus. It is very European and Asian – and is often pessimistic (or at least cautious). We are told to be reflective rather than rash, to observe before plunging in. Instead of declaring the usual

American imperative: “Don’t just stand there, do something” we are given the opposite instruction: “Don’t just do something, stand there!”<sup>iii</sup> We must understand the situation before plunging in and trying to change everything. The widespread European critique of the US invasion of Iraq exemplifies this perspective. An external locus, however, also evokes a troubling dynamic of “self-fulfillment.” When we are passive and wait for external events to direct us, then, sure enough, the outside world begins to have a profound impact on our lives. We accept a deterministic world view in which everything operates like a finely crafted Swiss Watch. We soon lose any sense of personal agency or personal responsibility.

John Calvin, the monumentally influential Swiss lawyer and theologian, saw the world as just such a finely crafted and divinely created Swiss watch. Like the American behaviorists, he looked primarily to external sources when examining and explaining human behavior. He didn’t look to the environment, however, as did the behaviorists. Rather, Calvin looked to a Protestant God. He believed that each human being was placed on the earth to act out some pre-destined drama. The Calvinist task was (and still is) to discover God’s plan. It would be arrogant, foolish and ultimately sacrilegious to design and enact our own individual plans.

We see comparable perspectives on the externally determined human destiny in many Eastern religions and philosophies. Contemporary businessmen in Taipei, Taiwan, for instance, venture from their office buildings at lunchtime to discover something about their fate and future (through the *I-Ching*). Mahatma Gandhi met with his enemy (and childhood friend) every afternoon during a nonviolent strike in India to ensure that each party to the conflict played out his predestined role in this great, pre-ordained historical drama (Erikson, 1993).

The external locus of control situates us on a much larger stage and provides us with assurance that we are not alone. Yet, ultimately, we are alone – and we must somehow stand outside the steam of history so that we can feel accountable and engage in the courageous act of seeking to improve the human condition. Despite precedence, dominant mindsets and the powerful societal, political and economic forces of our society, we must exert our free will and



do that which is unexpected, brave and transforming.

### **Internal and External Panes**

Given this brief description of these two fundamental perspectives on life, let's turn to the influence which these two perspectives have on interpersonal behavior and specifically the complex dynamics that operate in our New Johari Window.

#### **Internal (I) Panes**

##### **Quad 1-I: Presentational Self**

What I wish to convey to the world.

##### **Quad 2-I: Blocked Self**

What I choose not to receive from other people.

##### **Quad 3-I: Withheld Self**

What I purposefully don't share with other people.

##### **Quad 4-I: Unexplored Self**

What I have not wanted to explore or do not have time or occasion to explore in myself.

### **Internal Window Panes**

	<b>KNOWN TO OTHERS</b>	<b>UNKNOWN TO OTHERS</b>
<b>KNOWN TO SELF</b>	<b>QUADRANT ONE-I</b> <b>PRESENTATIONAL SELF</b>	<b>QUADRANT THREE-I</b> <b>WITHHELD SELF</b>
<b>UNKNOWN TO SELF</b>	<b>QUADRANT TWO-I</b> <b>BLOCKED SELF</b>	<b>QUADRANT FOUR-I</b> <b>UNEXPLORED SELF</b>

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**External (E) Panes**

**Quad 1-E: Inadvertent Self**

What I share (and know I share) with other people over which I have little or no control.

**Quad 2-E: Ignorant Self**

What I don't know about myself that other people do know and I don't know that they know.

**Quad 3-E: Obtuse Self**

That of which I am unaware that other people don't know about me.

**Quad 4-E: Discounted Self**

Aspects of myself that I don't know are a part of my self.

**External Window Panes**

	KNOWN TO OTHERS	UNKNOWN TO OTHERS
KNOWN TO SELF	QUADRANT ONE-E INADVERTENT SELF	QUADRANT THREE-E OBTUSE SELF
UNKNOWN TO SELF	QUADRANT TWO-E IGNORENT SELF	QUADRANT FOUR-E DISCOUNTED SELF

## Interaction between Internal and External Panes

The gap between internal and external panes is critical. When the gap is large we find three interrelated problems. First, the behavior of the person with the gap is likely to be *unpredictable*. Shifts in behavior can be quite dramatic, depending on the specific circumstances in which this person finds herself. She is governed at one moment by her own will and at another moment by someone else's will or by external exigencies. For example, a woman whom I have coached (I will call her Elizabeth) often exhibits nonverbal behavior of which she is aware, but which is discrepant with what she says, particularly with regard to her sense of self-confidence. In her words (Quad One-I), Elizabeth conveys a strong sense of self and presents very clear directions and offers readily understood timelines and criteria for successful completion of her subordinates' tasks.

Yet, in her nonverbal communication (particularly tone of voice and posture), Elizabeth conveys a quite different impression. Through her voice, Elizabeth seems to be apologizing for giving her subordinates any assignments. Furthermore, she sometimes fails to follow up to see if the assignments have been completed, thereby conveying, through her actions, that either she doesn't really care about the completion of these specific assignments, or she doesn't think she is "worthy" of asking her subordinates to complete specific tasks that she has asked them to do. Elizabeth has received ample feedback regarding her nonverbal communication and sporadic lack of follow-up (this is not Quad Two material).

That's why she has a coach. Yet, she feels like her nonverbal behavior is "out of her control" (Quad One-E) and that sometimes she can't assert herself with regard to follow up without coming across as a "demanding boss." Prior to our coaching sessions, the nonverbal communication remained for Elizabeth "out of her control." As a result of the coaching, she began to realize that she was not too demanding – rather she was unpredictable. This is what frustrated her subordinates. Elizabeth came to see that greater predictability regarding follow-up was critical to her effective leadership and that self-confidence resides not only in what one says, but also in what one does. This increase in compatibility between words (Quad One-I)

and actions (Quad One-E) helped Elizabeth to begin speaking in a manner that conveyed more confidence and self-assurance.

The gap between internal and external panes creates yet another problem. The gap often leads to *cognitive dissonance*. The person with the gap finds that his sense of self is filled with contradictions. The person he wants to be and has some control over is not very closely aligned with the person that he is as a result of external events and forces. This dissonance, in turn, encourages distortion in either his internal panes or his external panes. For example, I have consulted to a man (I will call him Daniel) who is quite careful about what he says to other people with whom he works (Quad 1-I). Yet, the people with whom Daniel works have given him feedback that they can “read him like an open book.” (Quad 1-E) They can predict how he will react in a specific situation, once they read his nonverbals. Daniel is faced with cognitive dissonance. He holds the self-image of someone who is able to “hold his cards close to his vest,” (Quad 3-I) yet apparently does not have a very good “poker face.” (Quad 1-E)

Given that Daniel is often negotiating with leaders from other organizations about purchases for his company, this discrepancy is a source of great concern. Sometimes, Daniel tends to over-estimate the power of his ignorant self (Quad 2-E), indicating that he is never able to hold a secret (Quad 1-E) and doesn’t even realize that he is giving everything away through his nonverbal communication (Quad 2-E). Daniel often concludes that he can’t be trusted with information about his company’s financial status when discussing prices and terms with a vendor. He believes that he always “gives away the store,” when in fact he often is able to negotiate a fair price for products he purchases for his company.

At other times, Daniel distorts in the opposite direction. He believes that he is being a clever negotiator (Quad 1-I), when, in fact, the furrowing of his brow indicates to vendors that he is holding back financial information and is not yet at the lowest possible price (Quad I-E). Daniel needs a performance coach to help him modulate his sense of self or at least he needs a colleague to join him in the field and give him supportive feedback when he is being effective

as a negotiator. This process of distortion based on the effort to resolve cognitive dissonance is an important, and often overlooked, aspect of human relationships. I will examine this distorting process in several different ways throughout this series of essays.

There is a third problem associated with the internal/external gap. This concerns the ongoing *intra-psychic and interpersonal tensions* that are likely to be precipitated by the gap. These tensions are exacerbated by the unpredictability and distortion I just mentioned; yet the misalignment inevitably creates tensions even without these other two problems. Both Elizabeth and Daniel feel very uncomfortable about their interpersonal relationships at work. Elizabeth has often considered leaving her position as a manager because of the tensions caused by her inconsistent and unpredictable supervision of subordinates. Daniel also feels considerable tension – mostly conflict within himself – about whether or not he is letting down his company during the negotiations. He is considering another career in which he doesn't have to be as "secretive."

Both Elizabeth and Daniel come to dread their work with other people (Elizabeth within her own organization, Daniel with representatives of other organizations). This fear eventually distorts all of their interpersonal quadrants, and they are both left with a growing gap between the interpersonal world they control (or at least influence) and the interpersonal world they do not control (or influence very little). Elizabeth has received some coaching assistance which has enabled her to more closely align her internal and external panes (especially in Quad One), whereas Daniel has received little assistance and believes that he has been left to "fend for himself" in what he perceived to be the "uncaring" and "cut-throat" business of procurement and price negotiations. Like many men and women who experience a widening gap between his internal and external panes, Daniel sees his own powers (internal locus) declining and the forces outside himself (the other parties to the price negotiations) growing in power. No wonder he wants to escape to another line of work.

In addition to the challenges that people like Elizabeth and Daniel face in seeking to narrow

the gap between the internal and external panes, there are additional challenges associated with the issue of personal awareness. To what extent does each of us see the internal and external forces that interplay with one another in our interpersonal relationships? How aware am I and how much control do I have over what I convey to other people? Both disclosure and feedback are helpful in this regard. Disclosure and feedback do much more than expand Quad 1 (and reduce some of Quad 4).

These two interpersonal processes also reduce the gap between internal and external panes of the window. Disclosure enables us indirectly (if not directly) to get feedback from other people about our external panes. The new double pane Johari Window adds a new level of appreciation to the nature and impact of feedback. Using the double pane model we discover that feedback is meant not only to help us learn something about ourselves that we didn't know before or knew only opaquely (feedback as *information-about-self*), but also helps us gain a fuller and more complex understanding of ourselves in interaction with other people and our impact on other people (feedback as source of *enriched-understanding-of-self*).

For example, let's imagine that I'm been asked to give my opinion about another person who has authority over me (let's call him Sam). I view Sam in an ambivalent manner. I might be inclined initially to offer only a positive perspective about Sam, not wanting to hurt Sam's feelings or risk my own job (if my ambivalent opinion got back to him). I also might hold back on my negative opinions because I want to appear to be a fair-minded person. My presentational self (Quad 1-I) would thus be filled with positive opinions about Sam. However, I might be sharing my more negative opinion about Sam through my nonverbal channels of communication or through my decline of an invitation to have dinner with Sam (Quad 1-E). I know that I am exhibiting these negative feelings (this is not Quad Three material), but don't realize how aware other people are of these negative feelings.

At some point, I decide to "fess up" to my colleague, who first asked what I thought about Sam. I point out that I actually have quite mixed feelings about Sam. I admire him in some

ways, but don't trust him or like him very much when he is operating in his "official" role. At this point, my inquiring colleague might feel free to give me some feedback that is very helpful to me as I seek to enrich my own self-understanding (Quad 2-E to Quad 1-E). My colleague might point out that the nonverbals are very clear and that my decision to turn down the dinner invitation is a clear indication that I am not fully supportive of Sam. This is very important for me to know. My colleague is not telling me something I never knew about myself (that I exhibit some negative feelings regarding Sam); rather, my colleague is telling me about the extent to which this Quad 1-E (Inadvertent Self) communication is obvious to other people.

It is the same with feedback and the double paned Johari Window. Feedback we receive from other people regarding those aspects of ourselves about which we are truly ignorant (Quad 2-E) encourages our own self-insights regarding information about ourselves that we know at some level but block off from self-awareness (Quad 2-I). A man with whom I work (we will call him Harold), for instance, did not realize that he tends to patronize and act in a condescending manner toward younger women with whom he works. One of his colleagues provided him with feedback about shifts in his tone of voice and rate of speech when working with younger women (Quad 2-E to Quad 1-E). Harold's voice goes up and he begins to speak slower, which can easily be interpreted as Harold being condescending to and irritated with his younger female colleague.

When Harold received this feedback, he not only took it to heart, but also to consciousness (Quad 1-E). He became fully aware of his own lingering sense that he appeared to be irritated with virtually all of the women with whom he works. With the help of his coach, Harold explored the reasons for this irritation and discovered that the real issue concerned a lingering sense that he was somehow "responsible" for the success of these women. He wanted them to succeed because he thought that women had every right to be in the workplace. He laid too much responsibility on his own shoulders for making this happen and, as a result, was resentful and, frankly, patronizing. Harold's support for women's rights had backfired and he

only began to relate his inadvertent self (Quad 1-E) with his ignorant self (Quad 2-E) after receiving the feedback.

In general, we don't like to link together our internal and external panes. On the one hand, we don't want to acknowledge that some things are out of our control. We want to believe that we are in charge of our own self – if not the world around us. It is not just (as Joe Luft noted) that we don't want to believe other people know things about ourselves that we don't know (Quad Two). It is also that we don't want to believe that there are aspects of our public (Quad One) and private self (Quad Three), as well as our potential self (Quad Four), that resides outside our control and even our awareness. We are always tempted to move from external to internal locus so that we can perpetuate a personal myth that we are captains of our psychic ship.

We don't want to believe that there are powerful external forces operating in our lives – that we might even have a destiny. We run away from that which we are “called” to do by events in the world and by settings in which we find ourselves (or in which we have placed ourselves). Abraham Maslow's (1968) *Jonah Complex* vividly and metaphorically describes this condition. Johan is running away from his destiny (external locus), but ends up vomited out on a beach, gasping for air, having resided in the belly of a whale.<sup>iv</sup> The whale has brought him back home to face his destiny. This was a “teachable” and “coachable” moment – a “moment of truth – for Jonah. These moments can be teachable and coachable for each of us.

The resistance to linkage between internal and external panes is not limited to a fear of external destiny and the movement from internal to external. We also avoid moving from external to internal locus of control. We want to stay away from an internal locus because it implies accountability (regarding things we don't want to do). We retain an external locus so that we might run away from our personal responsibilities. We prepare carefully for a major event in our life; yet we back off in fulfilling the promise of this event. I find, for instance, that many men and women who have completed all requirements for a doctoral degree other than their dissertation stop short and never complete this work. In fact, the second highest point of



drop out in most doctoral programs (after the first six months) is at the final stage of the program when the dissertation is being written. We run away from the responsibilities and expectations that are embedded in the completion of this academic degree.

Similarly, we run away from commitment in relationships with other people, after working for many months on these relationships, because we are fearful – afraid that the relationship won't be what we hoped it would be, afraid that it will be successful and therefore will consume much of our time, attention and energy, afraid that we have distorted our own perceptions of (or feelings about) the other person so that we might create this committed relationship, and so forth. We run just as quickly away from our personal potentials as we do from our destiny. To offer a revision of Maslow's Jonah Complex – we swim close to the beaches of Mecca (rather than being taken there by a whale), and then vacillate about swimming the final mile to actually arrive on the beach and claim our success as a long-distance swimmer.

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<sup>i</sup> Research cited by Marshall Goldsmith, during a presentation at the Annual Meeting of the Professional Coaching and Mentors Association, Long Beach, California, March, 2002.

<sup>ii</sup> A classic and well-reasoned representation of this behavioral perspective is to be found in: Walter Mischel, "Continuity and change in personality," *American Psychologist*, 1969, 24, pp. 1012-1018.

<sup>iii</sup> This counter imperative is usually attributed to Jay Forrester, the MIT system theorist and futurist.

<sup>iv</sup> In many ways this "belly of the whale" relates to the transitional process (called the "neutral zone") that William Bridges describes in vivid detail in his books about managing personal and organizational transitions (e.g. William Bridges, *Transitions*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1980).