

## **Self-Concepts: Primitive and Robust**

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Abstract:

I will distinguish between primitive and robust concepts of one's self. Primitive self-concepts don't include an idea of the agent. They are simply ideas of the complex of properties the agent has learned itself to have through normally self-informative states, like perception and interoception. This is all lots of animals seems to have. When a hen sees a kernel of corn a bit in front of her in a barnyard, she gets information about the kernel of corn, but also about herself. We as theorists would say she learns that there is a bit of corn in front of *her*. We need a word for the hen. But she doesn't. If she spoke English, she could just think: Lo, a piece of corn.

But a hen has to keep track of the various animals in the barnyard and treats them differently based on her experience. She flees from mean roosters but not from docile chickens. Her concepts of these other animals need to keep track of which properties belong to which animals. For this she seems to need ideas of the various animals. So, such animals have a much different way of handling information about themselves than about others. But some animals pass the mirror test. They are "self-aware". This means they can pick up information about themselves in the way they pick up information about other animals. This seems to require something like an idea of themselves. This leads to what I call a robust self-concept, that combines information about the agent gained in self-informative ways with information about the agent gained in ways that are normally other-informative. We are such animals.