

Newsletter

CREATING A NEW FOUNDATION OF VALUES FOR OUR LIVES

Saturn in Taurus, One More Time

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During the six months from October 17, 2000 through April 20, 2001, we are undergoing the final retrograde period of Saturn (the planet of discipline; of making decisions; of getting down to the nitty gritty; of the social order and one's relationship to it) in the final degrees of Taurus (the sign of matter, manifestation, the body, Earth herself). Saturn will not again be in this section of the zodiac until the year 2030.

During this six-month period we will experience one final slowdown, one more opportunity to rework what grounds us, to appreciate our own self-worth, to recognize real values. Our challenge is to truly ground ourselves before the quicksilver liftoff that awaits us in the Spring of 2001 when Saturn enters Gemini to join Jupiter, Uranus, Neptune, and Pluto in explosively expanding fire and air signs.

I write this as the snow falls. Winter begins to close in on the Tetons. Winter is a time to tell stories. Here's a story from my own life. A very "Saturn in Taurus" story. A story about "values." About the values we need to create a secure "bottom-line."

I dedicate this essay to all those, especially women, whose energy does not translate easily into money, whose worth, for others, in this materialistic culture, is largely invisible, whose self-worth is at risk.

The year is 1977. I am in my mid-30s and newly divorced from a short sweet marriage with the man who had been my high school sweetheart. I have \$3000 to my name (we emptied out our savings account for me), and am just beginning to practice as a consulting astrologer. In order to make ends meet I also work as a “go-fer” for a friend in the construction business and as a house painter. All very part-time. As part-time as I can make it. What I want and need is time to study astrology. My free time is what I value most, and I make it my priority. I live simply, in a tiny apartment in my home town, wear second-hand clothes, and walk or ride my bicycle for transportation and health.

Within a few months, I begin to date David, an ophthalmologist with a large practice and little debt or overhead. Since I am a strict feminist, whenever we go out I pay my own way. And yet, since I am “poor,” our nights out are limited to movies, dessert and coffee. On weekends we hike or cross country ski.

One evening my new friend says to me as we each pull out money for movie tickets, “You know, Annie, we are using your survival money and my luxury money. Why don’t we just use my luxury money?”

I am astonished — and thrilled! In one stroke, David has transformed our perceptual framework for looking at money. Because he assigned two different categories to the money that flows through his hands and the money that flows through mine, we are now able to expand the recreational possibilities which his “luxury” money affords. Now, rather than a movie, coffee and dessert, we can go out for dinner, attend a concert, go on downhill ski vacations, travel to the King Tut exhibit in Seattle.

About six months later, we are eating yet another luxurious restaurant dinner when David says, while concentrating on cutting his steak, “You know, Annie, it’s great that we are using my luxury money to be able to do all these things . . .” He pauses, then looks up at me, “but you *could* say thank you once in a while.”

I am stunned. So stunned by his remark — it came out of the blue and in such a matter of fact manner — that it feels like he just plunged a knife into my heart. First, my

utter astonishment. And hurt, that he should feel that way. Then, almost immediately, a throbbing in the solar plexus as pain warps into fury. Fury. RAGE!

HOW DARE HE!

Instantly, like whiplash, all my conditioning as a “good girl” clamps down. It is as if I am locked into a straitjacket, suffocating into a sickening, poisonous fog. The fires of my fury dampen to an icky, yucky confusion: guilt.

Suddenly the mind kicks in. “Why does he feel that way? Am I not of any value? Doesn’t he realize how unfair this is?”

Finally, calling up through the fury and guilt, the perplexed questioning, a little voice from below, calm, quiet and absolutely sure: *“If I should say thank you, then he should say thank you.”*

But why? Why do I feel that way? WHY was his remark unfair?

(Though I slow it down here for the purpose of describing it frame by frame, that complicated internal process was over in less than one minute.)

Meanwhile, David sits across from me, watching me struggle to control the play of feelings across my face. He is waiting for my response. But I have no words. All I have are these terrifying, inexplicable feelings.

Then, suddenly, my body takes over, propels me up from the table, pulls on my coat, and marches me three miles home in flimsy shoes in a raging blizzard.

The next day when he calls I refuse to talk to him. I refuse again the second day, and the third. For three long weeks I refuse to speak with him. Not because I am punishing him. This is not manipulation, not the usual power play between lovers. No. This is an internal meltdown. That one seemingly innocent statement of his triggered something inside me so profound that it felt like I have been flung into a boiling cauldron. Swirling feelings hurl up memories — of other times when I was furious at unfairness, of other times when I felt guilty, unworthy, of the position “money” occupies in our society.

Looking back on it now, decades later, I see my process during those three weeks in 1977 as an alchemical transformation. Lifelong feelings of defensiveness, paranoia and victimhood — as a woman, as a person who carries a different set of values than the mainstream, as one who was educated in a field (philosophy) not valued by society — were pressing up from below, demanding attention.

Meanwhile, I was looking also at my relationship with David, at the energy I had put into it. Energy which he didn't even notice, much less recognize the value of! Why not? As was usual in my relationships back then, besides being his lover and companion, I was functioning as his psychiatrist. Through my patient listening and questioning, he was learning to look inside himself, and wonder what was there.

I was doing the work that women have done for centuries, invisible work, soul work, work that has to do with the human spirit, with the connections we have with one another, and with our own inner lives. But that, obviously, wasn't of value, or he would have realized that if I needed to say thank you, then so did he.

(Bear in mind that I don't mind thanking people for favors done. I realize that the human community is fueled by the grace of this remark between those who appreciate each other. However, in this case, given our culture's assumptions, had I been saying thank you to him without his reciprocation, it would have put me in the usual subservient position.)

I had taken in what he was saying with my mind and heart and solar plexus, and during those three weeks his remark drifted down into my bones, where memories are stored . . .

Like the time when I was a young adult and my father took me up to his study to show me the books he kept on each of his eight children. He wanted to congratulate me, he said, for costing him the least money. In other words, the less he spent on me, the more value I was to him. But since money seemed to be his most important value (or why congratulate me? And why compare me to my siblings?), then he was also saying that I was worth less than the others. So confusing.

Like the times, as a teenager, when I would show my report card to my parents and receive \$25 — \$5 for every A, straight A's. That was a lot of money back then, and my academic “success” separated me from my brothers and sisters (I was the oldest), who were understandably jealous of the money and upset to have to follow me in school. Then, to drive me further from them, I would flaunt my “superiority” by pretending money didn't matter, squandering the money or losing it. But it *did* matter, or wouldn't have had such an attitude. Again, so confusing!

Confusing especially because, deep down, money *didn't* matter to me. Not the way it should have, according to my father. When I was a high school senior he bought a new car. And instead of trading in his old one he generously gave it to me. But I kept leaving the car door open on the street side, and he would arrive home and see it open. And be furious. So he took the car away. But I acted as if it didn't matter, just to spite him. So I was pretending to be what I really was! Because it *didn't* really matter to me. He had assumed I wanted it without asking me.

As a teenager, I already truly didn't value money or the things it buys and, I could also use my insouciant attitude toward money to passively rebel against my father. (Which came first?)

To complicate the matter of money further, for many years I had known that it was unfair that our family (Daddy was a doctor, as was David) had more money than most people in our small town.

I vividly remember walking home from school one day in first grade with my friend Freddy, also the child of a doctor. Across the street, walking in the same direction, but alone, was another first grader, “troublemaker” Lorenzo Ortega, a Mexican child of migrant laborers, or, as we called them, “wetbacks.” Suddenly, I had a eureka moment: from some place deep within came the knowledge that I was a child of privilege. That this privilege was a lucky accident. That it did not make me “worth more” than Lorenzo. I felt elated and secure to realize how lucky I was; at the same time I felt terrible, since I recognized the unfairness of the class difference between Lorenzo and me. This knowledge flashed through, wordless. It was not something I could articulate, much less share with anyone, especially another child of privilege.

So now in my 30s, and estranged from David, for three weeks I wrestle with memories which provoke me to notice my own contradictory attitudes towards money and materialism. This wrestling is passionate, and it is purposeful: though I have no way of knowing it, I am unconsciously reaching for something, some larger way of understanding values. Some way of perceiving, of reframing the entire discussion, so that all the elements of my life and of what is happening between David and myself will reconfigure into a new gestalt.

And finally, the fog clears. I get it. Finally, it is there, The Eureka Moment.

“Money,” I announce to myself, ***“is energy. But it is not the primary energy, not “bottom line.”***

“No. The primary energy is human energy. This means that for some people, depending on their nature and training and how that nature and training is valued by the culture, their human energy is easily translated into money energy — and therefore, into other forms of physical manifestation. For others, their human energy is not recognized in this culture because it translates more naturally and easily into invisible dimensions, and so cannot be quantified in the same way.”

What this means for David and me: each of us is giving our human energy equally to the relationship. Since David’s energy translates easily into money energy and mine does not, our culture views his energy as more valuable than mine and does not recognize the equal exchange between us. Nor do we ourselves recognize the equal exchange, since we have both been conditioned by this culture. It takes enormous intellectual and emotional effort to see through the veil of one’s own culture.

Looking back on it now, I can say that David and I were fortunate in that the remark he made was the knife which, for me, cut through the veil to reality, leaving me extremely confused and in a sustained process of alchemical dissolution and transmutation.

David’s remark collapsed the cultural screen, penetrated to the heart of my nature, and left me feeling furious, confused, unworthy and guilty. Why? Because in thinking

about money, I had not recognized the distinction between nature and culture. Between me and what others wanted me to be.

Each of us has a certain nature, which more or less “fits” into the culture we happen to be in. Each of us is conditioned into the culture as children and young adults, with more or less success, depending on our nature. For me, as a person called to work mainly with invisible energies, the cultural fit was always problematic, and yet, since I am a human being who longs for connection with other humans, I was forever, and with little success, seeking to “fit in.”

When we are successfully conditioned into a culture’s “reality,” we don’t realize that there is a difference between culture and nature. Those of us who have trouble “fitting in” are fortunate in that we have the opportunity to recognize the difference between who we are and what culture wants us to be. With this recognition, at first we can usually see only two options open to us: either we continue our essentially frustrating attempts to “fit in” to culture’s “reality” or, resigned to our loneliness, we rebel against it. But these are *not* the only two options. In fact, both options assume cultural reality as the basic given, to which we must either conform or not.

What happened to me during that three week period was this: ***I realized a new given.*** The new given was my own human nature, the energy that moved through me, and its translations into other energetic and material forms. ***I was the primary given. David was the primary given. As is everyone on earth her or his own primary given. Each of us is the center of her or his own reality, interacting with all the others. Each of us, as the center of the entire universe, is the real bottom line.***

When we see only two options in relating our nature to culture, the polarity of conformity or rebellion, we are making culture (and its artifacts, including money) the primary given, rather than our own individual selves. In either case, no matter how much we succeed in conforming or rebelling, we never quite make it. There is always somebody or something more perfectly in conformity or rebellion than we are. So we strive until exhaustion, at which point we feel disappointed, or bitter, or icky, yucky. In

short, guilty. Guilt is our culture's glue. It binds us together and keeps us in our place, looking for something outside to give us our value.

This business of looking to the outside, of living from the outside in rather than the inside out, is so pervasive that it might give some clue as to why it took me three weeks to "figure out" why I was so angry. And why I had such a strong drive to figure it out. My life with another was at stake. Though I didn't realize it at the time, the understandings that would result from those three weeks in the underworld would change my life.

I spent three weeks groping blindly in the dark, a very turbulent dark, unable to do anything but feel and remember, and re-experience the excruciating contradictions which the culture's "bottom line" value of money had drummed into me. *The key to my being able to reconfigure the way I looked at money was this three-week period which preceded it.*

Usually, whenever we look at anything that upsets us, we try to "figure it out" as quickly as possible. Sometimes this approach to a "problem" works fine; at other times, it yields at best a superficial solution, a mere bandaid. The wound goes unhealed. It is just covered up.

During the one year when I was a college teacher (in a California experimental college: I was then fired for being "too experimental") back in 1972-73, I would say to my students: "I much prefer a fertile confusion to a sterile clarity." During those three weeks in 1977, I experienced the dramatic results of this preference. When a "problem" is deep — in this case, not merely personal, but cultural and historical — then we need to have the courage to open to the depths of ourselves and the pain and continued upset that this provokes in order to have any hope of eventually finding real clarity.

For radical new understandings do not originate in the mind, but come up through the body. And that takes time. Matter moves slower than mind. Saturn in Taurus is, more than anything else, S-L-O-W. To creatively utilize Saturn in Taurus during this six-month period requires patience, endurance, and the courage to allow ourselves to re-member the buried pain of experiences that hold contradiction at their core. Only as

we allow ourselves to descend will we be able to finally ascend with a more real set of values as the foundation for our lives.

My body during those long weeks was the source of both my memories and my capacity to hold all those memories, no matter how they conflicted, simultaneously in the same emotional space. And, since nature always seeks order out of chaos, the chaos of that turbulent time led, in the end, to this new (old) kind of order which had at its heart three assumptions:

1. Everything humans do can be expressed in energetic terms.
2. The primary bottom line value is not money energy but human energy.
3. Human energy can be translated into many different kinds of energy, of which money is only one.

Armed with this new gestalt, I called David up, and we arranged to meet. As I outlined for him the process I had gone through I could feel him absorbing what I was saying, and getting more and more excited. In the end, David was as thrilled with the way I had reframed “money as energy” as I had been with his original bifurcation of money into “luxury money and survival money.”

As a result of this perceptual shift, we both recognized that each of us was bringing equal energy to our relationship. That my energy, though less visible in its effects, was of equal value to his.

Within weeks, enveloped in our shared new field of understanding, and yet not wanting to live together, we decided to buy me a house to live in. And did so. Of course, when our friends heard about this, they snapped into the usual cultural perception of “the doctor and his mistress,” and were embarrassed and uncomfortable. But the new perceptual field that David and I had created was so powerful and so sure that they soon were pulled into it with us, and rejoiced, not because I was “lucky to have a rich and generous boyfriend,” but because they too were beginning to glimpse the expanding field of possibilities which we can enjoy once we realize that for every human being,

their own personal human energy is the real “bottom line,” equal to that of everyone else.

I went on to establish a community magazine in that house, *OpenSpace*, putting the editorial offices in my living room and the production office downstairs. For two years our little community of the heart within the larger community of that small town shared a field of intent and delight as we put to work this new/old idea that all of us are of equal value. That as, together, we work to open up space, we discover and enjoy endless new worlds.