

BEYOND FUNDAMENTALISM

There is one foundation

upon which I have been standing,

ever since my soul agreed to enter this suffering world

as a happy, smiling baby . . .



Ann Renee Kreilkamp
December 19, 1942,
8:02 AM CWT
Fort Sam Houston Hospital
San Antonio, Texas

Nine months prior to my Doctor daddy's departure for the Philippines.



LIFE PATH: *to recognize, describe, notice ramifications of, and continuously point to “fundamentalism” as the epistemological root of WAR.*

Furthermore, how to then *move Beyond* Fundamentalism has functioned paradoxically as the rock solid, fundamental foundation from which I have never, ever been dissuaded.

And, of course, being all-too-human, I confess a tendency to project my own fundamentalism onto others — and must then, take it back, recognize its root inside the self.

From *Transforming Fundamentalism*, 2001:

As a double Sagittarian, all my life I have been driven to Know. As my husband Jeffrey likes to joke, I have the temperament of a fundamentalist, a true believer. Especially when confronted with a baffling situation, one which sprouts conundrums like spores in the wind, I want to single out one of these spores and clutch it, like a drowning man catches a piece of floating debris.

All my adult life I have been working to evolve my Sagittarian nature out of fundamentalism and into relativism. Not the usual “nothing counts, so I can do anything I want” but the more difficult relativism of recognizing that the left-brain mind cannot access Truth, that all it can do is process information. That Truth, the big Sagittarian truth, is accessed through the right brain, and that, in turn, must be linked to the heart in order for its truths to be meaningful to me and compassionate to others.

Early on, I was already faking it,

pretending to be a child,

Ears on alert for the heavy drone of bombers.

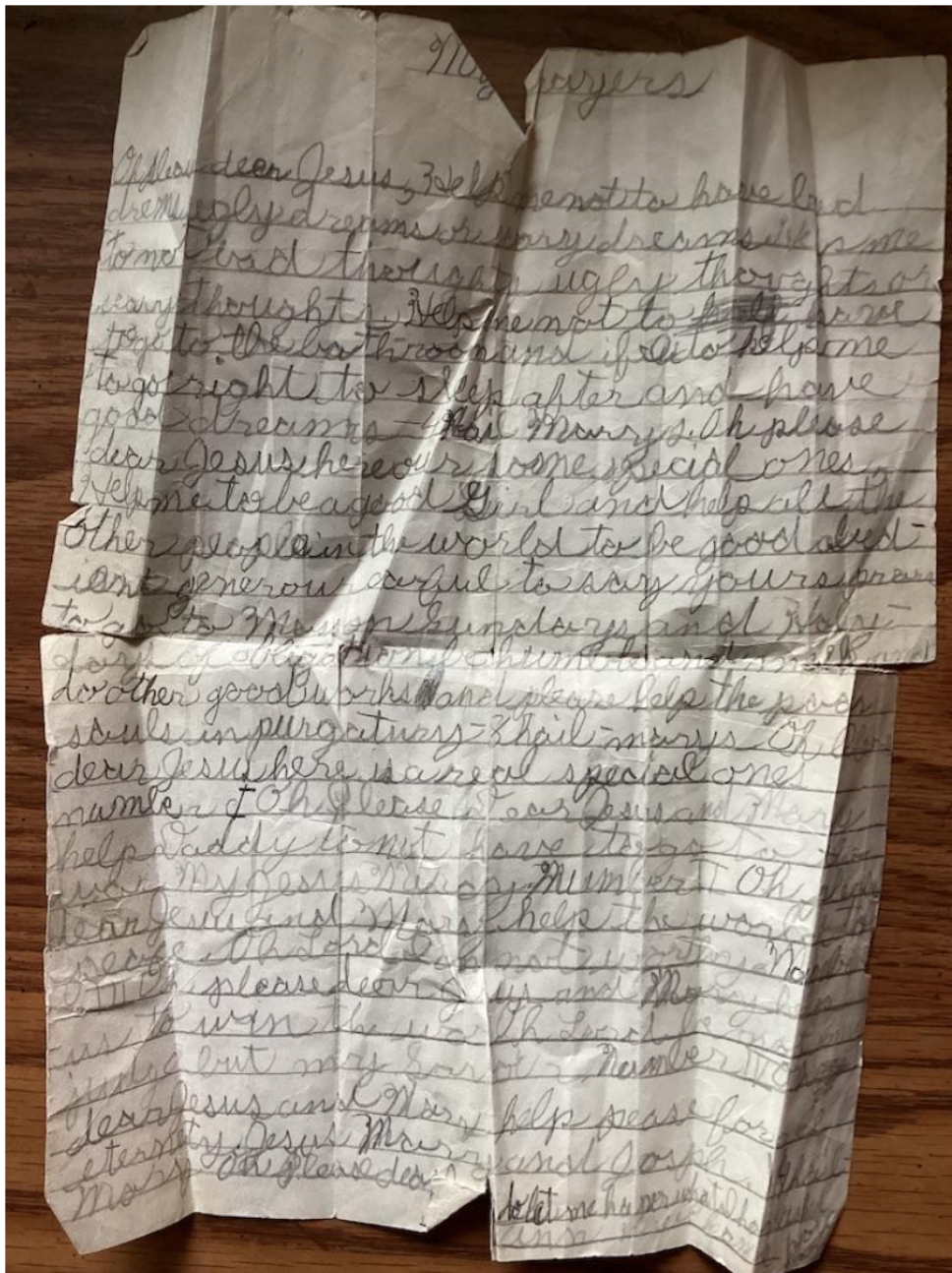


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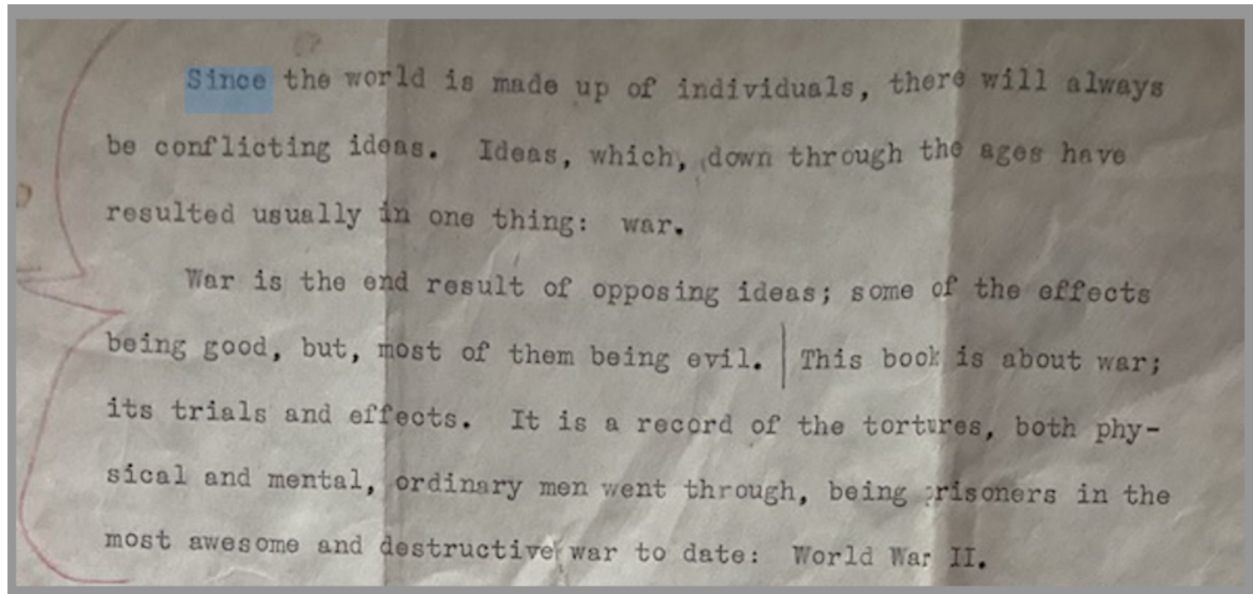
6½ YRS.

At night, before sleep, lying in the dark, invoking silent prayers while turning clockwise (side, to stomach, to side, to back) with successive entreaties, each followed by a Hail Mary prayer; begging God for peace, peace, peace, peace.

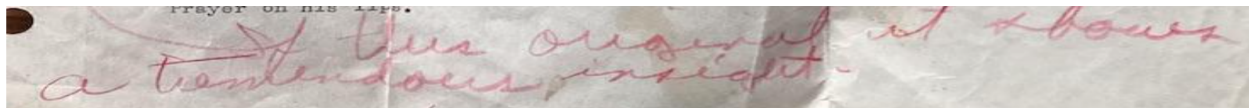
At one point I told Mom about my prayers. She asked me to write them down.



Then, suddenly, at 12 years old, intuition roared through for the first time, out of the blue, my passion flashing into language as the first paragraph of a 7th grade book review about Korean War prisoners.



My teacher, as surprised as I, that this should flow from her shy, silent student, commented:



To reiterate, a bit more gracefully:

“Since the world is made up of individuals, there will always be conflicting ideas. Ideas which, down through the ages, have usually resulted in one thing: WAR.”

Basically, ever since the trauma I suffered at age two years and eight months, while listening to the radio with my Mother and hearing about the horror of Hiroshima, I haven't changed either my focus or my point of view, ever!

So, despite that these essays are not in chronological order (1985, 2019, 1990, 2000, 2001, 2006), it doesn't matter. I'm always circling around the same deep, suppurating wound.

However, please note that the study of astrology, beginning in 1973, initiated me into a larger, fuller way of understanding human conflict, a way beyond polarity. This ancient symbolic language enlarged awareness —

so that I might recognize,

and enter,

the mysterious Center —

between any two seeming opposites.

Note: Prerequisites for Harmony ruminates on the transit of Pluto through Sagittarius opposite Gemini. I place this essay before Centering, since it introduces the idea of enlarging awareness to include the space that opens between opposites.

Essay

Alt-Epistemology: Let us avoid switching from one fundamentalism to another!

Exopermaculture, May 17, 2019

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On a meta level, what's the difference between fundamentalist Islamic and fundamentalist Christian? Answer: nada. Both assume that only one way, their way, is the right one. Both assume that of all the strict, confined mental silos dotting this planet, there is only one that should stand, theirs, and the rest be damned!

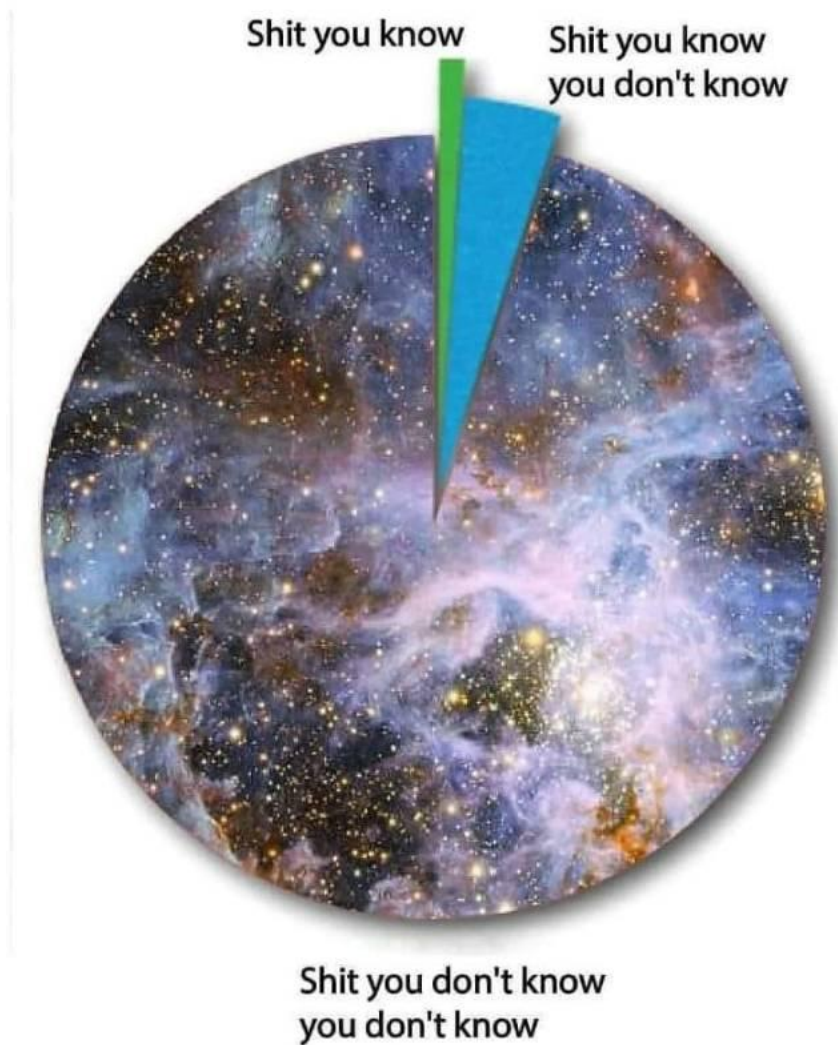
That's the strange thing about fundamentalist anything. *The unwavering attachment to a set of irreducible beliefs*. Why?

What does that get us?

I have a feeling that we think we're looking for intellectual certainty when really, underneath, we're seeking emotional security; and that, my friends, is not to be found using the mind. Instead, sink down into the body; allow the body to attune to the living Earth, sink further into Earth's place in our solar system, further into our solar system's place in the Milky Way galaxy — on and on, further and further, let us sink, through our bodies, into the Divine Mystery that holds us all, warm, safe, and beloved.

In other words, we *can* gain emotional security, but only at the expense of intellectual certainty.

Let us, instead, open our minds to allow continuously expanding horizons within an infinitely mysterious universe. Forget tearing down one conceptual helmet just to clamp down another. And let's face it: *those who value processing their own experiences* sooner or later realize that even when we think we know something, further opening will throw new lights on it to the point where the meaning, and the "truth" of it is bound to mutate. Which makes the following graphic itself "false," since even the "shit you know" YOU DON'T KNOW.



Essay

CENTERING: Beyond the Path of Polarity

Welcome to Planet Earth, 1990

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Two weeks ago, I underwent a crisis in consciousness, one in which I feel I narrowly averted locking into an old, insidiously destructive path. This path is familiar, like an old friend. I know the path intimately, how it begins, how it proceeds. Indeed, the groove of this path is so well worn, that had I stepped onto it again, I would have found it exceedingly difficult to remove myself before repeating the entire painful cycle exactly, yet one more time.

Many of us are on this path. Those who learn it well win the prizes. This particular path is so inextricably intertwined with the subtle underlying texture of western culture, so much a part of the motivating force which fuels behavior, that it is difficult to imagine ourselves operating without it.

This same path pervades all of life, from sibling rivalry to the educational system to business, to international politics. Though known by many names, and operating under many guises, the most common name for this path is “competition.”

We teach the path of competition from grammar school on, beginning with contests in spelling and other subjects, including sports. Here, though we give lip service to sportsmanship, fairness on the playing field, we all know what counts. What counts is to win.

In international politics, the path is now becoming known — and thank goodness, critiqued — as the “zero sum” game. Where, if one wins, the other one loses — and then feels bad, wants to get even, fans the flames of war. In our worst case scenario, the specter of MAD (Mutual Assured Destruction) — 50,000? Or is it now “only” 30,000? — nuclear warheads aimed at each other across the globe has made its absurdist point. There is no “winning” a nuclear war.

Our growing understanding of the shadow side of competition in world military affairs has yet to filter down into daily life. The path of competition still prevails in just about every field of human activity in western culture. Think of our legal system, for example. Again, a zero-sum game. The most profound and glaring example of competition however is the western economic system. Capitalism is our sacred cow; it elevates the path of individual competition to a high and increasingly ruthless art.

In my own experience, I think of graduate schools of philosophy, and other rarified academic disciplines. Here, competition is standardized as the path of argument, debate. Seminar discussions, dissertations and colloquia are all contained within its well-known framework. The path of attack and counterattack. Or, if not proof of one’s own position, then at least disproof of the position of one’s opponent.

In academia, this path is not only taught, it is celebrated, justified as “objective,” “rational,” by those who like to think themselves objective and rational.

For those of us whose thinking is becoming more self-reflective or psychological, however, this same path could be called the path of “projection,” or “polarity.” It is a path we now wish to move beyond.

For this growing group of people, the phrase, “we create our own realities,” is the key which opens the door to the deeper meaning of our lives. We view experience symbolically, as the external expression — or projection — of inner beliefs and attitudes. We understand what happens on the outside at any one moment as the result, in the physical world, of the way we had previously imagined things to be.

We call this new — and most ancient — way of understanding the world “metaphysical,” i.e., beyond the physical. Abstract in conception, it is thoroughly

practical in application. To begin to live metaphysically is to effect a radical reversal of the way we understand cause and effect. Rather than being victims of “what happens to us,” we are its creators.

One corollary to this reversal is the idea that we are collectively responsible for the state of the world now. That if we wish to change the world, then we must begin, each of us, by changing ourselves — the ways we think and see and do.

Another corollary is the idea that there is no such thing as objectivity, and therefore no rationality as previously conceived. Instead, all positions are seen as points of view relative to persons, not objective but subjective.

Once we reach this metaphysical understanding of the path of polarity, something happens to us. We can no longer identify with our particular points of view in quite the same manner. Our former passionate intensity in defending our positions against their opposites begins to fade . . . But I get ahead of my story.

My own course down the path of polarity began in earnest when I was a graduate student, being coached by my mentor, a professor of philosophy. This man was Jewish, Israeli, intimate with the tragic history of persecution endured by his ancestors. He was deeply familiar with polarized situations, and, given his pugnacious temperament, also quite accomplished at setting one up where it did not exist before.

Naturally, my mentor always occupied the minority position within any polarity, played the role of the persecuted one, victimized, and yet courageous in the face of overwhelming odds.

But it wasn't just his temperament which led him into scrapes. It was also his unflinching need to see through to the heart of things. Both of these qualities in him fascinated me — initially terrified me, then drew me to him like a moth to the flame.

My mentor believed that, by and large, Truth is not valued by society, and that one who speaks truth automatically sets up a polarity against him or her, becomes like Cassandra, ostracized.

As a double Sagittarian, I had found my teacher. We both valued Truth, and he was to teach me how to both understand and work with the social consequences of telling it.

Quite naturally, my mentor taught me to play out the same role he did. Taught me that in order to speak the truth I must accept the personal attacks which, he assured me, were its inevitable result.

The first years of my training involved learning how to think and speak clearly. He had no patience with fuzzy or muddled or superficial minds, and to the extent that I brought such a mind to him, he was ruthless in forging it into an engine which could both make exacting distinctions and yet see in far-reaching ways.

He taught me to question all my assumptions, question them down to bedrock — and beyond. He taught me that, indeed, there is no natural end to this process, that all our “rational” thinking processes rest on nothing, on empty space. A self-styled “skeptical” philosopher, he taught me to realize that intellectual certainty, my goal since childhood, was chimerical, that those who think they can reach it are fools.

And yet, when I had finally chewed and assimilated the consequences of his teaching to the bone, when I had begun to speak and act as if I had truly embodied his skeptical philosophy, he shouted at me, accusing, shocked at my audacity: “You are a relativist!”

“Thank you,” I bowed and replied.

My mentor thought that he was damming me with these words. Instead, I felt congratulated. To him, “relativism,” meant “anything goes,” because nothing can be counted on. It is a view, he thought, which justified any sort of behavior, no matter how pernicious.

For me, to be a “relativist” is to recognize that there is no certainty in knowledge, just as my mentor had taught me. Unlike him, however, I looked — and found — a basis for ethical action in another realm altogether, the realm reached through “centering.” But again, I get ahead of my story . . .

Though my mentor understood that there was no way to rationally justify knowledge, his emotional response to the fact that I, his student, had become a living example of his conclusion, showed me that he still needed to justify knowledge — not rationally, but emotionally. Underneath his own debunked intellectual need for certainty was the deeper, instinctive emotional need for security, safety.

He was able to shift intellectually, but not emotionally. He could not embrace with his whole being the idea that, in truth, there is no truth to stand on, that wherever we are, we are nowhere — and that even this truth cannot be proved!

Though this man could not personally take the final step which his own philosophy entailed, he did teach me much about the sociology of his fellow academic philosophers, how they too were afraid, even more afraid than he; and being less willing to admit it, they were more likely to hate the one who made them feel so afraid.

Thus the path of polarity — and persecution.

He taught me that the actual index to the value of what I was saying was a function of how strongly it shocked others, polarizing them into two camps, pro and con. He taught me to say what I had to say so clearly and so powerfully, that people would either love it or hate it, come down on one side or the other, either for or against.

At the time, this learning was exactly what I needed to break out of the paralysis induced by my upbringing. I had been reared to be a shy, sensitive and very good girl, one who didn't make waves, who blended, as far as possible, into the prevailing winds. Now my mentor was teaching me to sail directly into the wind, to stand straight and tall in the face of hurricane forces.

In my birthchart, this entire situation, both during childhood and as a graduate student, is indicated by an unusually precise yod formation. First house Mercury/Venus in Capricorn inconjunct both sixth house Saturn in Gemini and eighth house Pluto in Leo, the latter two planets in sextile, all these aspects exact within one degree. In addition, Mercury and Saturn are in mutual reception, co-dispositors of the entire chart.

As a child, I was serious and dutiful, my native intelligence blocked. As a graduate student, this Saturnine influence mutated into a more Plutonian depth of approach, thanks to my mentor.

So, I was in good hands. Being taught by a Jew to remember my own persecution at the hands of others who wanted to shut me up. Being taught courage in the face of those who would have my head. Being taught to tell the truth anyway, no matter what the cost — and even though I couldn't prove it.

That was 21 years ago. I honor this man for his profound teaching. Truly, he saved my life, he ignited the life that was in me, the Sagittarian fire, and guided me to the recognition that there is no end to the search for truth; that no matter how far I go, the journey is endless. Not only endless, but I have discovered along the way, joyful, creative, inspired. Or it can be. It is, if I stay clear of the well-known groove mentioned above.

During this year, Uranus crosses my natal Venus/Mercury, triggering the yod. Old patterns of thinking shatter. As they break down, light shines through the cracks. I begin to quicken with the joy of continuous discovery.

And now, as of two weeks ago, I realize for the first time the origins of my own scapegoat mentality in the teachings of my mentor. I see now where it came from. Now that I see it, I can let it go. I want to learn to tell the truth in a way which does not invite attack, which is larger than this relatively narrow manner of communication.

Two weeks ago I almost started down that same old road again. In an essay I wrote, I first presented my own view, and then compared and contrasted it with the view of another. I set up a polarity with him. It felt so natural to do it this way. So real. So definitive and clear.

I was standing on one point, my “position,” and looking across to another point, finger cocked like a child using her hand to mimic a pointing gun.

Luckily, with crucial help from a dear, dear friend, I caught myself in time to not make enemies. To not get caught up once again in that polarized place, that limited

space where I distract myself from presenting what I see. Instead of allowing my imagination to proceed further, I have gotten caught up along the way with defending my position in the face of real or imagined attack.

Psychologically, the mechanism seems to be the following: When I begin to attempt to describe the further reaches of what I see, at some point I grow afraid. Like my mentor, at some level I too still fear infinity, endlessness, continuously opening space.

In response to fear, my mind contracts, to a level at which it feels secure. First, I posit a point in space where I “take my stand.” From here, I look out and create (project) another point, at a certain near or far distance from the one upon which I am standing. And I then say, this is not that. This point is not that point. I define myself through what I am not. I am not like him. He becomes my “opposite.” I become not only intellectually, but emotionally involved in seeing myself “win” over him. One more zero-sum game.

This time, immediately prior to the whole sorry cycle beginning again, I caught myself preparing to do it and recognized where it would inevitably lead.

I create my own reality. In order to change that reality, I must first change my mind, by enlarging my vision. I want to begin to see the epistemological mechanism of projection and its hostile repercussions in behavior from a more mathematical or visual point of view.

Thinking visually, I can view my “opponent” as merely the other end point of a line which I have just created through positing a point across from my own.

This line, in turn, can be visualized as the diameter of a circle, the size of which is determined by the length of the line, by how near or far away I originally posited my “opponent” to be.

I have created a circle around myself, where formerly there was open space. I have created a circle and I am caught inside — without realizing it.

Whereas before I was afraid of openness, so now I am afraid of its opposite — claustrophobia! I seek a way out, want to break out, to punch my way through by destroying the point opposite the one upon which I still think I am standing.

In reality, I am no longer standing upon this point, which is now a point upon the circumference of the circle. Somehow, I have jumped to a point exactly halfway to the other side. I am standing in the middle of the circle now. I must be. Otherwise I wouldn't feel so enclosed, so surrounded on all sides by potential enemies . . .

So, resolution to this self-created conflict is first to visualize the initial polarity mathematically, as a line, which in turn becomes the diameter of a circle. The next step is to consciously realize that I have placed myself "squarely" in the center of that line, that circle.

As long as I stand in the center of the circle without awareness of being there, I feel surrounded, enclosed, claustrophobic, even paranoid. Once I recognize that I am standing precisely there, and that this circle is one I have created through the psychological mechanism of projection, my experience of the circle changes utterly.

Now I feel myself in the center, equidistant from all points on the circumference of this particular circle I have created to "orient" myself.

As the goal, in childhood, was intellectual certainty and emotional security, so now the goal of both head and heart is centering. As I center myself in the precise midpoint of my experience I find I am standing upon the very ground I was seeking all along.

Standing in the center, I sense the circumference of the circle I have created as a membrane, rather than a wall. It breathes, it moves, vibrating in resonance to the beat of my heart. Rather than being something I must break through to once again express my freedom, I can now rest within the circle, as one more form through which I both orient myself and direct energy.

For I sense my capacity to create an infinite number of concentric circles, both larger and smaller than this one. The circles radiate in all directions. The circles are frameworks or structures, paradigms within which I "make sense" of perception.

Each of these circles can be visualized as a globe or sphere or dimension of awareness. Each one contains an infinity of points, both upon its outer and inner skins,

and within the space which it encloses. Even in a limited space there are no limits.
Between any two points, there is always a third.

In order to bypass my old habit of limiting my perception by tying it down to work as merely one end point of a polarized point of view, I recognize myself as the center of a continuously expanding universe. This is the lesson, and the message, of the entire generation into which I was born: Pluto in Leo (1938-1958).

Each of us, as unique and singular individuals, stands centered, radiating outwards from the center of a universe that has no outer limits, no circumference. Each of us as the eye of our own storm, the still point of our own turning world. We are creative agents, attuning ourselves to and expressing ourselves through larger and larger spheres of awareness — forever.

We are all creators. We all breathe the same air. Our hearts beat to a universal biological rhythm, a rhythm entrained with other more subtle rhythms, all of them in concert as the universal harmony, the music of the spheres, the song of ourself. We are one. We are many. We are the one in the many. All polarities dissolve in the swelling sea of infinite space.

Newsletter

CREATING A NEW FOUNDATION OF VALUES FOR OUR LIVES

Saturn in Taurus, One More Time

Celestial Navigations #9, November 2000

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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.

Column

WHAT ARE THE PREREQUISITES FOR HARMONY?

Sagewoman #70, Summer into Fall 2006

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When I was young I felt sorry for my friends who weren't Catholic, because they were going to hell. Later, as I shed childish beliefs, early questions about the meaning of life persisted, and I tried out various answers.

After many, many years a different kind of recognition seeped into my bones — that what fuels my spiritual life is not any belief or set of beliefs, but rather an indwelling sense of Mystery, as an all-pervasive, invisible, unfathomable Presence.

I sense that we have all been gifted with glimpses of a subtle Presence that elicits wonder and awe. Eternal questions spring from this exalted plane. It's as if we are both tested and teased — the energy behind our questions propels us in uncharted directions while forever eluding final answers.

As I go about my errands at the grocery store or the post office, I tend to peer closely as others pass by, searching their eyes for light. I notice that most seem veiled, opaque. Perhaps their daily burdens weigh them down so that they no longer look up, take a deep breath, and marvel at the sky?

And yet, in mountain villages of Peru, or Greece, or Turkey, and even in old Istanbul I have walked down the street and encountered the soul of perhaps eight out of ten people. As we passed by, my eyes would greet theirs and our momentary connection felt so strong and full that my heart burst with joy.

Since the 17th century and the advent of scientific modes of knowing, we of European descent have been trained to consider “real” only that which we can perceive and measure through our five outer senses — sight, smell, hearing, taste and touch. “Materialism” — the religion of (Newtonian) science — denies the reality of realms both beyond and within the world of matter and dismisses enduring questions about the meaning of life as “unscientific.”

Our western minds have gradually crystallized, become hard-wired — through both formal schooling and the weight of tradition — so that the so-called “normal” person interacts with the world in strictly delimited ways.

I imagine that, in this country, many church groups and social networks long to rekindle the fading soul bonds among us. For myself, I enjoy the Sufi-inspired Dances of Universal Peace, where we gather to sing songs with lyrics from the mystical arms of the world’s religions. Some of the dances involve two facing circles that move in opposite directions. We greet each unique, luminous soul as it flashes through the eyes.

Anyone who has experienced the depth of these dances can attest to our spiritual communion as we dip below personality to dwell within the One. In fact, when I first encountered the Dances I felt overwhelmed, and wept openly. Here, I thought, was my kind of religion. No dogmas, no beliefs; just singing and dancing in shared surrender to the divine.

And yet, despite this inner spiritual flame that ultimately illumines our way, a terrible foreboding sits on our hearts. We try to pursue life as usual, but when we project into the future of these opening years of the 21st century, we fear for our children and our children’s children.

Our sense of foreboding on earth finds its mirror in the heavens.

Since 1995, Pluto (the planet of extreme, underground power) has been traveling through Sagittarius — the sign that refers to how we experience politics, philosophy and religion. Pluto's cycle through the 12 signs of the zodiac is long (248 years) and somewhat irregular. It takes about 15 years for Pluto to move through Sagittarius. Pluto's journey through a sign forces transformation; it harvests death and destruction and plants seeds of possible rebirth. Pluto leaves Sagittarius for Capricorn by the end of 2008.

So far, Pluto's journey through religious and philosophical Sagittarius has paralleled the mental crystallization that increasingly breeds fixation on "true beliefs," i.e., "fundamentalism," and its terrorist repercussions. Less than three years remain for us to surrender to the death and rebirth of deep-seated mental programming that divides us from each other. For once Pluto shifts into Capricorn, whatever philosophical transformation we have undergone during the Pluto in Sagittarius years will serve as the foundation for a need to recognize that we have come up against the structural limits of material reality. Pluto's fifteen year journey through Capricorn will initiate an upheaval that will deeply disturb and begin to reconfigure the institutions and hierarchies of the civilized world.

Pluto's Sagittarian reverberations shake up the way our minds comprehend what is real and of real value; and we cannot help but ponder the gravity of two profound and unprecedented crises.

- First, we bear anguished witness to the accelerating deterioration of Earth's biosphere, caused, at least in part, by human activity.

- Second, most of us cannot help but personally experience what seems to be an accelerating loss of authentic connection to both the natural world and to our fellow human beings.

Not so well known is the linkage between these twin crises; that they spring from the same root, from the manner in which the human imagination structures experience.

Our minds are the builders, first cause. Whatever we expect to see, we will get.

From a “scientific” standpoint, the ways we apprehend what we intuitively recognize as the sacred and mysterious dimensions of our lives don’t count, since none of them can be “proved.”

Yet both our questions and our search for meaning persist. The imagination refuses to be reined in by “Science.” And our answers, nourished by an endlessly astonishing human creativity, proliferate into myriads of competing sects and religions.

Unfortunately, as our sense of connection to nature, to human community, and even to our own bodies recedes, our psychological and spiritual unease increases. The stable ground for what makes us feel real and alive disintegrates; on a gut level we feel less secure. Naturally then, in an attempt to feel safe, we band together with those who agree with us.

Because we tend to identify with our answers rather than dwelling within the original, childlike awe that inspired our questions, those answers feel so important that they separate us entirely from those with whom we disagree. Indeed, our beliefs feel like a stockade that imprisons us and keeps “The Other” out. We may even judge “Them” as not just wrong, but bad or even “evil.”

In the final years of the 20th century, we learned to call this fixation on a particular set of beliefs “fundamentalism” and smugly assumed that fundamentalism applied only to The Other’s rigid point of view. Yet many of us now begin to sense our own fundamentalist tendencies. This new current in the zeitgeist shows up in recent films.

Spielburg's "Munich" portrays Israelis and Palestinians as equally inflexible. "Brokeback Mountain" shows the hidden, heartbreaking reality beneath stereotypes.

I ask myself, how many times have I pre-judged a stranger based on some little clue in manner, dress or behavior that, if I were mindful in that moment, would cue me in to my own unrecognized and unprocessed stuff? And how many times, on further reflection, have I had to admit that I was just plain wrong? When I do wake up to my harsh judgments, my arrogance astonishes me, as does the unconscious, prolific, projective power of the imagination.

Indeed, if we, as a species, do intend to continue to dwell upon this planet we each need to consciously release our identification with our own beliefs, no matter how "true" and "right" we think them! For both our stereotypes and our judgments are based on belief. To extricate ourselves from stereotype and judgment will fundamentally restructure the ways our minds work.

Our "scientific" mental hard-wiring includes two methods of knowing, "inductive" and "deductive." Both have reached the limits of their usefulness, and their interaction has turned malefic.

- Inductive (or, how we absorb information piece by piece *a posteriori* from the outside world): 20th century communication and transportation technologies, including the Internet, both link us together and vastly amplify the already overwhelming cacophony of information, pseudo information, propaganda, nonsense and just plain noise in which we have been continuously immersed since the dawn of radio.

- Deductive (or, the way we create theories to link, describe and explain information *a priori* from imagination): the current worldwide resurgence of religious and political fundamentalism tends to polarize us into opposing camps of rigid *a priori* beliefs and sparks fear, separation, judgment and hatred that, when stirred into frenzy, provokes violence and war.

Inductive and deductive reasoning supposedly complement each other. We draw in bits and pieces of information (inductive) and weave them into patterns to create theories that make sense of the whole (deductive). This “scientific” understanding of the way the mind can work is classic western epistemology and quite naïve.

For the more I pay attention to how my own mind works, the more I realize that I tend to make my mind up first — based on whatever: mostly unconscious prejudices and attitudes and values and stories of all kinds, not to mention my ego’s need to win — and then I check for “facts” and “arguments” that support my conclusions.

In the past decade or two, this more realistic understanding of how the mind works has taken a hugely cynical turn, with, for example, leaders, pundits and press secretaries deliberately weaving “credibility” in place of truth.

The limits of inductive and deductive methods interlock in the pernicious world of spin, where political and religious dogmas select and skew (“cherrypick”) bits and pieces from the endless heaving sea of so-called information to buttress their chosen beliefs; they then repeat their mantra endlessly to brainwash the susceptible. And who is not susceptible? It takes a very strong inner focus to maintain equilibrium and inner knowing in the face of constant entertainment and other distractions, not to mention unceasing streams of religious, political, business, and governmental propaganda.

Of course, we do need some kind of filter or framework to organize and simplify the vast sea of data rolling in, but how do we know when we’re hoodwinked? Does a so-called “impartial, detached” point of view exist *not* based on someone’s self-interest? The line between fact and fiction blurs, dissolves; we feel confused, as if we are drowning. Instinctively, we grab the nearest possibly viable “explanation” — no matter how wild and unsupported, how fatuous and self-serving — that might offer relief.

More and more, on a subliminal level, we feel afraid. How to discriminate true from false, authenticity from hype, deliberate lies from mistakes? How to make sense of it all?

Even so-called incontrovertible “truth” is always relative to context; the very next “fact” could expand context and destroy interpretation. So then, what context is appropriate? Where do we “draw the line”? As the philosopher Wittgenstein once said, “It’s hard to go back to the beginning, and not go further back.” Indeed, we could go back forever. For no matter how large or small, how defined or exacting a “controlled experiment” in science, it does not and cannot mimic the infinite complexities of nature.

Overwhelmed by “information overload,” we instinctively clench and curl up, revert to survival mode; we wish we could just stop the world and get off.

In America, we try to “cocoon” ourselves, and blot out the larger, suffering world. Meanwhile, we indulge in sweets, fast food, alcohol, sex, cigarettes, pharmaceuticals, electronics and other drugs, feverishly work to “get ahead” or “stay in the game,” apply and endure beauty and anti-aging treatments, indulge and feel victimized by power-tripping dramas, shop until we drop, and other mind-numbing addictions — all themselves elements that reflect and exacerbate the overwhelm.

Even I, who takes pride in remaining aloof from all (well, most!) superficial distractions, must admit my chronic desire to latch onto a set of simplistic rigid beliefs as a life raft, a black/white screen that filters and funnels information overload into what I can understand and control.

How many times, for example, have I wanted to just blame George W. Bush, the Republican party, and religious evangelists for the complex and deeply rooted, hyperactive and competitive cultural field that holds us in its thrall?

Extreme information overload goes hand in hand with fundamentalist extremes. These two link as poles of a single duality, endpoints of a single line. Yet they also travel on a collision course to form a circle, a noose. Our rigid beliefs and the resulting “spin” ratchet tighter and tighter, become more and more jingoistic in order to continue to blot out more and more information. This accelerating implosion of information and fixed beliefs generates a collective nervous breakdown.

In crisis we may uncover opportunity. Breakdown can signal breakthrough. We need to transform both inductive and deductive modes of thinking and learning.

- Inductive: in order to thread our way through the daily inundation we must develop new ways to discern genuinely relevant information from spin, spam, urban legends, inaccuracies, and downright lies. To do this we must let our minds go, drop into our hearts — and open wide. “The heart has its reasons that the mind will never know.”

- Deductive: in order to let go of fundamentalism we need to learn to trust and even revel in uncertainty, *not* knowing. We must allow and encourage new visions that provoke, stretch, and even conflict with our old beliefs. As Einstein once said, the only real question is, “Is the universe friendly?” By opening to new visions, we allow in new perceptions and commit to the endless, jaw-dropping grace and mystery of the present moment.

In my own life, I utilize astrological symbolism to both describe and understand our dilemma, as well as to suggest a way through.

In the archetypal language of astrology, the polarity between facts and theories refers to the “opposition” (a relationship in the circular zodiac of 180 degrees apart and directly across from each other) between two “signs”; in this case, Gemini (our capacity to perceive, name and communicate the constant flow of phenomena) and Sagittarius (our capacity to comprehend larger, overall philosophical and religious ideas and ideals). Astrological opposites function as complements. Each “sign” — each way of coloring experience — embraces its opposite Other in order to fully develop and balance its capacity.

Thus, we see (Gemini) what we expect to see (Sagittarius). It’s as if each of us looks at the world (Gemini) through a set of glasses with a certain prescription (Sagittarius). Change the prescription, and we encounter a different world.

Moreover, the continual interplay between Gemini and Sagittarius has ethical implications; for how you and I act in the world depends on our “vision” of it. Thus, in order to transform our nightmare vision of increasing chaos and disintegration, we all need to transform our limited, fundamentalist ways of thinking so that we may learn to act in new ways that encourage harmony.

And the time is ripe. The time is now. Indeed, the time is nearly over for us to begin to enact this philosophical transformation.

Whether rebirth surges from the Plutonian implosion of our old epistemology depends in part upon how deeply we acknowledge and work to dismantle our own fundamentalist tendencies. How wide and open can we stretch our minds? Our hearts? Our smiles? — real smiles, smiles of delight and joy that spread warmth and love from the inside out. The synchronicity between our current challenge and the current planetary transit — Pluto moving through Sagittarius — both describes the challenge and gives us tools to work with it.

We have now endured this Plutonian fundamentalist/information overload blitzkrieg for eleven years. I repeat, not quite three years remain for us to begin to recognize that our perceptions of the world are both selected and given meaning by our beliefs. Change our beliefs and what we see changes accordingly. Conversely, when we allow in more of what’s actually “out there,” our beliefs cannot help but transform.

In order to change our beliefs, we must know them — a daunting proposition. For the beliefs that hold us in thrall, the deepest ones, lie hidden within our subconscious minds and constitute the conceptual bedrock upon which we stand.

So, on the one hand, deep beliefs, attitudes and values run on beneath all our conscious thoughts and feelings, and channel ideas and emotions in only certain directions; on the other hand, to question them feels, well, terrifying, like an earthquake. Who wants that?

And yet, unless we do resolutely investigate what keeps us in a certain stance, or trance, smugly ensconced into an old and severely constrained way of understanding and perceiving the world, we will continue to feel separated and even alienated from those who do not think as we do and thus continuously re-energize the root cause of tension, conflict, and war.

Thus I, for one, from this day forward commit myself to sense, acknowledge, and honor other human beings at a level of the heart, below the small, myopic certainty of my “true beliefs.”

My beliefs, like clouds, form and dissolve as they pass through an open, infinite sky. As I let go of belief, I surrender to the empty sky — and allow what my soul has yearned for all along — a joyous, never-ending search for meaning and significance.

Ultimately, as we surrender belief, we once again remember our origins and glimpse the Oneness of which mystics speak — the living cosmos as a single organism embracing each of us as a unique and irreplaceable cell that dissolves, with the pulse of each breath, into a compassionate, ever-expanding awareness.

Nothing is foreign to we who sense this communion.

Update 2010: as predicted by astrology, the global financial meltdown began in early 2008, timed *exactly* with Pluto’s move into Capricorn. Meanwhile, those of us who pay attention to our own “stuff” know that humanity has only barely begun to question, much less dismantle the structures of belief that built this civilization and that Pluto called into question with its journey through Sagittarius.

We weep to witness catastrophic destruction of the flora and fauna in the Gulf of Mexico as Earth gushes her precious blood into its waters from the break 5000 feet deep of the exploded “Deep Water Horizons” oil platform. Nobody knows how long the hemorrhage will continue. Feelings gush up from the deep and threaten to overwhelm the shores of our collective awareness. Perhaps only cataclysmic, human-caused, telluric events such as this one can provoke benumbed, short-sighted, nature-deprived humans to call into question the structures of materialistic belief that generated them as possibilities.

Essay

STANDING IN THE CENTER

The world-view generated by my study of astrology

© Ann Kreilkamp, 1985

As a child I was a female Faust. By the time I grew up I was determined to know everything — all the facts. Though I didn't deal my soul to the devil for knowledge, I did read every page of the encyclopedia — up through the letter "C." In one ear and out the other. I had no net to catch my facts, no principle of selection, no framework beyond the alphabet, no real reason to learn anything in particular.

I never told anyone about my determination. There were limits to what people could accept. They would have called me foolish, naïve. There were too many facts even then, thirty odd years ago, for any one person to collect them all.

Though my project was doomed, the way I went about it was quite acceptable. Let me explain.

For the past three hundred years we who live in the western world have been making the assumption that all our knowledge arises originally from impressions made upon the five outer senses, impressions which, once translated into words, we call "facts." This method of learning we call "scientific," and its theoretical formulation we owe to the philosopher John Locke, who said that when we are born our minds are "blank tablets" ready to receive "impressions" from the outside world. All our knowledge, he said, is gained "inductively," from experience through our five outer senses.

Though I didn't know it then, there was a (Lockean) method to my madness. Despite my naivete, my failure to achieve my goal, the path I had chosen was traditional.

Rene Descartes, speaking at the same time as Locke, said the opposite: all our knowledge comes from God. We are born, he said, with “innate ideas,” and these ideas are guaranteed true. Why? Because God is perfect, therefore God wouldn't lie to us.

This method of learning we now call “deductive” (or, sometimes, “intuitive”). In contrast to learning from the bottom up, deductive learning proceeds from the top on down.

Descartes' faith in God's benevolence describes the other half of my child's mind. A good Catholic girl, I trusted dogma — for the same reason Descartes did.

Three centuries ago, Descartes and Locke engaged in a debate as to which method of learning — inductivism or deductivism — was correct. This debate still continues in academic circles, though we call it by different names: “nature versus nurture,” “heredity versus conditioning.”

Though this debate is abstract, its real world consequences reach far and wide. Legal dilemmas reconciling the claims of religion with those of the state, ethical choices as to whether to send someone to jail or try to rehabilitate him, educational choices as to what and how to teach in schools — these choices, among others, reflect how we decide, usually unconsciously, the outcome of this debate.

Those who value deductive over inductive learning tend to be somewhat rigid in their views, and are more likely to favor the status quo. Quite certain that their beliefs are true — after all, God is on their side — they are not only unlikely to appreciate others' points of view, but indeed often feel it their duty to convert others to their own. This attitude — need I say it? — is the fertile breeding ground for war, and indeed we could say that all wars are religious wars, the protagonists fighting over whose God is the real one. (In this context, we might call both Capitalism and Communism religions.)

Those who value inductive over deductive learning tend to be more broadminded, but lack backbone. Believing that anybody can be educated into believing anything, they tend to treat the human mind as if it were a machine, a computer, where all learning is Skinnerian conditioning, brainwashing. This view of the mind is a fertile field for consumer advertising and presidential campaigns. Here, ethical and metaphysical questions do not arise, unless programmed.

Debates, in their abstract form, are dueling dualities. Protagonists hold opposite views, each seeking to present the best reasons for holding to his position rather than switching to the other. There is, in principle, no natural stopping point for a debate, as one can always discover another, better reason for holding on than one has come up with so far. Given the inherent structure of the intellectual game of debate, it's no wonder, after three hundred years, we are still trying to choose between Locke and Descartes.

Our debates describe the limits of our thinking. It takes imagination to see beyond them.

Most people, if asked, would attempt to choose one side or the other. In practice, however, these same people act as if both sides are true — in their respective areas. They divide their minds into two parts, each working independently. I think of my own father here: a medical doctor, one side of his brain judges what is real according to scientific standards; a devout Catholic, the other side of his brain *believes*, beyond reason. Credo, ut intelligam.

Think of opposites as two poles, or end-points, of one line. Make this line the diameter of a circle. Viewed in this way, dualities measure the sizes of our circles, and their circumferences describe the limits of our imaginations.

Any particular debate is possible only when we are inside the circle which its dualities define. Once we see a circle as a whole, from the outside, that debate disappears. There is no either/or; there is both/and.

We don't solve our internal divisions. Rather, we transcend them, move beyond them.

Each of us stands inside the circle of his/her own world-view. Our world-views describe for us the ways it is possible for us to think. Once we reach the boundary-system of our particular circle, once we see/feel its outer limits, we can choose: do we move beyond that circle to a larger, more inclusive one, or do we repeat ourselves, going round and round in circles.

The esoteric belief system and its description through the astrological language offers us another, larger world-view than the one we are accustomed to using. Here, there are no debates between dualities; these resolve into larger wholes.

Imagine each planet as an energy. Imagine its orbit as a circle, or cycle, carved into space around the earth as centerpoint, through time.

Each of us is standing in the center of an infinitely expanding world. The more energies we tune into, the greater, the more inclusive our awareness.

Essay

TRANSFORMING FUNDAMENTALISM

Saturn in Gemini vs. Pluto in Sagittarius

Celestial Navigations # 13, July 2001

© Ann Kreilkamp

One keynote of this millennial age is the escalating bombardment of linguistic, imagistic, and other data. This subjects our nervous system to increasing stress. To ward off the breakdown we soothe ourselves through entertainment, drugs, alcohol and other mind-numbing distractions. While these may momentarily calm us, they also dull our senses, dumb us down.

Another keynote continues the long-time trend polarizing the world into good and evil, with evil projected onto the Other as scapegoat. For hundreds of years this type of worldview has been a defining characteristic of fundamentalist religions; since the Cold War it has infected U.S. culture and politics.

When the Berlin Wall fell in 1989, the simple, stark iron curtain polarization between East and West fissioned into what Vaclav Havel first identified as a “multi-polar world” in 1992. The 1990s spawned proliferating and increasingly strident and up-front polarities within and between tribes, ethnicities, races, and nations. In this country, Democrats are pitted against Republicans, fundamentalists vs relativists, rich vs poor, militarists vs peaceniks, environmentalists vs industrialists; now, at the dawn of

the 21st century, our new President's ignorant and arrogant policies have spawned the most dangerous polarization of all: the United States vs the rest of the world.

Information and its overload are governed by Gemini; belief-systems and worldviews by Sagittarius.

Gemini and Sagittarius sit polarized, opposite, directly across from each other across the circle of the zodiac.

In any opposition, if we identify with only one side, we will find ourselves in conflict with the other. Alternatively, if we acknowledge the reality of both sides, and create space for both, then opposites transform into complements. Rather than seeking to eliminate each other, they can work together in a larger, shared reality.

With Gemini, we absorb, name and classify what William James called the “buzzing, booming confusion” of the five outer senses. With Sagittarius, we seek to create or discover larger patterns to give order to the dizzying mess of data. The two signs are integral, necessary to each other. Without a coherent worldview, we cannot understand the passing show. Without facts and figures our worldviews are castles in the air, lacking foundation.

These are important principles to review now when both Gemini and Sagittarius are emphasized in the sky.

Two planets have been in Gemini: Jupiter, since July, 2000, and Saturn since late April 2001. Two planets plus a comet are in Sagittarius: Pluto since late 1995, comet Chiron since January, 1999, and Mars since February, 2001.

Pluto is the planet of power, of death and rebirth. In this context, note that on May 24, 2001, when Senator Jeffords “defected” from the Republican Party (a day when Mercury and the Moon were also in the Gemini array opposing Pluto/Chiron/Mars in Sagittarius), one little fact (Gemini) altered the balance of power (Pluto) so that the entire gestalt Sagittarius) of the Senate collapsed and reconfigured.

Pluto will remain in Sagittarius until 2008. Expect other extraordinary awakenings to the various meanings of power and transformation in the world-views which hold power during the entire period of Pluto's passage through Sagittarius.

Jupiter left Gemini for Cancer on July 14th. Mars and Chiron will enter Capricorn this September and December, respectively. However, Saturn will remain in Gemini until June of 2003.

For another two years we will continue to learn how to integrate the Gemini/Sagittarius polarity. There is no escape. Whether we notice it in the outer world or identify it internally, this polarity is there. The key is to learn how to expand to simultaneously embrace both poles of the axis.

Opportunities for integrating these two principles, of receiving information and learning to put that information into meaningful wholes, will be especially prevalent during the times when Saturn reaches 12-14° Gemini, very close to exact opposition to Pluto, now, in late July, through the end of November (exactly opposed on August 6 and on November 7, 2001), and again when Saturn reaches 16° Gemini opposing Pluto from mid-May through early June, 2002 (exact on May 26).

From now until next June, the information which we will need to absorb will be especially critical and serious (Saturn) when juxtaposed with our usual worldview (Sagittarius); contradictions between the two will in turn generate energy for transforming (Pluto) our worldview, which in turn will force us to look at information (Gemini) in all kinds of new ways.

Those trained in logic do not like to confront contradictions. As my logic teacher in graduate school pointed out, "from a contradiction, anything follows, *anything!*" Yes. When faced with contradictions between what we perceive and what we believe, we tend to deny one and hold on to the other. But we need to acknowledge that anything might happen at any time, that we have no corner on truth, and that when we think we know something, we have most likely driven ourselves into an intellectual dead end from which our larger selves will insist we break free. (Whether breakthrough comes in this

life or the next is up to us! Ignorance is *not* bliss! To hold on to denial is to prolong boredom, depression, or worse.)

But the difficulty of integrating the two realms does not stop with the contradiction between them. The mental realms of Gemini and Sagittarius are both much more complex than we'd like to think.

For example, who has not said, "Once I have all the facts, I can make up my mind"? "All the facts" — as if there is any such thing! As in mathematics, where between any two points there is always another, so too with facts. In any real life situation, the facts are in principle infinite, and in practice, indefinite. Though we may try to discover all the facts, at some point we get tired and our decision is ultimately based on a leap of faith.

Not only that, but as Werner Heisenberg and others have shown, just looking at a fact changes it. There is no such thing as a fact, lying there unadorned, an object in a room. A "fact" is always a relationship between the observer and the observed. What seems like a fact to me looks very different to you. You have a different relationship to what you perceive than I do, even if it seems like we are looking at the same fact! Not just visually, but in all ways. Until we really can step into each other's shoes and be in each other's bodies with all the history that implies, we have no hope of ever seeing any two things the same way.

Moreover, what may seem to me to be a fact one day looks very different the next. Like Heraclitus's river, each of us is a biological/emotional/mental/spiritual organism in the process of continuous change. Nothing can be repeated. It's not even the same as it was one millisecond ago.

It used to be that we thought facts were immutable, like hard little diamonds, each shining fact serving as one of the building blocks for theories which we constructed from the bottom up. That worldview, called "logical positivism," still rules, although others have begun to deconstruct the so-called "objective reality" of what even CNN now identifies as "factoids."

Our way of selecting among facts is not "objective" either, but is based on our theories, on what we *expect* to find. Moreover, we are beginning to appreciate that our

theories themselves are just guesses, conjectures which cannot be proven, only disproven. Theories are like anything that orders a number of parts within it. The theory may be elegant, or simple, or subtle, or complex, but we cannot say whether it is true, since a counterexample would disprove it, and that could come at any time.

One might say that on the epistemological frontier, both Gemini facts and Sagittarian theories appear to be mere chimerical reflections of the mind at play, rather than guarantees for an accurate mental picture of an outside reality.

All this talk about the subtleties of the mind and its link, if any, with the real world, though easy to rattle off, is fiendishly difficult to live in practice. Take me, for example. As a double Sagittarian, all my life I have been driven to Know. As my husband Jeffrey likes to joke, I have the temperament of a fundamentalist, a true believer. Especially when confronted with a baffling situation, one which sprouts conundrums like spores in the wind, I want to single out one of these spores and clutch it, like a drowning man catches a piece of floating debris.

All my adult life I have been working to evolve my Sagittarian nature out of fundamentalism and into relativism. Not the usual “nothing counts, so I can do anything I want” but the more difficult relativism of recognizing that the left-brain mind cannot access Truth, that all it can do is process information. That Truth, the big Sagittarian truth, is accessed through the right brain, and that, in turn, must be linked to the heart in order for its truths to be meaningful to me and compassionate to others.

The problem, for us fundamentalists, is that the right brain isn’t logical, nor are its ideas clear and distinct. When I judge the truths of the right brain by the standards of the left, then I think that all my wondering is mere confusion. Dreams, visions, images, synchronicities, vague hunches — all these nourish the right brain, and yet are hard to interpret in a Cartesian “clear and distinct” manner, not to mention logically explain or justify.

What helps me is to recognize that the left brain, if left to its own devices, ends up rigid and sterile, endlessly repeating dogmas that lost their relevance a long time ago. When I allow my beliefs to rule me, they do, by automatically filtering out any

experience which contradicts the reigning dogma. In this way, I never even have to know what I am missing! Nothing has to change. No matter how much I experience, I never learn.

This was my position when I decided, on a whim, to attend a UFO conference, my first, in June 2000. I was going as a detached observer, a sociologist. I wanted to see just who these people are who participate in such a gathering. My smugness was short-lived; within hours I was “hooked.” Objectivity flew out the window and I found myself listening with jaw-dropped amazement to the stories of UFO and ET experiences, contactees and abductees, as they are variously known.

But although my jaw dropped immediately, the rest of me soon began to squirm. For I noticed that the reality implied by many of the stories contradicted each other. This made me uneasy.

Looking at that experience now, I would say that of course it bothered me, since my fundamentalist self couldn't stand contradiction. I wanted to know the truth! Who was telling the truth, who was lying, who was misguided, imagining things, insane, blinded by fear, etc. I was riveted by the stories, and even more riveted by my need to figure out who was who, what was what. My fundamentalist self sought to find the one story more credible than all the others, latch on to it, i.e., treat it as my new true belief, and then judge all the others as falling off more or less from that one standard.

So that was last year.

One month ago I went to the 2001 UFO conference, and this time, having chewed over the meaning of my response to the first event for a year and especially having dared to take what might be a first really good look at my own fundamentalism, I wanted to see what my own process would be this time around.

And do you know, despite my dogmatic German temperament, I actually appear to have learned something? Not about what is true and what isn't, but rather about how to make room for all the various stories (and their truths or not) inside myself at once without having to know which are true and which are governmental disinformation, illusions, lies, misinterpretations, etc.

And I discovered something very exciting in the process. I discovered that I felt much lighter and more spacious as a result of this new way of working with information, no matter how strange or bizarre, how out of kilter some or most of it might be with my usual world-view.

I discovered that if I truly did hold all these seemingly contradictory stories and beliefs about extraterrestrials and the various dimensions and star systems they occupy, not to mention all the various interpretations of them involving a secret and unaccountable aspect of the U.S. government — that if I really did make room for them all without having to know what was true, what was false, that I became “enlightened” — that is, my being became lighter.

This was the revelation I was seeking, and I now realize it was why I felt impelled to go to these particular conferences. For I want to increase my awareness, and that means I need to expose myself to the most “outlandish” (pardon the pun) views. In order to incorporate these views, I myself must expand, and continue to expand.

Now that it’s over, I realize I was working with expansive Jupiter while it was in Gemini. Now Jupiter has moved into Cancer. What is left is Saturn in Gemini. And strict Saturn reminds me that there still remains the problem of what is true, and what not. But how to decide?

At this point, I realize that my worldview (Sagittarius) is much too limited to even begin to make sense of all the contradictory data. So I’ve decided to do something which may look like laziness; I’m going to follow the wisdom buried in a cliché and “sleep on it.” I figure the unconscious knows much more than I do, and can process in ways that I, in my waking state, would find absurd or mysterious. I may have to sleep on it for months, even years, before my worldview can even begin to put all this perplexing information in perspective. As Einstein said (and I paraphrase), we can’t solve a problem at the level of the problem; rather we must place the problem in a larger context, at which point the problem dissolves.

I mention all this because it may be relevant to you as well, dear reader. During this ten month process of Saturn opposing Pluto, we need to look at our long-held beliefs,

and see how any belief, no matter how expanded, is always — in all ways — limiting. Sometimes we need to permit and actually embrace experiences that are guaranteed to confuse us — because whatever these experiences imply will contradict long-held beliefs and eventually force our minds to expand beyond them.

While, for me, admitting UFO/ET phenomena into my world is an experiment in consciousness, it is not just that. For 30 years I have said that we need to recognize that “earth is a heavenly body.” That we are not alone in the universe, that our earth’s home is the larger heavens. But before now, this idea was abstract, something that I, as an astrologer, would be expected to think.

Here are all these people on earth, I used to say, looking down at their own little fiefdoms, whether a patch of ground or an empire; still, it is a looking-down. What if we changed our view, and looked up! Not just to get a sun tan, or to admire the Moon when it is full, but to recognize the infinity of space that surrounds us, to allow in that dizziness natural to any gravity-based being who contemplates a limitless universe.

Now I’ve been introduced to the possible ET species (reportedly 101 of them so far identified) which inhabit space and are visiting us (I hear all of them communicate telepathically). I’ve been introduced to multiple dimensions we are said to live in, even though we ourselves are usually only familiar with three. I’ve been introduced to possible military involvement with ETs, and to sinister ramifications.

I find it interesting that at the time when Jupiter, the planet of consciousness expansion, opposed Pluto, in early May, that an extraordinary event occurred related to this ET business. That was on May 9, at the National Press Club, a two-hour presentation by Steven Greer’s Disclosure Project. Twenty high-level government and aerospace witnesses (including Daniel Sheehan, attorney for the Pentagon Papers) testified as to their experiences with ET/UFOs, and said they would be willing to testify before Congress under oath.

To find out more about the May 9th event, go to www.disclosureproject.org.

I recommend you do this as an experiment in consciousness and as a first step in understanding the just completed Jupiter/Pluto expansion which will be concretized (Saturn) in the world over the next ten months through the Saturn/Pluto opposition.

No major newspaper in the U.S. put this event on its front page, despite the fact that once it is recognized, our entire world-view, and hence how we live upon the earth, will transform. U.S. citizens have been brainwashed by the rigid left-brain dogma of the U.S. government and media, and we are much the poorer for it.

Allow me to put this UFO/ET business in a larger astrological context:

Let's go back, first, to the end of the 19th century, when in 1891-92, Neptune and Pluto met up with one another in the sign of Gemini (8-9°) for the first time in 500 years. A new cycle began then, a cycle which symbolized transformation (Pluto) of the mind from left-brain (Gemini) to whole brain (including right-brain: Neptune). During the 20th century, the external results were obvious in the invention and explosion of communication (Gemini) and transportation (Gemini) technologies.

Also in that first phase of the working out of this new 500 year Neptune/Pluto cycle were Einstein's theory of relativity in physics and Freud's discovery of the unconscious in psychology. It appears that both these discoveries will continue to ramify well into the 21st century. The mind itself is to be transformed into a relativistic instrument capable of recognizing, communicating, and working with dimensions beyond the limits of ordinary awareness.

The first major aspect between Neptune and Pluto was the free-flowing sextile (60°), which began in 1942, when Neptune moved into Libra (as Gemini is an air sign, so is Libra) while Pluto was in Leo. Ever since then, these two planets have been traveling a near-60° relationship to each other as they sequence through the signs. This sextile will begin to wane in 2023. Let's hope that by that time, we will absorb the alliance between mental and spiritual transformation.

Utilizing one version of the U.S. chart for the Declaration of Independence with a 13° Sagittarian Ascendant, notice that the Jupiter/Pluto opposition during the Disclosure Project Press Conference on May 9 at 14-15° Gemini/Sagittarius was only one

degree away from being exactly conjunct the U.S. Ascendant/Descendant axis. Bingo! Notice that the Saturn/Pluto conjunction during this coming ten month period will be from 12° to 16° of Gemini/Sagittarius. Again, directly criss-crossing that same U.S. axis.

It seems that the U.S. Government is going through an extraordinary transformation with both its own people and in its relationship with the rest of the world. The Bush team's contemptuous dismissal of all opponents of its attitudes towards global warming, environmentalism, and missile defense has put the U.S. in the position of rogue state, the bully on the block. If the UFO/ET Disclosure Project begins to get the attention of U.S. citizens, we may discover that a secret part of our federal government has been enslaving us to the nuclear/big oil/war industry economy, and masterminding the propaganda used to keep us either in fear of or ridiculing the possibility of ET/UFOs. Furthermore, as we begin to look up into the heavens and to recognize earth's home in the universe and humanity's family in the diversity of ET species, we may discover that current ET technologies present us with the possibility of free energy which will help us reverse global warming and other environmental degradations. And perhaps what is most critical now — I write this on the days following the trumped-up "success" of the July 14 ballistic missile defense test — we may discover that the ultimate rationale for missile defense is that it is an anti-ET agenda. That the secret government plans to hijack the galactic human destiny.

A skeptic might argue that I have just flipped into a new fundamentalism, a new true belief. Perhaps. In any case, I (and we) shall be finding out over the next few years as Pluto finalizes its focus on Sagittarius.

Don't believe me. See for yourself. Get the video: www.disclosureproject.org.

[Note, 2022: this essay was written two months prior to the 911 event, timed to occur with the Saturn/Pluto opposition which I discuss above, sitting directly on the Ascendant/Descendant of the U.S. chart. It may be that this event was designed to turn us away not just from Rumsfeld's admission of the day before that 2.3 trillion Pentagon dollars were unaccounted for, but it was to also make sure that the disclosure project did NOT grab the attention of the U.S. public.]