

Excerpts from: Finding Our Center: Wisdom from the Stars and Planets in Times of Change - by Heather Ensworth, Ph.D.

**CHAPTER SIXTEEN -
FINDING OUR CENTER**

So what is this birthplace, this source, the cosmic womb that has given birth to all life? Across the past century, physicists and astronomers have been struggling to grasp the nature of the energies of our Universe and the nature of the galactic center. Their findings have revolutionized our understanding of reality. Einstein's explorations of the forces moving through the cosmos have led to the theory of relativity and the revision of Newtonian physics, which has shaped our understanding of the cosmos for the past five hundred years. Recent research with the use of the Hubble telescope and examinations of the galactic center through radio and gamma ray technologies have led us to a deeper understanding of the nature of the center of our galaxy.

As we noted at the beginning of our journey through the zodiac, across human history, we have searched for the path to the center. The medicine wheel, the mandala and the circle as symbols for wholeness and the search for Source permeate all cultures and all religions. Ancient cultures oriented their land and located the seat of power and of sacred sites at the center of their region. We have searched for the center in the Sky from the ancient focus on the celestial pole as a source of stillness in the swirling landscape of stars to the ancient cultural view of the Milky Way as the source of life where the World Tree attaches and holds the Universe intact.

So where is the center that we can orient our lives from? As we look for the center, we first must honor our location on our Earth, our home. Then, we journey out to the center of our solar system, our Sun. Then, we remember that our Sun is one star among the 300 billion stars in our Milky Way galaxy and may be one in a binary star system revolving around a central point. Finally, we look to the center of our galaxy, our ultimate source. This is what Sedna is guiding us towards as she moves from the primordial matter of our solar system, the Oort cloud, and experiences the energies of the surrounding star systems and then brings that awareness back into our inner solar system.

Our Earth resides in the Milky Way galaxy, a spiral galaxy consisting of 300 billion stars and a diameter of about 100,000 light years. Our galaxy is the second largest in a group of over 30 galaxies comprising what is called the Local Group of galaxies (Melia, p. 3). The nearest galaxy is Andromeda, which is 2.4 million light years away. Our solar system is on the Orion arm of our Milky Way galaxy about two-thirds of the way out or about 30,000 light years from the center. We orbit around this galactic center at about 250 kilometers per second, taking 225,000 years to complete one cycle. Our Sun was formed roughly 4.6 billion years ago, so the elements that make up our bodies have orbited the center of our galaxy approximately 20 times (Melia, p. 8).

Recent research has shown that we live in a Universe of which only 4% is matter as we know it. 23% is unseen dark matter and 73% is dark energy of which we only have the beginning

glimmers of understanding. Of the 4% that is visible matter, astronomers have only seen and researched 1% of that. We live in a Universe filled with mystery far beyond our comprehension and in a spiral galaxy filled with wonder.

What is the center of our galaxy? Only in recent years have scientists come to understand more fully the location and nature of our galactic center. Prior to the use of radio telescopes, our most powerful optic telescopes were unable to glimpse this amazing site due to the cloud of space dust obscuring our vision. Through radio astronomy, we are able to move beyond this veil to glimpse the amazing source of our galaxy. What we now know is that if the galactic center was unobscured, its size and brightness would be comparable to the full Moon, lighting up our night sky (Melia, p. 8). Instead, it moves in darkness, veiled from our eyes. Surrounding the galactic center is a concentration of stars, drawn by the powerful gravitational pull of this source. It is from this center that our galaxy was formed almost 14 billion years ago in a cosmic explosion. As we noted earlier, this concentration of stars is viewed through our constellation Sagittarius, the archer whose arrow points into the galactic center.

What is the nature of this cosmic source? Our radio telescope views of this amazing site have given us some sense of the composition of this region. What we find are a concentration of stars and three spiraling arms of hot gas, known as Sagittarius A West emanating from the source and moving in a counterclockwise manner, a triskelion of sorts. There is also an enormous bubble of hot gas, known as Sagittarius A East that is most likely the result of a star that ventured too close to the center and exploded, yielding the power of 50 to 100 supernovas (Melia, p. 15). At the center of all of this pulsing, moving heat and energy is Sagittarius A*, what we now know to be a massive black hole with the power of 2.6 million Suns emanating from its source and with a diameter about the size of the orbit of our planet Mars (Melia, p. 40). While stars close to this center move at amazing speed (up to 5 million kilometers per hour) due to its phenomenal gravitational pull and the triple spiraling arms of hot gas dance in graceful movement around it, Sagittarius A*, the galactic center, does not move. This powerful source is truly the still point in our galaxy.

What is it made of? This super massive black hole is composed of “dark” matter, meaning its gravitational pull is so great that it absorbs all matter and light. Physicists since Einstein and the theory of relativity now realize that gravity affects both light and time. Strong gravitational energy can bend light and slow down time. The compressed energy of the black hole at the center of our galaxy is so great that no light can escape from it, and time stops. It becomes a world onto itself from which nothing can escape, surrounded by a virtual membrane, the event horizon. This amazing center is the source of all of life in our galaxy and the place of its ending; it is the Creatrix and the Destroyer. It is the dark womb that has given birth to all of the stars in our galaxy and the tomb, drawing them in to die. Within this compressed source of power is a mystery beyond our wildest imagining and a realm that we can never fully comprehend. Brian Swimme refers to this amazing Source as the “all-nourishing abyss,” the “foundational reality of the universe” and the “ocean of potentiality” that brings forth all life and then absorbs it back into itself (Swimme, p. 100).

What is also amazing for us to comprehend is that we live in an expanding Universe. Einstein’s mathematical formulations, which shocked even him, indicate that the galaxies are moving away from each other at a velocity related to the space between them (Swimme, p. 75).

In other words, the greater the distance between them, the faster they are moving apart. At the birth of our Universe, there was an explosion that we can still monitor in terms of the movement of photons across the galaxies. Yet, amazingly, this fiery birth was also the beginning of our notions of space and time. There was no space or time before this creation. From the void, came all of life.

As Edwin Hubble discovered, as we measure the galactic expansion, we discover that we are at the center with everything moving away from us. In other words, every point used to measure this expansion becomes the center. Brian Swimme in *The Hidden Heart of the Cosmos* explores this amazing paradox. What we find is that we live in a complex, omni-centric evolutionary universe with a cosmic explosion as our birth yet, at the same time, a “developing reality which from the beginning is centered upon itself at each place of its existence,” (Swimme, p. 85).

What does this mean? It means that our former Newtonian notions of space and time were inaccurate and inadequate. For centuries, we have held a view of ourselves as fixed in space and time, consisting of solid form. We now know that is an illusion. We initially began to come to this awareness through the discovery that we consist of atoms, tiny invisible molecules of matter, existing in an expanse of space. We are mostly space, the expansiveness between these molecules. Yet, now, our scientific understanding has taken us even deeper into the realization that even this conception is false. In reality, we now know that the elementary particles of life, photons, the light energy that forms into matter, arise out of the vacuum itself. They do not move in space or stay in a fixed state; they “foam” into and out of existence. Physicists refer to this ground of being as “space-time foam,” (Swimme, p. 93). As Swimme describes it:

...the elementary particles and atoms are not permanently existing objects but are events that are vibrating at extremely rapid rates. Even the word “vibrate” is not exact, for it connotes a solid object that moves rapidly back and forth in space. ... we know in fact that it is not true to think of particles moving back and forth in space. Rather, as has been celebrated and discussed throughout most of the twentieth century, particles exist in one location and then exist in another location *without traversing the space in between*. So, as bewildering as it might sound to us, it is more accurately scientifically to say that the particles and atoms are flashing into existence, surging into existence, and then just as suddenly they are dissolving from their place to surge forth in a nearby location... (Swimme, p. 102)

Beyond the reach of our eyes, and almost beyond the capabilities of our imagining, the particles of life foam into being and then dissolve again, everywhere throughout the universe. This birthing of our Universe at the galactic center is thus mirrored throughout time and space. We and all of life arise out of the fecund void, the womb of the Universe, the Great Goddess of Creation and Destruction and move through cycles of birth/death and rebirth. This galactic center is our birthplace, our true center, and yet the act of creation and the center is also within each of us at each moment. We dance into being and then dissolve back into the sea of all being, of all

potentiality. With the galactic center, we are co-creators of our own destiny and move with the currents and rhythms of the Earth and the Sky.

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN - CONCLUSION: COMING FULL CIRCLE

Now that we have moved around the wheel of the zodiac and found our way to the center, what does it all mean? How has this exploration of the sky and our ancient and modern understandings of it provided us with any guidance for our lives in this time? We have come to realize that the movements of the sky are mirrored in the events on the Earth and that we can find meaning in the stars and planets that surround us. We have searched for the center and found it in the heart of the galaxy and within ourselves. But what does this mean for our day to day lives?

In that we are in a profound time of transition, astrologically, globally and environmentally, we need to realize that we are in a time of letting go and yet not knowing what new forms or ways of being will emerge. This is similar to the monthly lunar cycle when at the time of the dark of the Moon, the old cycle has ended but the new Moon has not yet become visible in the sky. We now live in a time of mystery, of liminality, and need to honor being in the dark, without knowing what will be born on the other side of this profound time of change. We know from ancient prophesies and modern science that this is a time of intense change and a time when we either need to change our ways of thinking and being or we are likely to self-destruct as a species. But what the change means, what we are meant to become, what the new forms of consciousness are – that we can not fully know. So, part of the challenge of our time is to honor that process of releasing, of dying to what has been, without knowing the shape or form of what is to come.

This process of letting go and of honoring the liminal time (the in-between space) is a critical phase of any rite of passage, and this is the message of Neptune and of Sedna. Rather than fighting to cling to the past and to what is familiar, we need to let those old ways of being dissolve. This is the lesson of non-attachment and the ancient wisdom of dying to ourselves (and our former ways of being) that we might be reborn. We can honor this letting go through individual and group rituals and rites of passage. For example, we may want to ceremonially release those ways of being that no longer serve us by symbolically giving them to the sea or writing them down on paper and burning them in a fire.

We also can live that reality daily in breaking old habits and patterns that keep us locked into an illusion of security and familiarity. This does not mean becoming chaotic or impulsive in our behavior, but rather it means bringing that deeper galactic consciousness to our day-to-day lives in realizing that what we view as fixed and determined and stable in our lives is really an illusion. It is as if the forms and structures of our lives and of our world are fractals that have appeared from the sea of chaos and potentiality and must dissolve back into that source for some new form and structure to emerge. If we can view all of matter, systems and structure in this way, we can live in a more fluid manner and not attach our identity or security to particular patterns, structures or forms.

On a practical level, this means that we need to simplify our lives. In living more simply, we can begin to honor a more sustainable way of being. In de-cluttering our external environment, we can begin to attune to what is truly necessary and authentic to our lives at a deeper level. It is also important to reduce the clutter and chatter in our internal lives by taking time away from the over-stimulation of the world around us so that we can begin to meditate, listen to the wisdom within and take time to listen and attune to the natural world again.

Being open to these changes also means being open to the unknown and to the new ways of being that will emerge. Culturally, it is as if we have only viewed reality as that 4% of visible matter in our Universe. Yet, 96% of our Universe is mysterious dark energy and unseen dark matter. We live in a reality that we cannot understand. Our lives are embedded in mystery. We float in a cosmic womb that holds us but is beyond our control or comprehension. As we realize that we are truly a part of our unfathomable Universe and shaped by larger cosmic patterns and cycles, we can find our security in that mystery and in our awe of the Source of our being.

It is an amazing synchronicity that 4% of the Universe is visible matter, and scientists have discovered that only 4% of our DNA accounts for our visible form. The other 96% has been labeled “junk DNA” (by Susumu Ohno in 1972 in a scientific journal for DNA with no known function) due to our blindness to what is beyond the visible realm. Many spiritual teachers and shamans tell us that this remaining DNA is what holds the star wisdom and our connection to the wisdom from across time and space. By engaging in meditation, shamanic journeys or through experiences of altered consciousness, we can open to the wisdom within our bodies that connects us with the stars and with the matrix of Creation and of the Universe. Modern scientific knowledge, achieved through our observations, is only able to help us to access a limited amount of information, just as we have been able to actually observe and research only 1% of the Universe ($\frac{1}{4}$ of the visible matter). Utilizing more ancient and shamanic ways of knowing can allow us to more directly access wisdom and guidance from the Universe. These more intuitive right-brain ways of knowing provide an important balance and complement to our left-brain analytical ways of learning.

In this time of profound change, we are opening more fully to the visible and invisible realms and are letting go of old belief systems and ways of being. The changes in the world around us call us into transition and transformation. We are bombarded daily by news of global chaos, terrorism and war. We hear scientists talk of “peak oil” and how our global economy and modern lifestyles may drastically change across the coming years. We watch as the weather patterns shift in dramatic ways with global warming, and species become extinct through the effects of human pollution and over-population. Our world as we have known it is radically changing.

Many of us react to these changes with either despair or denial. We feel helpless in the face of the magnitude of the challenges that surround us. Some of us work hard through activism to call attention to the current global crises and to help us reorient our lives to make meaningful changes. This is evident in the work of many scientists and environmentalists concerned with global warming and in the peace activists who see our need to unite and collaborate as a global community. Others of us try to deal with the challenges by exerting even more effort to be in control and to cling to old ways of being. This was apparent, for example, in many of the policies and actions of the Bush/Cheney administration in the United States following the crisis of

September 11, 2001. Yet, these types of efforts only exacerbate our problems as we saw in the increase in terrorism and mistrust of the United States around the world in the past several years. As we noted in the myth of Sedna, the father's effort to regain control and to take back his daughter led to disaster and to her death.

Rather than clinging to the past, following Sedna's example, we need to dare to have the courage to step out of the cultural norms as Sedna followed Raven into the wilderness, into the unknown, setting her life on a new course. We do not know where this path of transformation may lead, but we have to trust that we are held by larger powers and forces that are beyond our comprehension. While making conscious choices and taking the steps that we can in positive ways to address our current issues, we also need to be open to new ways of consciousness and radically new ways of being.

It also means preparing ourselves for the changes that are occurring on a global level – environmentally, economically, politically and socially. It is important that we not expect the old forms and systems of government and business to continue as they have across the past few hundred years. What we have relied on as our external sources of security have been bound to a way of being that has exploited the resources of our world and led us to the brink of disaster. We need to allow ourselves to divest of our attachment to and dependence on that way of life.

How do we follow this path? As Pluto speaks to us of the death of old ways of being and knowing, we realize that our guidance will not come through the religious forms or beliefs of the past or through the dictates of political or even spiritual leaders. It will not come from outside of us or from some power over us or external authority. We will not find our way by exerting even more control and dominance over others or over the natural environment. The ancient wisdom of the past and the findings of modern quantum physics tell us that everything is interconnected, and that the path to healing is through finding and knowing the center within ourselves and in recognizing the consciousness in all of life and the source, the unity, from which we all come.

What we have realized from our journey through time and across space is that the Universe is sentient. We may call this Spirit or energy, and this Soul of the Cosmos is speaking to us through the patterns of the Sky and of the Earth in each moment. This means we need to learn the way of deep listening and intuition, attuning to the whisper of Spirit and the wisdom of our own bodies. It means finding the center within, the divinity that resides in each one of us. It means learning to discern truth from illusion and continually refining our ability to see and hear what is all around us. This truth resides in the patterns of the stars, the shape of a flower or the movement of a bird and lives in our own hearts. The center, the source, the knowing, is within us as well as in all of life.

If we begin to live in compassion, from the heart, the path to that knowing will deepen, and we will begin to understand the truth of our interconnectedness and oneness with all of life. As Thomas Berry asserts, this is the challenge of moving into the new Eco-zoic Age in which we remember that we live in communion with all of life rather than relating to the world around us as objects to be exploited. To do this, we have to come back into deeper connection with our hearts.

Recent research by the Heartmath Institute has shown that our heart actually has neurotransmitters, much like our brains. These researchers have found that we tap into our intuition and most effective decision-making abilities not by linear analysis with our minds but

by attuning to our hearts. In this way, the brain is entrained by the heart and knows how to respond, rather than the mind dominating and entraining the heart, which results in confusion, stress and illness as well as disconnection from the body and from the natural world.

By learning to listen to our inner knowing and our heart's awareness (living from our center attuned to the center of the Universe), we will learn what it means to be in right relationship with ourselves and with all of life. The Sedna story is one wisdom tale about the importance of right relationship. As we have seen, it is a myth coming to us from the Inuit people, and it speaks deeply of their awareness that to live and thrive, they needed to honor and be in right relationship with the land and sea around them. The myth relates how their relationship with the Arctic Sea, their source of life and sustenance, was not as a resource to be managed or exploited, but as an entity to honor and respect.

This was manifested in the act of gratitude and reverence after the first catch of a fish when the fisherman would spill drops of fresh water into the mouth of the fish and give thanks to Sedna, the Mother of the Sea Creatures. The story also emphasized that Sedna observed how the fish and sea creatures were treated after being killed for the food and clothing for the people. If they were treated with respect, she would be pleased. If not, the people could expect her punishment through deprivation of fish or through storms. The meaning of this story is clear; we experience direct consequences in relation to how we treat the natural world around us and its creatures. We see that now in the consequences of global warming and the diseases resulting from the toxins in the environment. So, a deep part of the message of the Earth and the Sky in this time is our need to return to right relationship with each other and with the world around us.

What does that mean? How do we live in right relationship?

Imagine living as if everything around you was alive and sentient. Imagine experiencing the rock in your garden, the tree on the side of the street, the squirrel running up the tree and yourself as equal in value. Think how differently you might live. If we lived this way, we would no longer view our natural environment or others or even our own bodies as objects to be controlled and used. Instead, we would learn to live in reverence, respect and gratitude. We would begin to truly see and listen again. Everything around us would be seen and known as a celebration and manifestation of the Spirit, the energy that is in all of life, in all that exists. When we sat down to dinner, we would feel deep gratitude for the animals and plants that gave of themselves for our sustenance. When we walked outside, we would be aware of how our actions bring life or harm to the creatures and environment around us. Imagine what it would be like to live in right relationship with all that we encounter, acting out of gratitude and wonder rather than out of disconnection, fear, exploitation or abuse. The message of the Earth and Sky to us in this time is that we can no longer afford to live a life of disconnection, dominance and denial. We must let go of our past patterns or we will bear the consequences of that and face our own possible extinction.

A friend of mine was on a business trip a few weeks ago. As she sat on the airplane, she overheard a few other business people discussing global warming. One laughingly said to the others that she had heard that global warming was all a big hoax. The others agreed, and all laughed together. When I heard this story, my heart broke. What I realized is how drastic the disconnection of our culture from our natural world has become. We do not need the evidence of scientists or the dictates of politicians to tell us what is real. All we need to do is live in

relationship with Earth, and we will feel and know how drastically the weather patterns have changed and how it is affecting the animals and plants and ourselves.

The story of Sedna and the wisdom of the Sky are guiding us back into connection. We can begin to do this just by taking 20 minutes each day to walk in the neighborhood or woods or fields where we live and to begin to observe the trees, plants and animals that share our immediate environment. All we need to do is to begin to open our eyes and ears to what is right in front of us, to begin to step back into relationship again.

Another way to begin to come back into connection with the natural world is to begin to pay more attention to our bodies. Our physical bodies are our link to the natural world. Also, how we treat our bodies parallels how we treat the Earth. If we are burning ourselves out, disregarding our own health and over-riding the messages from our bodies, we are doing to ourselves what we have been doing to our environment. If we pay attention to our own bodies and begin to honor them as sacred, we will already be on the path to coming back into right relationship with the natural world.

Another step that we can take is to begin to let go of patriarchal and hierarchical ways of thinking and being. Since the time of Aries, these underlying assumptions and the patterns based on them pervade our lives. Imagine what it would be like to go into work and to realize that your boss is no more important than you are, nor your employee any less important. What if we treated each of them with the respect that we long for ourselves? What if we treated each person as well as each life form that we encounter in that way? Imagine how different our world would become. We can begin that process by living with more awareness of how we step into or out of these hierarchical patterns or power dynamics in our day to day lives.

As we work with what it means to be in right relationship, we come to a deeper sense of respect and compassion for the world around us. At the same time, we also begin to integrate the difference between rules and human laws and right action and natural law. Our current cultural context gives us regulations and laws that we must obey or we will face punishment. We need human laws to provide guidelines and protections for us within our human societies, yet we need to honor natural law to guide us in living in relationship with the conscious, living world around us.

What if we lived in a way that we honored natural law as much as human law? What if we tuned in to the consequences of our actions and their effects on the world in which we reside? We would, for example, not pollute our yards with pesticides, not because there might be a regulation against it, but because we would understand the natural consequence of poisoning our environment and the plants and animals around us as well as our own illnesses that would result.

Living in natural law and right action does not mean being a passive victim of circumstances or sacrificing oneself out of false compassion. It means living with passion and consciousness, discerning in each moment what is right action. This means living in a more complex manner with the awareness of the interconnectedness of all of life. Living in right action means having the spectrum of choices before us and living with consciousness rather than operating out of fear, hatred or blind allegiance to external authority. It means living and acting with passion from the heart and with full awareness of the consequences of our actions and the interconnectedness of our lives with all that is around us, even with those who might be different

from us or those who might wish us harm. We are all part of the whole. This is the deeper message of Sedna.

Sedna dissolved into her unity with the Sea and the sea creatures. She was human and fish and seal and seaweed. We are not separate. We are all a part of the web of life and our form, our current incarnation, is fleeting and fluid. I am a woman residing in the United States today, yet in the past or in the future, I may be the tree outside my window or the stone in the garden or the young terrorist from another country struggling to find meaning in a broken world. If we live in that awareness and sense of unity, it changes every moment of our lives and every decision that we make and every action that we take.

Another message of Sedna and of the Age of Aquarius is that everything is energy. Dualism is an illusion. There is no separate self and other, male and female, up and down, in and out. All are parts of the larger whole. This is the meaning of the understanding in modern physics that matter is not fixed, all life “foams” in and out of being. If we could begin to live that awareness, our need for external tangible security and a fixed sense of identity would dissipate, and our fear of death would dissolve. Differences of belief systems, religions, nationalities, ethnic background, sexual orientation, gender or socio-economic status would continue to exist but as differing manifestations of an underlying unity rather than as a basis for division, separation, hatred, fear and polarity. This is the message of Uranus and the Aquarian Age calling us into a true understanding of community and egalitarian relationships and the common energy that permeates all of life.

In moving beyond polarity, we also come to realize that the sacred, the numinous, Spirit, is not transcendent or immanent. It is not outside us or only within us. It is both/and. To fully step into our divinity, to dissolve into that sense of the sacred in all of life, is to move into humility and to honor what is divine in everything. It is to realize that we are 30,000 light years from the Source and center of our galaxy that has birthed us and formed us, and the center is also within each one of us and in each object and creature that shares our Universe.

In moving beyond this polarity, it also means no longer engaging in the dialectic between a masculine God and a female Goddess or one God and a multiplicity of deities. It means embracing the Sacred Feminine that teaches us that Spirit is embodied and is in all of life and that we are born from the womb of a woman and the black womb of the Universe. We live in the mystery of the sacred dark energy of the Universe and are surrounded by the wisdom of the darkness and the potentiality of the fecund void. At the same time, we also reach for the Sky God, the deity beyond the realm of the tangible, and we seek enlightenment and revere the light and energy of action and manifestation. We honor the Sacred that is incarnate and transcendent, yin and yang, fire and water, earth and air, within and without. Spirit is in all yet beyond all. This is unity consciousness.

The Earth and Sky are speaking to us and calling us back to this deeper wisdom and awareness. If we listen, perhaps we will come back into right relationship and find our center and begin to live out of a galactic and embodied consciousness beyond anything we have ever known.

