

FIRMLY GROUNDED—IN THE COSMOS!

It really is all in the perspective, isn't it? When we are in the midst of something, every change, every problem, every situation is magnified so that the littlest thing can seem like a catastrophe. Not to say that the election of Donald Trump isn't a catastrophe, but taking a breath—ok, a lot of breaths, and trying to get some perspective, a little distance from the harsh reality can help at least for maintaining sanity. Remembering how little follow-through he has had in his business dealings might be an indicator that his twitter rhetoric about using nukes and building up our nuclear arsenal may be soon forgotten. Still, it is worrisome that so many of his cabinet choices have shown such disdain for the policies of departments they may soon head. And it is a concern that he doesn't believe the intelligence agencies. But, yet, a little perspective is good.

In the depth and breadth of the Cosmos, Earth itself is just a tiny pebble. The soon to be 8 Billion human inhabitants, mere ants on that pebble, have really not yet accomplished much of Universal note in at most 4 million years of human development out of 15 Billion years of Universal expansion. As a species, we have become quite good at killing off each other and other species and making a mess of Earth, and rather recently have begun to dream of space travel but have yet to journey beyond our own Moon. Aliens from elsewhere in the Universe probably haven't seen any reason to make contact yet! OK, maybe this is a little harsh, but some of us take ourselves awfully seriously for what little of cosmic significance we have created!

I would like to propose that we seek to ground ourselves not merely on the shifting sands, of which there are more each year, of earth, but rather in the wholeness of the Cosmos. For hundreds and thousands and hundreds of thousands of years, humanoids have left their mark on the face of the earth, but it has only been a few hundred years since humans discovered that the earth is a globe circling a massive star, of which we now know there are billions throughout even the known universe.

Astronomy really was one of my first loves among the sciences, but you know how things happen when you spend too much time looking down at the problems on earth rather than up at the stars! Even so, starry nights have always helped to settle my troubled spirit, to give perspective, to offer a base kind of pagan spirituality that is my most native religion. Oh, how many times I prayed to the God of the Universe for this or that, for clarity, for hope, for wisdom, for deliverance! Now, I just stand in awe beneath a starry sky, wondering about the flow of time and the amazing beauty of the universe. It is reassuring to know that whatever damage the new administration may do to our nation and the earth, the Cosmos will continue to expand, the Universe will continue to flower in amazing beauty, and somewhere sentient species will find ways to create peace and harmony among all beings, even those we might think deplorable!

See, if I think of myself just as a natural born American Democrat, it is really hard to just put this election behind me. But when I think of myself as a Unitarian Universalist citizen of the Universe, I can ground myself in the totality of the Cosmos. Yes, it may be a bit of gallows humor, but it kind of works for me. Grounded firmly in the Cosmos, I can laugh at the foibles of humanity knowing that after the apocalypse, the cockroaches will still survive and flourish—they might even glow!

Whenever the budget for NASA comes into public discussion, there are those who want to cut it and help the poor, but that issue is similar to the proclaimed need to cut welfare and human services—a smokescreen so people ignore the billions of dollars going to corporate welfare and the waste of NSA and the military-industrial complex. It isn't human services we ought to be cutting. What would a Cosmic perspective be on the American budget wars? Would a sentient alien from a harmonious world on the other side of the galaxy be impressed with how much money is spent on weapons, or with how people recognized as the most successful are the ones who have done and are doing the most harm to others and our planet? I'm pretty sure that if I came from a peaceful planet, I would turn my spaceship around and go another way to look for a more developed and civilized species. Those aliens might be glad that we have yet to become the space-faring species that some dream we will be.

Perhaps the problem with our nation and world is that at best we seek justice, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. To understand the cosmos, we also need the pursuit of wonder, discovery and exploration for their own sake rather than just for profit. It saddens me when students of colleges and universities so often forsake science and literature for business, finance, accounting, and then go on for MBAs. But that is what our nation and the western world promote and reward. Artists and musicians die penniless in unsafe warehouses while CEOs make hundreds of times what ordinary workers make, and Congress and our new President are ready to take more from workers to make those CEOs and other 1%-ers even richer. When will we ever learn?

As long as justice and righteousness in our world are measured only by short term financial success, only aliens at our own level of development or below will even bother with earth, and that is probably just as well. But I can imagine higher levels of development and interrelationship that value acceptance, inclusiveness, cooperation, respect for all persons and their gifts, and the encouragement for all persons to create and share without fearing the loss of healthcare or financial bankruptcy or death in unsafe dwellings. I am just an ordinary earthling, and even I can imagine so much more than what corporate leaders and congress and our new President want to offer to the people of America and the world. Even recognizing some limitations based on available resources, we do not have to hurt people financially or by way of the loss of services for everyone in America, even everyone in the world to have enough food, shelter, healthcare, and chances for education and work. This is really not just a zero-sum game in which only a few winners succeed. We do need for those in power to get a different perspective, or to elect only those with bigger hearts and more cooperative practices next time around. I will miss President Obama!

Finding our grounding in the totality of the Cosmos can help us to see a future beyond the disasters of our own time! Not all of us will live to see the promised land, but perhaps out of the inequities of the Trump regime will rise a time of equality, justice, acceptance, and respect for all persons. It may be 2 or 4 or even 8 years or longer before the racism and hate engendered by the election of 2016 is replaced by a new and deeper awareness of the value of all persons, but the time will come.

The Cosmic perspective may also help us to find more inclusive and accepting understandings of justice, fairness, and compassion, for out of the continuing expansion of the Universe there is an ongoing flowering of beauty and diversity. The Universe has not narrowed down to one shade, one gender of a single species, but continues to expand possibilities allowing females to equal or exceed the importance of males, beings of color to equal or exceed those more pale, and whether the universe would allow thin-skinned relatively hairless beings to become dominant again will be an interesting study for sentient beings of the cosmic future!

Of course, we are caught in these challenging times, but we dare not lose hope in a better future. Sometimes in the flows and swirls of the universe the progress we thought we had made can be taken away in an instant, but perhaps the next effort toward justice and equality will be rewarded with healthcare for all, honesty in elections, protections for reproductive choices, and corporate responsibility! The progress we had made testifies to the future possibilities that might satisfy our dreams in a fuller and more glorious way! Who knows how many of the current wealthy hypocritical leaders of Congress might be replaced in just 2 years? And if real change doesn't happen in our time, perhaps it will under our children or grandchildren if we help to ground them in the universal values expressed in our Unitarian Universalist Principles?

Most of the organizations working for change have refocused their work for the challenges yet to come, some by building resistance to the proposals of Trump and the Republicans. As a community seeking to welcome all persons but particularly aligned with the needs of the poor, the excluded, immigrants, and LGBTQIA persons, we must find ways to resist the newest forms of Fascism and oppression. Real change will only come at the hands of those who can build coalitions of love standing strong in the face of purveyors of hate. As long as the Constitution stands, there will be hope that justice will prevail, that the rights of all persons will be recognized, and that even those now holding the most wealth and power will be forced to recognize and respect the value and rights of every person.

Salvation for humanity won't come from religious or political wars, nor from the wealth trickling down from those at the top to those at the bottom.

Salvation will come from learning to live with, accept, and respect each other, not as tools or stepping stones to our own success. It is through cooperation that values the talents and abilities of each person, accountants and artists, musicians and scientists, therapists, teachers, medical professionals, and sports figures, laborers, homemakers and strategists that we will build a society worth viewing from across the galaxy.

I have always been excited by the prospect of space travel, though I will likely not live long enough to be chosen for any trip I could afford to take. Still, I look to the heavens for the future of humanity. Yes, we will need to shape a healthier global community before we will be able to successfully colonize distant M-Class planets. But the hope remains, and the possibilities are out there! Not today, not tomorrow, but some day.

So for now, for today, I challenge and encourage us to recommit ourselves to the struggle, to renew our faith in the values of our Principles, to respect and accept all persons and to seek to educate our children and grandchildren to face the world with hope for peace, justice, respect, and compassion! May we live each day with those values that we affirm in our Principles, and may our efforts bring us closer to that day of universal harmony and peace!

So May it Be!

Shalom, Salaam, Blessed Be, Namaste, Om, and Amen!