

SPIRIT AND STARDUST

An address delivered by Dennis J. Kucinich
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As one studies the images of the Eagle Nebula, brought back by the Hubble Telescope from that place in deep space where stars are born, one can imagine the interplay of cosmic forces across space and time, of matter and spirit dancing to the music of the spheres, atop an infinite sea of numbers.

Spirit merges with matter to sanctify the universe. Matter transcends to return to spirit. The interchangeability of matter and spirit means the starlit magic of the outermost life of our universe becomes the soul-light magic of the innermost life of our self. The energy of the stars becomes us. We become the energy of the stars. Stardust and spirit unite and we begin: One with the universe. Whole and holy. From one source, endless creative energy, bursting forth, kinetic, elemental. We, the earth, air, water and fire-source of nearly fifteen billion years of cosmic spiraling.

We begin as a perfect union of matter and spirit. We receive the blessings of the Eternal from sky and earth. In our outstretched hands we can feel the energy of the universe. We receive the blessings of the Eternal from water, which nourishes and sanctifies life. We receive the blessings of the Eternal from the primal fire, the pulsating heart of creation. We experience the wonder of life multidimensional and transcendent. We extend our hands upwards and we are showered with abundance. We ask and we receive. A universe of plenty flows to us, through us. It is in us. We become filled with endless possibilities.

We need to remember where we came from; to know that we are one. To understand that we are of an undivided whole: race, color, nationality, creed, gender are beams of light, refracted through one great prism. We begin as perfect and journey through life to become more perfect in the singularity of "I" and in the multiplicity of "we"; a more perfect union of matter and spirit—This is human striving. This is where, in Shelley's words, ". . . hope creates from its own wreck the thing it contemplates." This is what Browning spoke of: Our 'reach exceeding [our] grasp'. This is a search for heaven within, a quest for our eternal home.

In our soul's Magnificat, we become conscious of the cosmos within us. We hear the music of peace, we hear the music of cooperation, we hear music of love. We hear harmony, a celestial symphony. In our soul's forgetting, we become uncon-

scious of our cosmic birthright, plighted with disharmony, disunity, torn asunder from the stars in a disaster well-described by Matthew Arnold in *Dover Beach*: "... the world, which seems to lie before us like a land of dreams, so various, so beautiful, so new, hath really neither joy, nor love, nor light, nor certitude nor peace, nor help for pain. And we are here, as on a darkling plain, swept with confused alarms of struggle and flight, where ignorant armies clash by night."

Today *Dover Beach* is upon the shores of the Potomac River in Washington, D.C. Our leaders think the unthinkable and speak of the unspeakable inevitability of nuclear war; of a nuclear attack on New York City, of terrorist attacks throughout our nation; of war against Iraq using nuclear weapons; of biological and chemical weapon attacks on civilian populations; of catastrophic global climate change; of war in outer space.

When death (not life) becomes inevitable, we are presented with an opportunity for great clarity, for a great awakening, to rescue the human spirit from the arms of Morpheus through love, through compassion and through integrating spiritual vision and active citizenship to restore peace to our world. The moment that one world is about to end, a new world is about to begin. We need to remember where we came from. Because the path home is also the way to the future.

In the city I represent in the United States Congress, there is a memorial to Peace, named by its sculptor, Marshall A. Fredericks the "Fountain of Eternal Life". A figure rises from the flames, his gaze fixed to the stars, his hands positioned sextant-like, as if measuring the distance. Though flames of war from the millions of hearts and the dozens of places wherein it rages, may lick at our consciousness, our gaze must be fixed upward to invoke universal principles of unity, of co-operation, of compassion, to infuse our world with peace, to ask for the active presence of peace, to expand our capacity to receive it and to express it in our everyday life. We must do this fearlessly and courageously and not breathe in the poison gas of terror. As we receive, so shall we give.

As citizen-diplomats of the world, we send peace as conscious expression wherever, whenever and to whomever it is needed: to the Middle East, to the Israelis and the Palestinians, to the Pakistanis and the Indians, to Americans and Al Queda, and to the people of Iraq, and to all those locked in deadly combat. And we fly to be with the bereft, with those on the brink, to listen compassionately, setting aside judgment and malice to become peacemakers, to intervene, to mediate, to bring ourselves back from the abyss, to bind up the world's wounds.

As we aspire to universal brotherhood and sisterhood, we harken to the cry from the heart of the world and respond affirmatively to address through thought, word

and deed conditions which give rise to conflict: Economic exploitation, empire building, political oppression, religious intolerance, poverty, disease, famine, homelessness, struggles over control of water, land, minerals, and oil.

We realize that what affects anyone, anywhere, affects everyone, everywhere. As we help others to heal, we heal ourselves. Our vision of interconnectedness resonates with new networks of world citizens in nongovernmental organizations linking from numberless centers of energy, expressing the emergence of a new organic whole, seeking unity within and across national lines. New transnational web-based email and telecommunications systems transcend governments and carry within them the power of qualitative transformation of social and political structures and a new sense of creative intelligence. If governments and their leaders, bound by hierarchy and patriarchy, wedded to military might for legitimacy, fail to grasp the implications of an emerging world consciousness for cooperation, for peace and for sustainability, they may become irrelevant.

As citizen-activists the world over merge, they can become an irresistible force to create peace and protect the planet. From here will come a new movement to abolish nuclear weapons and all weapons of mass destruction.

From here will come the demand for sustainable communities, for new systems of energy, transportation and commerce. From here comes the future rushing in on us.

How does one acquire the capacity for active citizenship? The opportunities exist every day. In Cleveland, citizens have developed the ability to intercede when schools are scheduled to be closed, and have kept the schools open; to rally to keep hospitals open; to save industries which provide jobs; to protect neighborhood libraries from curtailment of service; to improve community policing; to meet racial, ethnic and religious intolerance openly and directly.

Active citizenship begins with an envisioning of the desired outcome and a conscious application of spiritual principles. I know. I have worked with the people in my own community. I have seen the dynamic of faith in self, faith in one's ability to change things, faith in one's ability to prevail against the odds through an appeal to the spirit of the world for help, through an appeal to the spirit of community for participation, through an appeal to the spirit of cooperation, which multiplies energy. I have seen citizens challenge conditions without condemning anyone, while invoking principles of non-opposition and inclusion of those who disagree.

I have seen groups of people overcome incredible odds as they become aware they are participating in a cause beyond self and sense the movement of the inexorable which comes from unity. When you feel this principle at work, when you see spiritual principles form the basis of active citizenship, you are reminded once

again of the merging of stardust and spirit. There is creativity. There is magic. There is alchemy.

Citizens across the United States are now uniting in a great cause to establish a Department of Peace, seeking nothing less than the transformation of our society, to make non-violence an organizing principle, to make war archaic through creating a paradigm shift in our culture for human development, for economic and political justice and for violence control. Its work in violence control will be to support disarmament, treaties, peaceful coexistence and peaceful consensus building. Its focus on economic and political justice will examine and enhance resource distribution, human and economic rights and strengthen democratic values.

Domestically, the Department of Peace would address violence in the home, spousal abuse, child abuse, gangs, police-community relations, conflicts, and work with individuals and groups to achieve changes in attitudes that examine the mythologies of cherished world views, such as 'violence is inevitable' or 'war is inevitable'. Thus it will help with the discovery of new selves and new paths toward peaceful consensus.

The Department of Peace will also address human development and the unique concerns of women and children. It will envision and seek to implement plans for peace education, not simply as a course of study, but as a template for all pursuits of knowledge within formal educational settings.

Violence is not inevitable. War is not inevitable. Nonviolence and peace are inevitable. We can make of this world a gift of peace which will confirm the presence of universal spirit in our lives. We can send into the future the gift which will protect our children from fear, from harm, from destruction.

Carved inside the pediment which sits atop the marble columns is a sentinel at the entrance to the United States House of Representatives. Standing resolutely inside this "Apotheosis of Democracy" is a woman, a shield by her left side, with her outstretched right arm protecting a child happily sitting at her feet. The child holds the lamp of knowledge under the protection of this patroness.

This wondrous sculpture by Paul Wayland Bartlett, is entitled "Peace Protecting Genius". Not with nuclear arms, but with a loving maternal arm is the knowing child Genius shielded from harm. This is the promise of hope over fear. This is the promise of love which overcomes all. This is the promise of faith which overcomes doubt. This is the promise of light which overcomes darkness. This is the promise of peace which overcomes war.

Thank You.