

The Dance

An Evolutionary Parable

By Larry Edwards

BEFORE THE BEGINNING, Mystery communed only with itself. A thought arose, "I am ready for a new eternity! I move into dimension and time." With an explosion of existence transcending imagination Mystery expanded into dimensionality. Existence spread in a continuum of space and time. Mystery mused on its creation and spoke, "Come forth, Wisdom. Carry with you all that is. Learn. Learn the Dance as it is." And Wisdom was born. She listened and watched the Dance unfold.

Again, Mystery spoke, "Hear, O Wisdom, give of yourself that which is required for my Dance." Wisdom moved with the Dance, listening to the gentle roar of expanding existence. In time Wisdom bore twin daughters, first Life, then Death. Wisdom spoke: "So O Mystery, that the Dance may continue I bear Life and Death." And both were pleasing.

Life and Death danced together and with all existence. When Life danced, existence turned outward and rearranged into greater complexity. When Death danced, existence turned inward inventing new possibilities. Thus even as Life and Death moved to the rhythm of the Dance, the Dance itself swayed to the rhythm of Life and Death.

And the Dance continued for aeons. Existence found rapture in the Dance, the Dance led alternatively by Life and Death, each giving of herself for the joy of existence.

In this way galaxies were formed and died, stars coalesced out of the death throes of other stars. After billions of years of creativity, Gaia, the water planet, was born.

The Dance continued. Gaia brought forth new forms of life of her own: plants, animals, all manner of creatures.

In time Gaia sought the counsel of Wisdom, "Tell me, O Wisdom, soon my children will number many. How shall I be with them?" Wisdom spoke, "Bring forth Life and Death as it was in the beginning. For I know the One Dance. Both Life and Death must

dance and laugh with all your children that the Dance may proceed. Then, O Gaia, then give in abundance. Teach your children to give. For such is the Dance."

Once again the twin sisters, Life and Death, came forth. Again they laughed and danced with existence, with the children of Gaia. As before when the creatures danced with Life, greater complexity emerged. When the children of Gaia danced with Death, new possibilities unfolded.

One morning Gaia was preparing to bring forth a new child. But this one was different. The labor was long and difficult. Finally she bore the child. Life, Death, and Wisdom came to see it. But the child flinched at the sight of them.

Gaia wondered, "What is this that this child reacts so? This one bears watching."



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As was the custom, Life came to dance with the child. The child danced well, Wisdom noted, very well. But the child would not dance with Death. Whenever Death appeared the child withdrew.

Gaia was perplexed, "Why is this?"

One day the child was in the forest and saw Death praying with the animals. The child feared as before. Gaia started and turned to look. Death stopped her prayers and turned to the child. Sensing danger the animals faded into the forest.

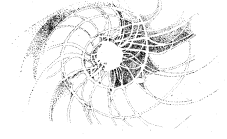
Death asked the child, "What is it, Young One? From where comes this fear?" Trembling

the child did not answer.

And so it went. The child continued to grow and dance with Life. But when he saw Death, he stopped, each time his fear changed more and more to hate. He increasingly lived in two worlds. With Life, he grew strong. But he hated Death. Gaia worried over her last born.

One day when Death was communing with the deer and the wolves in the forest, the Child came by. Hate raged within his breast and moved out to all. The deer started and ran; the wolves cowered and crept away. Death turned slowly to Man. "O Man, you have feared and hated me since your birth. I know not the reason that Wisdom has passed you over in this way. You now hate my presence and heap contempt upon me in your heart. But hear me, O Man, in your ignorance you disrupt the Dance. My sister, Life, and I now find confusion instead of joy among the children of

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Gaia, ye, with Gaia herself. You have gained power, O Man, but you will now feel my wrath! All others will know the joy of giving. But you will not! I will come to you constantly, not at the end in prayer to receive your greatest gift. No, I will come to you daily in vengeance. I will keep Life from you, even as you live."

Man looked deep into the eyes of Death and knew terror, the terror of the loss of his most beloved, Life. He fled the forest and never returned.

Man continued to grow in power and fear. But his dances with Life were short, for Death always appeared and drove the two apart. Gaia wept for her child.

The Dance of the children of Gaia became more difficult. In his fear Man kept trying to dance with Life so that she could not visit the others so readily. Life became weaker. Death spent more time among Gaia's children.

Once again Gaia sought the counsel of Wisdom. "Tell me, O Wisdom, tell me of my youngest born, the man-child. How shall I be with him? He responds not as the others." Wisdom responded, "You have taught your children well. All give that they may live. The one, the man-child, will also learn. Even now he grows less in strength and more in wisdom. So give, O Gaia, continue to give. For such is the Dance."

Larry Edwards is a chemist turned storyteller. After many years of teaching at several universities and then working at the U.S. National Science Foundation, he decided that a better strategy for the healing of Earth would be the telling in a variety of ways the newly discovered story of Earth and Universe. Presently Larry teaches cosmology and chaos at the California Institute of Integral Studies, the University of Creation Spirituality, and Genesis Farm.

Rosary continued from page 41

even has a bead to mark the invention of the Hubble Telescope.

During one of his workshops, when Michael Dowd mentioned including one's personal history and birthday, Sonya Shoptaugh perked up. Sonya knew about prayer beads because she is a practicing Buddhist.

Each April, the Washington, D.C., resident, celebrates her birthday by returning to Mendocino, California,—“my spiritual home, the place where the land meets the water, the place where I feel most at peace.”

“I learned about Michael’s rosary just as he was making it,” she said. Sonya decided she needed to make one, too. Michael sent her to the bead shop he and Connie had gone to. Sonya, ablaze with newfound enthusiasm, told the sales people how the beads “were becoming symbols of magnificent evolutionary leaps in our Earth’s life.” Her listeners were fascinated. “They even gave me a discount on the beads,” said the teacher/writer/photographer. Sonya’s birthday happened to be April 25, the same day Michael and Connie were beginning their adventure.

So on this particular birthday, as Sonya sat in her favorite spot, she had her beads and Universe time line with her. “I strung my beads starting with the Divine and the beginning of the Universe as we know it, continuing through time where my life becomes a part of the strand. As I strung the beads, I felt in an emotional and physical way my place in the matter of things. I honored the birth of plants, when water first came into existence on Earth, the coming of frogs, trees. I recognized the various extensions that have occurred and the coming of humans and our impact on Earth. I celebrated the birth of all

that is and felt at a core level how my birth is part of a long lineage of births and deaths and births.”

When she finished making her rosary, Sonya dunked the beads in the ocean as “a symbolic blessing, christening, baptism, sanctifying the strand in the waters of my spiritual home. I put them on proudly, feeling both the solidity of my connection to Earth as well as the temporariness of my singular existence. I am humbled and honored to have a place in the evolution of life.”

Sonya plans to restring her beads next year, by adding new ones based on facts she has learned, or have become important to her.

“When I hold the beads and marvel at the beauty of what they stand for, I am reminded how miraculous the Divine is. I am of the Earth. I move and breathe because of a force so awesome, I can barely even begin to grasp its significance.

“Through my connection to Earth in this way, I can hold the beads and pray for our humanity and myself to awaken to the responsibility bestowed upon us to be wise stewards of the Earth’s resources. My passion for Earth, social action, science, and God has combined together in the Universe Story rosary.”

For further information about rosary making, or ordering a set of Sister Gail’s Earth Prayer Beads, contact her at srgail@together.net; to learn more about Paula Hendrick’s bead making, write her at paulahendrick@hotmail.com. To access information about Connie Barlow and Michael’s Dowd’s Great Story Beads, plus their travel schedule, contact them at www.thegreatstory.org.

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