



Storytelling

God, the *Cosmic Dancer*, we honor you.
You who choreograph
the solar flares,
the orbits of the planets
and the wild careening of comets and meteors.
You who can name every ancient rock in the
Asteroid Belt,
you who can tango with
typhoons and twisters and tornadoes,
we honor you.

My grandfather, Daddy Jim, was a *seanachai* (a story-teller). The *seanachai* was a much-beloved character in every village of Ireland in the 1940's and '50's when I was growing up. It is a vocation stretching back through the times of the Druids into Ireland's pre-history.

Ireland has the greatest collection of folklore in the world due to the herculean efforts of Séamus ÓDuillearga, who founded the Irish Folklore Commission in 1935, which managed to archive one and a half million manuscript pages of stories in a few decades.

I wish I could say that the Irish were the *first* storytellers. Alas, they were well beaten in that race. The truth is that not even Homo Sapiens Sapiens invented storytelling. That honor goes back almost four billion years to bacteria. These lowly single-celled creatures were the first storytellers and archivists. As they adapted to different environments they recorded their impressions and were more than willing to share this information with any new bacteria that swam into the neighborhood.

And you are the beneficiary of that activity. Not only did they collect the stories, they began the building project (evolution) which allowed multicellular communities (organisms) to trace their lineage back to the beginning. In a prodigality of generosity they have bequeathed every human copies of this journey. And, just in case you're careless and tend to lose things, they've given you 50 trillion copies. As we say in Ireland, "Just to be sure to be sure." Each cell in your body has an autographed copy. It's called DNA.

Once Homo Sapiens Sapiens developed language (about 50,000 years ago) we, too, became storytellers. At a practical level these stories allowed us to pass on the wisdom from generation to generation, at a time in our history when life expectancy was in the late teens or early twenties. Long before the invention of the wheel, it was important not to keep reinventing the wheel; but rather to use the stories of previous generations to build more complex, and therefore, more durable societies.

We wound up inventing four different kinds of stories: “my story” which were the stories that gave me a sense of individual identity; history which gave us a sense of tribal identity; theology which were the stories we told about our relationship to the gods; and cosmology which were the stories we told about the origin of the cosmos and our place in it.

In the course of this evolution we have used stories to entertain ourselves, to educate ourselves and to aim at the future by understanding the past. But the greatest achievement of story-telling, in my opinion, is that it was the first practice humans used to volitionally create altered states of consciousness which allowed us to access different levels of reality.

Without this aspect of story, we are locked into scientism and atheism, utterly unable to contact and relate to the entities and energies that are enfolded into the very fabric of the universe.

A species without story-telling is an evolutionary cul-de-sac.

May God continue to hold you tenderly in the hollow of Her hand.

Namasté,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Sean". The signature is written in black ink on a white background.