

THE ON — ING SERIES

On Rising

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June 2026



Imagine a person so wholly in tune with their jays that the world no longer arrives one angle at a time.

I am not that person — not yet, and perhaps not in this life. But I think I have felt the edge of it: the way you can sense a room is larger than the slice of it your eyes are holding.

We see the way a lens sees. Light falls in, and a single vantage is paid for with the loss of every other. To look east is to turn your back on west; to be here is to forfeit there. Ordinary sight is a kind of debt — each image bought with the foreclosure of all the images we did not take.

Now run the light backward. Trace every ray back out through every human eye — past the lens, the wet cornea, the held breath — until the rays that left a million faces meet again in the open air above the world. Gather them. What returns is not a scene but a totality: every angle at once, no west surrendered to win the east.

Physics keeps a word for a state that is all its possibilities until something forces it to choose just one — superposition.¹ To be fully aligned might be to dwell in the superposition the rest of us collapse the instant we open our eyes.

And here is the quiet astonishment: all color gathered is white. The spectrum is only what white light becomes once it is broken — dispersed through the prism of a single life into one band, one bias, one beloved and partial hue. Each of us is a color. I have spent a good part of a life trying to learn which band is mine — and suspecting, on the clearer days, that my one color was never meant to be mistaken for the whole of the light. The one who rises sees the white that was holding our colors together all along — not a brighter view, but the view.²

Behind the scientific rules that bind us, the ones insisting you cannot stand in two places or see every side at once, stand the other rules, the metaphysical ones — the ones that keep us safe. These do not so much bind us as hold us. We are not permitted to read them, and that mercy may be the point: a truth left veiled

because to see it bare would be to stop being the creature it was protecting. One of the last unexplained kindnesses of the universe.

To rise this way is not to leave. It is, at last, to see your own wake. The aligned one watches the ripples leave their hands — every intent a stone let fall into time, every act widening outward in rings that do not stop at the edge of a life.³ I think about my own wake more than I used to: the rings I set going without meaning to, and the ones I would call back if the water would let me. We make them now, blind, the way a swimmer cannot see the far shore their motion already reaches. Alignment is only the gift of turning to look back along the wave and reading what your intent has been writing the whole time. Timeless in design: the rings were always traveling. You were merely the place they began.

And the direction of all this — up — is the most honest illusion we keep. Up is whatever points away from the mass that holds you down.⁴ A man in Missouri and a woman in New Zealand both lift their eyes “up” toward the stars, and their gazes part in opposite directions across the dark. I am the man in Missouri, and I have stood in that yard and felt how certain “up” is — how nearly impossible it is to believe it is only a direction away from the dirt beneath me. There is no ceiling overhead; on the largest scale the cosmos keeps no up at all.⁵ Yet every up agrees on the one thing — away from the pull. So to ascend toward something greater than ourselves is not to travel a fixed bearing into the sky. It is to move, from wherever you stand, against the weight that gathers you and presses you flat.

I feel that weight most days. Rising, for me, has never been an arrival so much as a direction I keep choosing — again and again, against my own pull. Up is not a place. It is a relationship: the refusal of one’s own gravity, repeated in every direction at once — which, from far enough away, looks like nothing so much as a single light leaving a single world, rising.



Notes



1. In quantum mechanics a system may exist in a superposition of states — all of them at once — until measurement resolves it to a single outcome. The use here is frankly metaphorical: a picture of perception, not a claim about physics.
2. Cf. Spinoza, who held that the mind can perceive things *sub specie aeternitatis* — “under the aspect of eternity” — a view from no single time or place (*Ethics*, Part V). The Dzogchen traditions name something near to it as *rigpa*: a primordial awareness not achieved but recognized, in which clarity was always already the case.
3. The figure of aligned beings leaving legible ripples in time belongs to the “jays” framework set out in *On Facing*. Jung’s instinct rhymes here: wholeness as the *coincidentia oppositorum*, the reconciliation of every opposite within a single Self (*Mysterium Coniunctionis*, CW 14).
4. “Up” has no absolute meaning; it is defined locally as the direction opposed to the gravitational pull toward a body’s center of mass.
5. The cosmological principle holds that the universe is, on the largest scales, homogeneous and isotropic — the same in every direction, privileging no center and no “up.” As Sagan put it, we are a way for the cosmos to know itself; the gathered light, traced home, returns to where it began.

Resonances



further light — kin the piece rises through, beyond the notes

Isaac Newton *Opticks* (1704)

White light split by the prism into the ordered spectrum — the physics beneath the image.

Plato *Republic VII*

The ascent from the cave toward the sun: rising to see the source the shadows were only of.

Plotinus *Enneads*

The soul's ascent to the One — the flight of the alone to the alone.

Indra's Net *Huayan Buddhism*

Every jewel holding the reflection of every other: the totality, every angle at once.

Dante *Paradiso*

The rising through the spheres toward the light that moves the sun and the stars.



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On Rising

*Set in dispersion: white light gathered at the top, falling through the prism
of a single life into the visible spectrum below — the one view broken into our
many beloved, partial hues.*

Jamison Johnson · June 2026
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