

A LYRIC - PHILOSOPHICAL ESSAY



On Seeing

*The Hypothetical Perspective of an
Individual Aligned in Time*

by Jamison Johnson • June 2026

FROM THE 'ON -ING' SERIES



IN MEMORY

To Elliot Gish

For all the conversations about life and death, and everything in between.

A dreamweaver in the flesh.

To Bobby

We don't actually lose the people we love, we just stop seeing them with our eyes one day.

Your memory will live on forever.

I want to open with a philosophical question: do you know what you look like?

Consider it honestly. You have stood before a mirror; you have seen yourself in photographs and on video. But you know your own face only in the way an astronaut knows the Earth — from the outside, at a remove, beautiful and flattened to two dimensions.

I know how that sounds — like a flat-earth argument warming up in the wings. It isn't. The Earth is unambiguously round, at least to anyone who understands how light behaves, and that is not my quarrel here. It is simply a fact I want you holding before we go on. You could sculpt a wax model of your own face — the most faithful likeness imaginable — and even if you managed it in ten minutes flat, that likeness would already be ten minutes out of date the moment you set down the tools.

Are we on the same page? No? No matter — you are on this page regardless, so we may as well continue.

Now then. Where was I.

Oh yes. On *seeing*.

Let us consider what it must have been to be a human being whose jays were aligned — someone wholly aware of their own standing in time, and able to become timeless through a single sustained intent: the understanding that humanity was one.

We could name any number of prophets here, as I do in my second journal, and find in each of them a different account of the same occurrence — the same constellation of events gathered around a single human life, refracted through a different language each time. So let us set aside the ego of naming any one of these figures, whose lives have already closed, and dream instead of what it would be to be an egoless thought moving through time as a whole.¹

Let us dream about what the world looks like to such a person.

First, I imagine very little sleep — almost none at all. A strange and steady harmony of inner energy, balanced so finely that the person seems to know, to the ounce, exactly how much is required to carry a day to its close. And then sleep arrives in brief installments: discrete bursts of REM that let the body recover, while a lucid, half-waking mind keeps its own counsel. To those nearby, such a person would seem almost self-powered — almost *alien*, which is precisely the word history has reached for, again and again.

This, I believe, is simply what alignment looks like from the outside: a presence so complete in the moment that it reads as divine — the mind receiving all of its signals at once, *time itself among them*.²

Do they see the future? Certainly not. The future is a boundless, churning field of possibility, and no one reads it. But do they understand how to move through the present so that it becomes timeless — through plain kindness, through doing unto others,

through leaving behind a name that outlasts them by centuries? That much I find difficult to argue against.

Do they see the past? In a sense we all do. We hold the history that delivered us here and the forces that shaped us. But do we truly grasp how radically different it might all have gone, given the smallest alteration at any fork along the way — the butterfly effect, if you like? What endures, in the end, is the positive intent. The harm a life sets in motion does not vanish, but it grows strangely weightless once that life has become timeless.

And what are the senses enduring through all of this? Total overload — a load heavy enough to drive an ordinary person to madness, or, as the histories more often have it, to make him *appear* mad to everyone watching. For any number of reasons, such people align and then, almost at once, *unalign*, buckling under the sheer weight of it — or else turning to prove it to others, which is only the ego asserting itself by another route. That second motion, the compulsion to prove, I attribute to the observer effect.

Take the Transfiguration, on the small scale. Jesus is called to the summit of a high mountain, and the disciples who climb with him want to *see*. Jesus sees what he is meant to see; the others can only describe what passed before them, and their description is bent further out of shape by translation with each passing century. (In Luke's account, Peter begins offering to build shelters, "not knowing what he said.") But what actually occurred on that summit? No one could ever know but Jesus himself.³



Now let us widen the lens. The Miracle of the Sun — Fátima, Portugal, October 1917.

A crowd estimated at some seventy thousand — by certain accounts as many as a hundred thousand — assembled in a single field, having been promised, months in advance, that a miracle would come. And then they watched the sun appear to *perform*: to dance, to spin in place, to plunge toward the earth and recede, to throw off colors — each witness rendering it a little differently from the next. The easy dismissal is mass hysteria, or simple damage to the eye from staring too long at the sun. But that explanation founders on a single stubborn fact: the phenomenon was attested not only by the devout who had come to look, but by secular journalists, officials, and avowed skeptics who had come precisely to debunk it — people with no wish to see anything at all, who saw it regardless.⁴

Tens of thousands of perspectives upon a single event. Tens of thousands of descriptions, no two alike.



Now let us draw all the way back in — to the one.

What would a single person experience in a single moment, drifting egoless through space and gathering in sensory data? As I said: complete overload. Every sense at full capacity at once. Sight spanning a full hundred and eighty degrees from any stance. Smell parsing a dozen sources at a time. Taste heightened as well — and since so little food is needed for fuel, the little that *is* eaten would taste extraordinary. Hearing pitched to an animal's, registering every sound wave in the vicinity and able to hold each one apart from the others. Touch reporting, all at once, the precise pull of gravity at the spot where the body stands, the weight of clothing, the wind against the skin, the small contents of a pocket, the shoes upon the feet.

But what of the “sixth sense” of time — the one the old accounts describe, and the one my own theory names jays aligned: the capacity to remain timeless? Picture the person at the sink, pouring a glass of water because thirst has arrived. In the same instant, they apprehend past, present, and future together — and the mirror of positive and negative threading through every part of it.

This grows tangled the moment we widen our view, so let us fix on the single instant in which the glass is filling. Every sense works in concert to carry out the task, leaving the mind free to *think* the moment even as it unfolds.

The mind holds every position in time at once. There is the proactive instant that precedes the act — *got up to get the drink*. There is the optimistic instant that follows it — *thought of how good the drink would be* — already building toward a future reality of

thirst satisfied. Now turn the same vantage toward its negative face. *Got thirsty*: the adverse reality, arriving before there is any chance to amend it. *Decided not to get up*: the reactive refusal that skips straight to the ending. *Judged that one glass would never be enough*: the pessimistic afterthought that lands, inevitably, at *thirst not satisfied*.

But a truly balanced perspective holds one further option we have not yet named — the positive reality lodged in the *past*, prior to any decision to rise and pour at all: *I was never thirsty to begin with*. The design would grant such a person the thought-power to author that reality for themselves, perhaps in the very instant the thirst first stirred — dissolving the entire positive-and-negative procession before it can begin, and with it the need for the water at all.⁵

Such a person would simply drift through time, needing little of this or that to go on living. Wondering, all the while, what their own face looked like — for they had never seen it, only heard it described an endless number of ways.

And they would know that everyone around them is made of the same consciousness, and would treat each of them exactly as they would wish to be treated in turn. This is not divine intervention. It is divine intelligence in action — inexplicable across the whole length of history, yet worth considering in an age like our own. The human mind is a far more powerful instrument than we have ever given it credit for being.





Notes

1. The image of an *egoless* awareness moving through time has a close analogue in the Dzogchen notion of *rigpa* — a recognition in which the ordinary subject/object split is seen as a construction rather than a given. What looks like superhuman autonomy from the outside may simply be the absence of the ego that normally stands between a person and the moment.
2. To perceive past, present, and future “all at once” without that perception being *prediction* is close to what Boethius means by eternity in *The Consolation of Philosophy* (Book V): *totum simul* — the whole, possessed all at once. On this view a timeless vantage does not foresee the future so much as see every moment in a single, undivided present. This is why “see the future? Absolutely not” is exactly right: timelessness is not foreknowledge. Spinoza names the same vantage from the other direction — to see things *sub specie aeternitatis*, under the aspect of eternity, is to grasp them not as they pass in sequence but as they stand within the whole. Boethius approaches it through the divine, Spinoza through reason itself; both describe a seeing in which time is held entire rather than traversed.
3. The Gospels place the Transfiguration on an unnamed “high mountain” (Matthew 17:1; Mark 9:2; Luke 9:28), traditionally identified as Mount Tabor. Luke notes that Peter, overwhelmed, offers to build three shelters “not knowing what he said” (Luke 9:33) — the witness reaching for words that cannot hold what he saw.
4. Standard estimates put the Fátima crowd at roughly 70,000, with some eyewitness figures as high as 100,000. The accounts most resistant to the “staring too long” explanation are those of skeptics and secular officials who

had no wish to see anything at all — the testimony hardest to attribute to expectation is the testimony of the unwilling.

5. That fourth option — the one that steps *outside* the positive/negative pairing rather than choosing a pole within it — is structurally a *coincidentia oppositorum*: the union of opposites that Jung described through the transcendent function, where the tension between two contraries is resolved not by picking one but by producing a third thing that contains and dissolves both. “I was never thirsty to begin with” is not the positive branch of the binary; it is the binary undone.