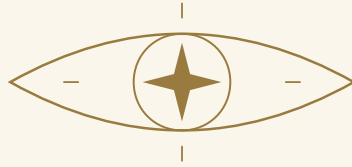


THE ON — ING SERIES



On Watching

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For my friends of faith.

*I am no prophet — but those who walk their own divine paths
are prophets in my eyes, Watchers in their own right. They
keep me on a road that is true and just; they make certain I
choose rightly, even when choosing rightly means taking no
great ego from a small accomplishment.*

*I thank you for your love and your guidance. I would not be
the person I am without you.*



I

WHAT DID YESHUA OF NAZARETH AND LAOZI HAVE IN COMMON?

One was a carpenter's son who taught in parables and was killed for it; the other an old archivist who, the story goes, set down the Way in five thousand characters and then rode west through the pass and out of recorded history.¹ Two men, two tongues, two thousand miles and some centuries apart. Yet lay their sayings side by side and the same strange grammar surfaces in both: the first shall be last; the soft overcomes the hard; to keep your life you must lose it; the highest good is like water, which seeks the low place every proud thing avoids. They understood duality — not as a riddle to be solved but as the actual shape of the world, two truths held at once without the comfort of choosing between them.

Let us try, once again, to imagine how such a one sees — and what, beneath the miracles and the maxims, makes a prophet *true*.

The old word for one who sees this way was *Watcher*: in the older tongue *'ir*, the wakeful one; in the Greek that followed, *egrēgoros*.² Not guardian, not keeper — only one who will not close his eyes when the hour runs long and everyone else has gone down into sleep.

1. Laozi (“the old master”), the sage to whom the *Tao Te Ching* is ascribed and who, in Sima Qian’s *Records of the Grand Historian*, rides west through the pass and out of history. The paired maxims gather Matthew 20:16 and Luke 17:33 with *Tao Te Ching* 8, 43, and 76 — the last, the soft overcoming the hard.

2. The *Watcher* (Aramaic *'ir*, “wakeful one”; Greek *egrēgoros*, source of the *Grigori* of 2 Enoch) is the descended being of the *Book of the Watchers*, 1 Enoch 1–36, and the “watcher, a holy one” of Daniel 4:13, 17. The sleepless register inverts Psalm 121:3–4, where the keeper of Israel “neither slumbers nor sleeps.”

To Watch, in this sense, is not to stand above a thing. It is to stay awake beside it.



Every tradition keeps a cautionary version of the gift.

In the Book of the Watchers, the beings who descend teach humanity the *outside* of the world — the edge of the blade, the omen in the star, the paint for the face, the fire in the forge — and the world breaks along exactly those new seams.³ More power over things; less over the self. It is the oldest warning about knowledge: that it can enlarge what a person is able to *do* while leaving untouched, or worse, what a person *is*.

The true prophet's knowledge runs the other way. He does not teach men to bend the world; he teaches them to turn and look at the one doing the bending — to meet the shadow they have been casting and to call it by their own name. Interior sight. *The kingdom of God is within you*, says the one; *knowing others is intelligence, knowing oneself is wisdom*, says the other.⁴ It is the same forbidden thing in both mouths, for nothing is so forbidden as a person's true face shown back to them.

And it is still a crossing. The prophet reaches past the sanctioned boundary — which is what makes him dangerous, and why the authorities, every time, reach for the cross or the hemlock or the road

3. 1 Enoch 7–8: the descended Watchers teach metallurgy and weaponry (Asael / Azazel), cosmetics, sorcery, and astrology — power over the world that corrupts its bearers. The descent is set on Mount Hermon (1 Enoch 6).

4. Luke 17:21, “the kingdom of God is within (or among) you”; *Tao Te Ching* 33, “knowing others is intelligence; knowing oneself is enlightenment.”

into exile. The mythic shape of it is Prometheus: the one who steals the fire to give it away and is chained to the rock for the gift, not the theft.⁵ No honest account leaves this out. The line was real, and it was crossed, and no good outcome ever quite washes that clean — nor should it.



III

Here is the thing both men knew, and it should unsettle us a little: the gift is one thing, not two.

The sight that makes a person whole is the very same sight that finds where a person breaks. The map to the wound and the map to the healing are a single map, read in two directions. The faculty that integrates a divided self can, unchanged, show a man precisely where to cut another. The Greeks had a word for a substance that is at once remedy and poison — *pharmakon* — and could never settle which it meant, because it was always both.⁶

The Garden remembers this too. *Your eyes will be opened*, the serpent says — and they are. That was never the lie; the eyes do open. The deception lay only in whom the opening would serve.⁷ So every true prophet carries, without rest, his own fluency in the lower road. The serpent is not a stranger who knocks. The serpent is the part of him that already knows the way down — and the difference between a

5. Hesiod, *Theogony*, and Aeschylus, *Prometheus Bound*: the fire-bringer punished for the gift, not the theft — the mythic shape of the benefactor who crosses a sanctioned line.

6. The Greek *pharmakon*, at once remedy and poison (Plato, *Phaedrus* 274e–275a), the undecidable later drawn out by Derrida in “Plato’s Pharmacy.”

7. Genesis 3:5, 7. The serpent’s promise is not refuted by events — the eyes do open — which is what makes it the canonical figure of a deception that tells the truth.

prophet and a tempter is not that one lacks the knowledge. It is which direction he turns it.

✦
I V

This is why the Taoist register matters: it shows what to do with a desire one cannot, and should not, kill.

Imagine the true prophet honestly and you must grant him the appetite the pious edit out: he wants the proceeds. He finds the gold beautiful. He feels the pull of the old Triad — the hunger of the flesh, the hunger of the eye, the pride that would raise a monument over one small thing done well.⁸ A being who wanted nothing could *release* nothing; there is no virtue in opening a hand that was never closed. The wanting is not the flaw. The wanting is the material the right choice is cut from.

So he holds the desire on purpose — the way the dark is held against the light so that each can be seen — and then lets the water go where water goes. The way that can be named is not the lasting way; the giving that announces itself has already collected its reward, as the carpenter said of those who pray on the street corner to be seen.⁹ Water reaches the low places without telling anyone it chose to. There is no glory in it. The prophet is not above the chain; he is a link in it, and the proceeds pass through him toward the ones who need them, and he keeps no residue, and takes no name.

8. 1 John 2:16: “the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life,” mirroring the threefold appeal of the fruit in Genesis 3:6 (good for food, pleasing to the eyes, desirable to make one wise).

9. *Tao Te Ching* 1 (“the Tao that can be named is not the eternal Tao”) and 8 (“the highest good is like water”), with the principle of *wu wei*. The unannounced gift echoes Matthew 6:1–6: those who give or pray to be seen “have received their reward.”

✦
V

Wealth, looked at rightly, is Intent congealed — coordination, stored against the undertow of the clock.

The mortal hoards because the mortal lives inside Time and feels its pull at every hour; to hoard is to try to freeze a Trace against the certainty of loss. But a frozen Trace goes dark. It stops being legible; it drops out of the web of relation and ceases to mean. *You cannot serve God and mammon* is less a rule about money than an observation about direction: the held thing rots, the moving thing lives.¹⁰ And mark what the true prophet does *not* do — he does not despise the gold. Contempt for the made world is the error of those who end by hating the Maker, the old Gnostic wrong turn.¹¹ He loves the gold. He simply will not let it stop moving. A Trace stays alive only so long as it travels.

✦
VI

Which brings us to the hard question, the one the traditions circle without end: how do you tell the true prophet from the false?

Not by what he knows — they hold the same fire. Not by what he gains — gain can serve the goal or swallow it, and from the outside the two wear one coat. The Hebrew scriptures stage it precisely: Jeremiah and Hananiah stand in the same temple, both saying *thus says the*

10. Matthew 6:24 (Luke 16:13): “You cannot serve God and mammon” — read here as a claim about direction rather than a prohibition on wealth.

11. On Intent and the legible Trace, see the *jays* framework and *Toward a Theory of Coherent Existence*. The refusal to despise matter marks the deliberate distance from the Gnostic *demiurge*, for whom the material order is itself the prison (cf. the *Apocryphon of John*, NHC II,1).

Lord, and the only test on offer is the slow one — wait, and see whose word the years make true.¹² *By their fruits you shall know them* — but the fruit was never the produce on the branch. The fruit is evidence of the root. Same harvest, different tree.¹³

Until the Trace is read, the prophet stands superpositioned — true and false at once, both wholly present — and only Time, observing, collapses him into one.¹⁴ And here is the terror at the center, the part no honest account omits: the prophet cannot fully grade his own paper. Desire is an eloquent liar about its own purpose. The verdict is not his to render in the moment of the act; the Design renders it, downstream, by what the Trace did and not by how he felt while doing it. The false prophet is not, first, the one who lies to others. He is the one who has lied to himself, and means every word. The Design is the only thing he cannot fool.

✦
V I I

So the whole of the discipline reduces to a single line: the means must not become the end.¹⁵

Let the goal slip — let healing become the story he tells while gain becomes the thing he is after — and the prophet becomes, with the

12. Jeremiah 28: Jeremiah and Hananiah prophesy against each other in the same temple, each invoking the Lord; Deuteronomy 18:21–22 offers only the slow test — whether the word comes to pass.

13. Matthew 7:15–20, the test of false prophets: the fruit is read not as product but as evidence of the root.

14. The *Quantum Lens*: an indeterminate state resolved only upon observation. Cf. the discernment of spirits, 1 John 4:1 and 1 Corinthians 12:10 — a verdict reserved to a vantage the actor does not himself occupy.

same hands and the same gift, the very thing he crossed the line to undo. The fall is never loud. It is a quiet reversal, a swapping of which thing serves which, and it can happen inside a man who still believes himself good.

This is why the timeless ones describe their task in the present tense and never the past. The mortal gets to finish — there is a last test, and then rest. The prophet only continues. The choice is not won; it is only ever *being* chosen, in an unbroken present, the serpent's clarity undimmed beside him and unfollowed.¹⁶ He is not at peace. He is practicing. The one who teaches the school is its hardest student, and never graduates.

✦
VIII

And this the wakeful learn last of all: the Watcher is also watched.¹⁷

The one who keeps the path for others is himself kept upon it — by those who, walking their own true roads, turn and make certain he chooses well; who will not let him take a great ego from a small accomplishment; who watch over him with a love that asks for no name in return. Yeshua had his few. Laozi had his Zhuangzi, to carry the Way forward laughing. No prophet stands alone; the spine of the

15. A theological turn on the second formulation of Kant's categorical imperative (*Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, 1785): to make the end a means, or the means the end, is the inversion that turns the true prophet into the false.

16. On the timeless present as distinct from mortal succession, cf. Augustine, *Confessions* XI, and Boethius, *Consolation of Philosophy* V — the divine *nunc stans*.

17. The reciprocity of watching recalls Buber's *I and Thou* and the mutual constitution of persons; the sleepless keeper who is himself kept returns to Psalm 121. The Taoist line is carried forward by Zhuangzi, who turned the Way to laughter.

thing is reciprocal. To Watch, in the end, is only this: to love something enough to stay awake for it.



I X

It is worth turning all of this toward the present, where the question of other watchers has grown loud again.

The essayist has long held a quiet hypothesis: that the beings the old texts called angels and the beings this age calls aliens may be a single category seen through two vocabularies — messengers, watchers, beings of light.¹⁸ But the hypothesis carries one condition, and it is the same condition this essay has circled from the start: a being of light is seen only in the presence of purity. Light needs a clear medium; the eye must be clean to receive it. *Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.*

If that holds, the timing of an arrival becomes its own test. Anything that shows itself *before* the world has done its healing would, by the logic of the true and the false, belong to the false — drawn by the same appetite that turns a prophet into a tempter, come to be seen, to extract, to divide. The real Watchers, on this reading, are the ones who do not arrive until after; whose coming is not the cause of healing but its consequence, receivable only by a world that has cleared its own sight enough to receive them. The deception comes early. The genuine waits.

18. The identification reads the angelic “beings of light” and the modern extraterrestrial as one category under two vocabularies. The condition of purity recalls Matthew 5:8 — “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God” — and tempers the long caution of 2 Corinthians 11:14, where the deceiver appears “as an angel of light” (cf. Hebrews 13:2, on entertaining angels unawares). The reading honors the wariness of the deception while holding open the genuine.

And the same Quantum Lens can be turned on the files the present keeps unsealing. The essayist reads the recent disclosures by a single rule — the rule of this whole essay: whatever has been collapsed into a solid, handleable form, a craft on a hangar floor, a body, a thing that can be owned and sold, is most likely a fabrication, built by someone reaching to draw success from a discovery — which is to say, by a false prophet making the means the end.¹⁹

What asks for attention is the opposite: the small points of light that will not hold still to be possessed — that thin away the instant they are looked at directly, and register most often not on the eager believer but on the indifferent instrument, the gun-camera of an aircraft that was not even hunting them, footage no one thought strange until later, when it was laid beside a witness's account and the two quietly agreed.

Notice how precisely this keeps the grammar already laid down. The thing that refuses to collapse under a grasping gaze is the superpositioned thing — true and not yet resolved, legible only to an observer with no stake in the outcome. The verdict is not rendered in the moment by the one who needs it to be real; it is rendered downstream, by a disinterested witness setting the Trace beside the testimony across Time. A light that leaves a legible mark for the unbiased to find later is exactly what an aligned life leaves behind: an intentional trace through Time, waiting for someone clear enough to read it.

Healing is the goal. It was always the goal. The Watchers worth waiting for do not come to be photographed or sold or chained to a

19. A personal reading of the recent UAP disclosures, offered as theory. The refusal to collapse under a grasping gaze restates the *Quantum Lens* (§ VI); the legible mark left for a disinterested instrument and confirmed downstream against testimony restates the *jays* — an intentional Trace through Time, read by an observer with no stake in the outcome.

hangar floor; they come when the medium is clear enough to carry their light, and not one hour before. Keep that before you, and let everything else — the gold, the hunger, the long sleeplessness — fall into its proper place behind it.

STAY AWAKE



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