

Watching

He had been sitting there for the past twelve hours. Just sitting on a rock and staring at a large oak tree in the town square. Even though the town was buzzing with rumors about the well-dressed Spanish gentleman, the man himself seemed to not notice. Finally, the village blacksmith plucked up the courage to address the stranger. “Señor,” he asked, “Who are you? And *what are you doing?*”

The stranger turned around, rather surprised by the rude interruption. “I am the king’s painter. I watch this tree to learn how it looks at different times of day. How can I become a better painter unless I study what I paint?”

The above story is based on the real habits of painter Diego Velázquez. Considered one of Spain’s best baroque painters, he worked in his king’s court for nearly forty years. I am sure he would have agreed with the Italian proverb, “To him that watches, everything is revealed.” But what about those of us who do not paint trees for a living? Is everything revealed by simply watching? I believe this proverb can be shown true through a couple of real-life examples.

First, let me define what “watching” means in this proverb. I believe it describes an active process of observing. It is not like an audience that watches a film for a couple hours and may nod off when the action lags. Instead, it is like students watching a teacher. For nearly a year, the students focus on every word the teacher speaks and take extensive notes. They know that a test looms ahead and that they must be ready for it. The watching in this proverb is a grasping, exploring, desperate kind of watching fueled by a desired goal. With this definition, let us continue.

I have personally experienced an example of this proverb through learning the habits of our local deer population. When my family moved to our house four years ago, we were amazed to find that large herds of white-tailed deer populate our rural neighborhood. My mom and I, always avid animal-lovers, would stop everything to watch them amble across our yard. We quickly realized how ignorant we were. Instead of being gentle creatures, deer jealously kick and chase each other away from limited amounts of food. Also, instead of constantly staying with their young, mother deer often leave their fawns by themselves for several hours at a time, apparently “abandoning” them. I did not know how much our watching taught us until a neighbor called a year later. “There’s a little fawn in my backyard that has been all by itself for three hours! Do you think I should take it to the animal shelter?” she anxiously asked. As my mom explained how mother deer always return after a few hours, I wondered how someone who saw the same deer we did could know so little about them. I then realized that all our knowledge of these deer came through consistently taking the time to observe them. Because we watched the deer, their way of life was revealed.

Watching creation has produced more knowledge than simply that about the animal kingdom. One of the last century’s greatest theories was developed because a scientist closely watched the physics of our world. In school, Albert Einstein continually got into trouble with his teachers. “You are always somewhere else,” they scolded. What they didn’t know was that that “somewhere else” happened to be the universe. Whether it was after classes or during free time at his patent office job, Albert spent every spare moment pondering complicated physics problems or performing related experiments. His detailed studies culminated in the publication of the theory of relativity. This theory took

the scientific world by storm because it explained many natural phenomena better than Newton's laws of motion. As a result, Albert became one of the greatest physicists of his time and revolutionized our perception of science. Because Albert Einstein watched the universe, its secrets were revealed.

Watching takes time, patience, and sometimes deep thought. I believe that if anyone is willing to implement these to reach their goals, all they want to know and more is revealed.