

# HYPARXIS

Men's curiosity searches past and future  
And clings to that dimension. But to apprehend  
The point of intersection of the timeless  
With time, is an occupation for the saint—  
No occupation either, but something given  
And taken, in a lifetime's death in love,  
Ardour and selflessness and self-surrender.  
For most of us, there is only the unattended  
Moment, the moment in and out of time,  
The distraction fit, lost in a shaft of sunlight,  
The wild thyme unseen, or the winter lightning  
Or the waterfall, or music heard so deeply  
That it is not heard at all, but you are the music  
While the music lasts. These are only hints and guesses,  
Hints followed by guesses; and the rest  
Is prayer, observance, discipline, thought and action.

T. S. Eliot *Four Quartets*

The challenge Eliot gives – ‘an occupation for a saint’ – is that of understanding hyparxis, because this is precisely the ‘point of intersection of the timeless with time’ though we might render it in the context of *The Dramatic Universe* as the *dimension* of intersection. There is much that is psychological in approaching the meaning of hyparxis but we must remember that JGB would never divide the universe into ‘mental’ and ‘physical’ but strive to start from something that was deeper than that kind of distinction. With that proviso we can begin from our sense of ‘now’. Most people would agree that this experience has at least two main aspects, which more or less contradict each other. On the one hand there is the sense of ‘time is passing’ which we can associate with observations of processes like the ticking of a clock, the lengthening of shadows, trying to find one’s glasses . . . remembering the vanished childhood . . . As soon as anything happens, it becomes a memory. On the other hand there is the sense of permanence, of no-change, of not-passing. This sense we usually ascribe to some supposed ‘self’ or just ‘me’ as an identity. Change and no-change ‘at the same time’!

We know that the materials of our bodies are renewed every so many years while we retain our biological identities. It is as if there is a template or form to which our changes conform. Of course, nowadays we think of DNA as the template, a structure in space. It is a big step to think of this in terms of a structure in a *kind of time* that JGB called ‘eternity’. It is rather like imagining some invisible dimension in place of the visible biochemical construction. We will want to do this if we are concerned with *all* the things that *might* happen in our existence. This is not so much a template as a *pattern of potentials*. We can think about this from many standpoints – genetic,

social, even astrological if one wants – and the terminology is rather vague. How would we *measure* such a pattern or come to know it?

JGB proposed some properties of his dimension of eternity. One of the foremost was that it was *stratified into different levels* and not continuous as actualization-time appears to be. In saying this, he most probably drew on quantum mechanics and psychology while following ancient systems of cosmology that in general use hierarchical models. In quantum mechanics a particle such as an electron ‘jumps’ from one energy to another it appears in an instant, all at once and not gradually. In our psychological experience we can notice that what we call our ‘state of consciousness’ can change discontinuously, which includes for example what is known as ‘waking up’.

Further, displacement in eternity is the antithesis of displacement in time. The further along actualization-time the greater the entropy or ‘disorder’ while the further along eternity, the greater the ‘order’. These terms of order and disorder can be given specialist significance but here have qualitative meaning. JGB associated them with the concept of degree of *inner togetherness*. We might then add that we have a capacity to assess degrees of inner togetherness through our own *consciousness*. In this particular sense we have an interpretation of Protagoras’s ‘man is the measure of all things’. In a more important sense, we can remember Gurdjieff’s principle of the *relativity of being*.

We started from the sense of no-change and considered a template or form governing what could change. A leap was made to JGB’s concept of eternity as another kind of time to actualization-time, using the category of time to distinguish this invisible dimension from space. Eternity is postulated as structured in levels, allowing for the concept of a kind of measure in which instruments are not used but made directly through consciousness. The latter makes us vulnerable to accusations of subjectivity but there is an implicit position here that a kind of ‘objective consciousness’ is possible.

As empirical selves we can well appreciate the tension between the full range of our potential and what can be actualized – in this mysterious ‘now’. What is actualized can only be a selection out of many alternatives and is essentially impoverished in comparison with our eternal wealth. At times, we can vividly sense and feel that this is the case and it can cause us great suffering. Whatever we do, we must lose out on something else.

This leads us to contemplate the *relation* between ‘the timeless and time’. Giving this relation, like any other, a *reality of its own* is to follow the principle of *triadic thinking*. In this context, the principle amounts to: when things are opposed to each other look for something else that reconciles them. The ‘occupation for a saint’ turns out to be something like ‘working on oneself’, but we will leave the development of such implications for later. What reconciles eternity and time is called *hyparxis* and JGB

translated this as *ableness-to-be*. The word 'be' or 'being' has two basic meanings in the context of our discussion: 'potential' and 'realised'. We are going to associate realisation with hyparxis.

It might already be possible to see that the resolution of the impasse between eternity and time points us back to what is 'now'. 'Now' can be more or less, stronger or weaker because it being understood as what binds the eternal and temporal making of them something new. And also: what is separated in actualization as past and future and separated in eternity as higher and lower may no longer be so.

In terms of actualization-time hyparxis acts to produce recurrence or cycles, in that in some sense the 'same' event happens again and again (perhaps getting better and better as in *Groundhog Day!*). In terms of eternity, this is realising many possibilities all at once and perhaps to be associated with Gurdjieff's 'self-remembering'.