

CHARLIE'S HYPARXIS

Hyparxis can be taken as the most personal thing there is. Bennett picked up on the ancient thought of *actively* being who one is – working out one's own salvation with diligence might have been the Buddha's version if we allow it also to include removing oneself altogether from the picture – and reasoned that this concern of people, especially those who strive to 'work on themselves', must be a general property of everything that exists, high or low, great or small. So, everything strives to be what it is, in its own way. This is not an oxymoron since it is also predicated that we are not quite what we 'should' be.

But perfecting oneself is not solely to do with one's soul. It impinges on all our acts. It may be hard and uncertain to delve into our soul-making, which maybe the nearest thing to who we are in reality, but we can take a look at *art* wherein we can find images outside of what is within us. Essentially, hyparxis has to do with recurrence *in the same time*. This looks a bit weird at first (maybe at second, third, etc. also!) because it means for example that the Battle of Hastings is being repeated over and over *in 1066!* But this kind of repetition – to which Ouspensky gave the misleading term 'eternal recurrence' - can be reflected in the linear sequence of time.



This is known in the cinema, where one spends time and after time repeating the 'same' thing to get it right. A well-known example of this being *portrayed* in cinema is *Ground Hog Day* where the character played by Dan Murray has to go through the same day over and over again until it is so perfected and exact that he is set free to enter into the energy of love.

A quite different sort of example is to be found in the work of Charlie Chaplin, the English Music Hall entertainer who became a global figure of Hollywood. He was renowned for taking tens and even hundreds of 'takes' for a single shot that would last maybe two minutes. The supreme example was in his filming of *City Lights*. The film took more than two years to make and was the last great silent film and one of the foremost movies of all time.

In the opening scene, Charlie as the Tramp meets the blind flower girl. She sells him a flower and comes to believe he is a rich man. The woman playing the flower girl had no experience of acting and Chaplin spent day after day just trying to get her to hold up a rose in the way he wanted. He did not know how the scene should be constructed. She was moved nearer and further from the fountain at the corner of the

street. Charlie approaches her from this direction and then that direction. He experiments with how he can show he learns that she is blind. Work on this one scene went on for months. Later he was to sack his flower girl actress and try with someone else but had to rehire her because he could not go through perfecting the opening scene again.

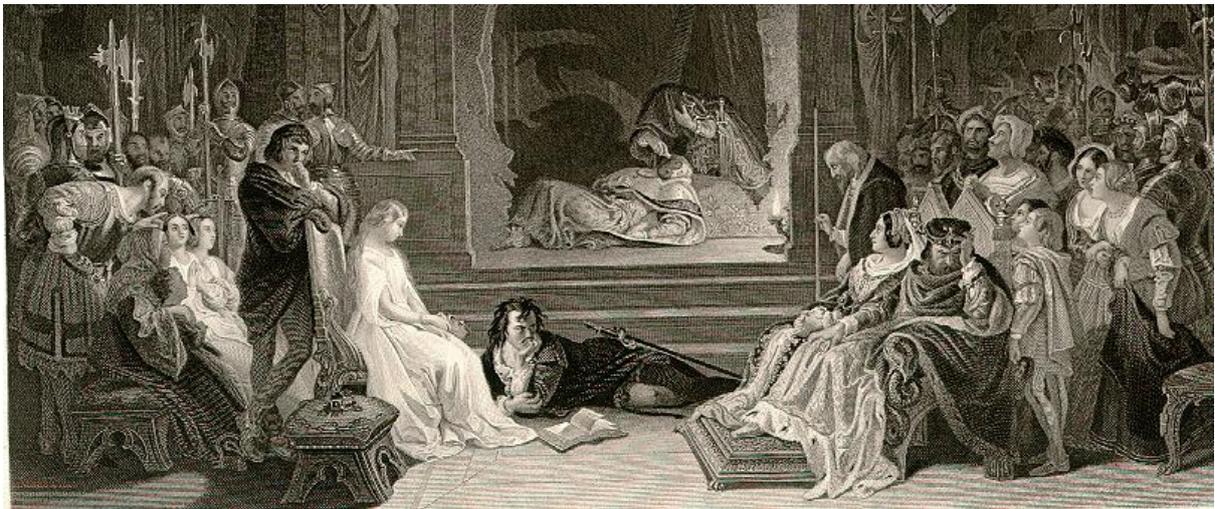


The final version of the scene is a marvel. It is perfect. Not a millisecond is wasted. It sets the meaning in a precise way that is mirrored at the end when the two characters meet again, the Tramp having sacrificed himself to paying for an operation to restore her sight and she initially unaware that the bedraggled figure outside her new shop window is her benefactor. The opening audience leapt to their feet in a standing ovation.

Such is the perfection of doing. In this case, through laborious repetition, experiment, adjustment and not in some instantaneous miracle.

The marvellous opening scene has its own 'proper time'. We think we see just the one version which made it to the cinemas, i.e. just one actualization, but by study of archive material we can be led into the *workshop of hyparxis* or the inner

recurrences of the event. As Bennett says in Volume 4, “fulfilment is a hyparchic condition” (p. 102n)



Perhaps *Hamlet* has been performed a million times or more. All these different actualizations of the play are united in its own proper or hyparchic time. It has its own present moment. The present moment does not have to be the property of a human being. The various performances of the play over centuries have actualised a vast range of its potentialities but they are all mutually relevant to each other in hyparxis, which is the dimension of *meaning*. ‘Hamlet’ is more real than most people.

Extensively, hyparxis is in our deeds; intensively it is in our attention.

Reference DVD: *Unknown Chaplin: The Master at Work*