

The Epiphanic Mode of Education in *Stephen Hero*

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Abstract

This research paper examines Joyce's novel Stephen Hero in the light of Wordsworth's theory of education as expounded in his epic The Prelude. Epiphany is the key term here that not only links Joyce's Stephen Hero with Wordsworth's The Prelude but also links Modernism with English Romanticism. Most scholars argue that the epiphany is an aesthetic doctrine but my argument in this research paper is based on the premise that the epiphany is not simply an aesthetic doctrine but also an aspect of a much larger concern with learning beyond and in spite of the institutions of education. The privileged mode of education in Stephen Hero is the epiphanic mode, which has, I argue, a striking resemblance with Wordsworth's concept of 'spots of time'.

Keywords: *Epiphany, 'spots of time', education, romanticism, modernism*

1. Introduction

Stephen Hero as we have it in the published form is an incomplete text. Joyce never published it during his life. The novel was first published in 1944. He was probably nineteen or twenty when he started writing it. He abandoned it without completing it, and called it – “a schoolboy's production” (Spencer, 1956, p. 14). Out of a total of 914 pages in Joyce's handwriting, the first 518 pages are lost; he made use of the last 383 pages of the manuscript as the last eighty pages of *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (Spencer, 1956). Although *Stephen Hero* receives less critical attention than his later works, it bears a significant relation with his later works as Spencer affirms that “it throws light on Joyce's whole development as an artist” (1956, p. 16). *Stephen Hero*, though an earlier and abandoned version of *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, is an important text in Joyce's oeuvre in the sense that it discusses at length his theory of the epiphany which holds a central position in his entire work. Indeed, Spencer terms “his successive works as illustrations, intensifications and enlargements of it” (1956, p. 22). In his later, published works, the term epiphany occurs only once in *Ulysses*: “Remember your epiphanies on green oval leaves, deeply deep, copies to be sent if you died to all the great libraries of the world, including Alexandria” (Joyce, 1992, p. 50)?

The surviving pages of the manuscript begin from the period of Stephen's university education. In the context of the Wordsworthian mode of education, there are a number of questions about Stephen's growth as a child and a boy that remain unanswered because of the incompleteness of the text. How might he, as a child, have responded to his environment? What were his childhood impressions of his mother, home life, community, and Nature? Were these impressions helpful in forming his character on the lines Wordsworth describes in *The Prelude*? Did he have exciting childhood and boyhood experiences as Wordsworth had? How did he respond to his school education? Since the novel is incomplete, there is very little known about his earlier education. What went on earlier in Stephen's life was the subject-matter of *A Portrait of the artist as a Young Man*. In this research paper, I will focus on the last two years Stephen spends at the university.

2. Discussion and Analysis

Like Wordsworth's *The Prelude*, *Stephen Hero* is, Gorman argues, "an autobiographical book, a personal history, as it were, of the growth of a mind, his own mind, and his own intensive absorption in himself" (1924, p. 133). Wordsworth's *The Prelude* is a classic study of 'the Growth of a Poet's Mind'. He refers to it in his letters to Dorothy Wordsworth that it is "the poem on the growth of my own mind" (Cited in Abrams, 1979, p. 586). It is his story rather than anyone else's. Wordsworth states clearly "my theme has been / what passed within me" (1979, III, pp. 175-6). The poem is profoundly original in its technique and subject-matter as it narrates the story of the uniqueness of an individual on an unprecedented scale. In *Stephen Hero*, Stephen is obviously Joyce himself. There are obvious allusions in the novel to Stephen's education which is, in fact, Joyce's own experience of the institutions of education. Stephen is probably nineteen or twenty years old when he first makes his appearance to the reader of *Stephen Hero*. He is an undergraduate student at University College, Dublin, originally known as Catholic University of Ireland – Joyce enrolled himself at University College, Dublin in 1898. The impression Joyce conveys of Stephen is that of an independent and tenacious young man. As Wordsworth says of himself in *The Prelude*: "I was ill-tutored for captivity" (III, p. 359). What appeals to Stephen is "wild living" (Joyce, 1956, p. 40). It is reminiscent of young Wordsworth's calling himself as "A wild, unworldly-minded youth" (1979, IV, p. 290). Wilson (2004), Benziger (1962), and Kermodé (1962) argue that rebellion lies at the heart of Romanticism. Stephen's desire for independence and 'wild living' is plausible in the context of the powerful forces of coercion of Irish society. The Roman Catholic Church, the popular political ideology of nationalism, and the institutions of education exert their combined influence in forming a powerful alliance against Stephen's desires. He resists any such self-formulation which is superimposed by the institutions of Irish society. The keynote here is the cultivation of individuality as against typicality. In order to corroborate this point, it is necessary to have a brief look at the nature of Irish society and the institutions of education Joyce/Stephen attended.

Ireland – situated on the brink of Europe – had long been a British Colony; it became part of Great Britain on 1 January, 1801 under the terms of the Acts of Union in 1800. It had been even longer a Catholic country. Since the arrival of Saint Patrick and other Christian missionaries in the early to the middle of the 5th century AD, Christianity began to spread its influence to the point of incorporating the local Celtic religion. By the turn of the next century, Christianity had established its hegemony in Ireland. Irish Catholicism continued to be the dominant religion even after the unification with Anglican Great Britain. The time when Joyce was writing *Stephen Hero* – probably from 1901 to 1906 – the Irish struggle for freedom was already under way. Amply aided by the Roman Catholic Church and the nationalists, it had taken on a revolutionary shape especially after the fall of Charles Stewart Parnell in 1891. Parnell founded the Land League in 1879. He was strongly in favour of Home Rule. Joyce admired Parnell for his political stance. The Irish Catholic Church played a significant role in his fall. Joyce regretted it greatly even when he was quite young. There are various references to Parnell and his fall in *Dubliners* and *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. Joyce sees religion as a primary insignia of identity in Ireland; Irish society is a largely rural conservative society where the power of the Catholic Church has such an immense stranglehold over the individual lives of Irish society that the Irish identity independent of the Church is subject to suspicion and critical attack. The Church controls and manipulates the lives of its people by sustaining a mode of education and language that fit in with Church ideology. Since the nineteenth-century, the majority of children were educated at Church run schools. Costello (1992) describes the social significance of Catholic priests in the nineteenth-century; they "were nearly always the sons of the gentry, strong farmers or merchants: their spiritual influence owed much to their social standing in the community" (p. 34). More recently, Ledden's study of

education and social class in Joyce's Dublin affirms the same point (1999). Historically speaking, monasteries in Ireland were the important places of intellectual and artistic life. Since the institutions of education were under the powerful influence of the Church, so the popular form of education was Jesuitical. The Jesuits were a new form of militant Catholicism. They were considered gentlemen, and they had a strongly literary outlook. The nature of the Jesuitical education was literary as "it depended on reading and translation from Latin and Greek into English and vice versa" (Costello, 1992, p. 84). Joyce attended Clongowes Wood College, a boarding school, in Kildare from September 1888 to June 1891. Situated in Clane village spanning over 500 acres of farming country, Clongowes was established in the late Middle Ages while its current traditions were traced back to the sixteenth-century Europe. The purpose of education at Clongowes was "the preparation of an educated Catholic" (Costello, 1992, p. 85). After Clongowes, he attended briefly the Christian Brothers' School on North Richmond Street, Dublin and subsequently he attended Belvedere college in 1893. It was a day-school meant to educate the sons of businessmen and lower middle-class Catholics. *Stephen Hero* does not provide this information about the institutions of education Stephen attended before entering University College, Dublin but it is necessary to construct Stephen's earlier history of growth on the assumption that he is the juvenile Joyce himself.

Stephen is based in Victorian Dublin. Does this mean the same thing to Stephen as the English countryside to Wordsworth? As it appears to the reader of *Stephen Hero*, in contrast to Wordsworth's rural imagination, Stephen's is an entirely urban imagination. Wordsworth opens *The Prelude* with a sense of welcome release at having 'escaped' the tyranny of city life: "escaped/ From the vast city, where I long had pined / A discontented sojourner: now free / Free as a bird to settle where I will" (1979, I, pp. 6-9). Later in the poem, the theme of the 'unnatural self' is carried forward in his depiction of London. Based in the English countryside, Wordsworth picks up characters predominantly from humble life such as peasants, shepherds or pedlars. Stephen's entirely urban imagination is less inclined to appreciate the Irish peasant as he declares to patriotic Madden, his university fellow: "I really don't think that the Irish peasant represents a very admirable type of culture" (Joyce, 1956, p. 59). It is not natural objects that usually catch his attention but ordinary objects. At the same time, Joyce is not inclined to believe that the city life is better than the rural one. In his imagination, Dublin stands as "the centre of paralysis" (Cited in Ellmann, 1966, p. 134). In this sense, he shares the Romantics' concern over unwholesome city life. The difference lies in the fact that Wordsworth critiques modern urban life while living predominantly in the countryside; whereas, Joyce critiques modern urban life while living predominantly in the city.

The narrative sets forth Stephen's image as that of a person whose face "to a certain extent" is "the face of a debauchee" (Joyce, 1956, p. 29). Joyce does not employ the word innocent or angelic; it rather evokes a sense of sinfulness which contrasts sharply with the strictly conservative cast of Irish society. Joyce may have deliberately employed the word 'debauchee' to set him against authority and against the burden of 'the unnatural self' the paralyzing city life constantly threatens to impose upon him. In this sense, Stephen's face bears the mark of unwholesome modern urban life which rather seems to suggest in him the demonic qualities of a Byronic hero who enjoys "a process of life through corruption" (Joyce, 1956, p. 41). This image of Stephen is reinforced on another occasion in the text when his mother calls his ways "licentious" (Joyce, 1956, p. 89). Nevertheless, he is a very well-read student for his age. By virtue of his literary and philosophical knowledge, he develops a certain reputation among his university fellows; he is regarded as "a personality" (Joyce, 1956, p. 43). He is an idealist but he has yet to find a material basis for his ideas.

Stephen's discontent with the nature of education at University College, Dublin, is based on the assumption that it does not cultivate individuality; it rather threatens to usurp his right to independence and 'wild living'. Like Wordsworth, Stephen does not feel happy at the university. He positions himself antithetically to the mode of education at the university. His very entry into the university is marked with a kind of Wordsworthian displeasure: "It was always with a feeling of displeasure that he entered the Green and saw on the far side the gloomy building of the college" (Joyce, 1956, p. 36). Stephen's response toward the most popular university of Ireland is no less critical: "The deadly chill of the atmosphere of the college paralysed" his "heart" (Joyce, 1956, p. 198). In this context, Pointon's comment on Wordsworth's view of education is quite pertinent, as he argues that education for Wordsworth means "primarily the cultivation of the heart as distinct from the instruction of the mind" (1998, p. 55). Stephen finds himself in an atmosphere that constantly menaces to paralyse his heart. As a result, he grows rebellious toward authority, whether it is the authority of the Roman Catholic Church, or of the family or of the teachers at the university.

The disenchantment of Stephen's heart is further heightened when he sees his university fellows reaffirming the hegemonic forms of Irish society. (By hegemonic I mean the dominant prevalent ideology of the institutions of education, religion, nationality, language and family). He seriously puts into doubt the nature of an education that is reinforcing already-formed beliefs. The "intellectual heart of Ireland" – University College, Dublin – inculcates conformity to a given set of values (Joyce, 1956, p. 197). He attempts to make friends with his fellow students but later decides to detach himself from what they stand for, and consequently leaves them to their lot. His disillusionment with them is revealed through many rounds of conversation he has with them. He sees education mutilating creative potentialities in his university fellows. He knows that education in the most popular university of Ireland could win them important social positions. Some of them are so rigid in their beliefs that he ends up in despair; some show tolerance toward what he explores and seemingly are in sympathy with his ideas but they, too, return to their customary thinking in the end. He deplores such a system of education and asks himself, where is that free spirit of inquiry that could land a seeker in an unstable and uncertain region of liberated imagination? He usually has a shocking quality to his speech which is probably born out of his manifest rupture with the common-sense perceptions of his university fellows. He is in the habit of rehearsing his phrases before he could speak to them. He addresses his interlocutors with the self-conscious air of "a poet with malice aforethought" (Joyce, 1956, p. 32). He rather makes it his defensive pose against social victimization, and begins to consider "ineradicable egoism" as a "redeemer" (Joyce, 1956, p. 39).

Before marrying his father, Stephen's mother used to take keen interest in reading new plays. She tends, we are told, to appreciate Henrik Ibsen's plays. She has read Charles Dickens as well, we are also told, but she keeps her opinions reserved on some subjects. In striking ways, she has the appearance of a suppressed Wordsworthian character. Stephen's father is an unimaginative and inartistic character. He is more interested in athletics than reading books. Stephen's "aristocratic intelligence" is constantly on trial against the ordinary intelligence of his university fellows and his family (Joyce, 1956, p. 210). Apart from the university and home, there is another place, Mr Daniel's house in Donnybrook, which he visits on Sundays; here so-called educated young men and women come and talk and sing. He visits this house because Emma Clery, his beloved, comes here. He does not like Emma's passionate interest in the Gaelic Revival movement. The Irish Literary Revival or cultural Renaissance – roughly between 1890 and 1920 – could not attract Joyce towards the grandiose claims it made in order to retrieve the essential Irish identity by looking back into the Celtic past. William Butler Yeats is known to be the most central figure of the movement. Joyce knew and appreciated Yeats' poetry but it could not inspire

him to join the movement. It may be a nostalgic yearning on the part of the enthusiasts to bring their past identity back into the present so as to cast off the British influences but Stephen stays away from it. Joyce exemplifies it in the novel by making Stephen take a course in the Irish language at the university. Mr. Hughes, the Irish professor, makes fun of the English language. Later, Madden shows a couple of patriotic poems written by Hughes. As a result, Stephen decides to withdraw from his Irish course. It appears to Stephen that this movement does not unsettle the power of the Catholic Church as the defining feature of Irish society. He sees his university fellows inclined toward it as it is embedded in the ethos of the university education. As stated by Norman Vance, the “cultural nationalism” of the revivalists tends to promote the idea of the Irish as a finer race (2002, P. 99). Emma is fond of Father Moran whom Stephen dislikes for his priestly authority and his involvement in the Revival movement. The only professor he likes at the university is the professor of English, Father Butt – Joyce was deeply influenced by his English professor as well. Father Butt is from the South of England. In spite of being a staunch Roman Catholic, he may probably be called Wordsworthian in the sense of his relation to the English countryside and its values. Wiener (1981) sees a categorical division in the conception of England in the north and in the south. According to his study, at the turn of the twentieth century the south of England came to be associated more with the countryside values, so in this sense more representative of ‘Englishness’ than the north. It may serve here a tenuous piece of evidence that links Joyce with the English countryside and its values through the mediation of his English professor but it is enough to establish the link nevertheless. It is also possible that Father Butt is modelled on the Victorian English Poet, Gerard Manley Hopkins (1844-1889). Another piece of evidence that links Joyce with the south of England is his earlier residence in the small seaside town of Bray which was called the Brighton of Ireland – Brighton is situated in the south of England. Father Butt, we are told, is “a philosopher and a scholar” (Joyce, 1956, p. 31). The description of Father Butt is missing in the text. Whatever few details of his personality we get is enough to establish the fact that he has grown quite stiff in his beliefs.

In contradistinction to the ethos of his university education, Stephen undertakes to educate himself. He decides to stay away from what that university education represents for him. Wordsworth’s disillusionment at the mode of education at Cambridge sets before him the alternative choice “to exalt the mind / by solitary study” (IV, pp. 304-5). Stephen does likewise as he devotes himself to studying authors of his heart’s desire. He is left alone, questing on the margins of his society, and directing his imagination toward contemplating “intensely the truth of the being of the visible world” (Joyce, 1956, p. 85). As Wordsworth writes in *The Prelude* that “I was left alone / Seeking the visible world” (II, pp. 277-8). Earlier Stephen tells Maurice, his younger brother, that “Isolation is the first principle of artistic economy” (Joyce, 1956, p. 37). He is prepared to bear the consequences of isolation as a result of this choice. In the Wordsworthian sense, he rather welcomes the “self-sufficing power of Solitude” (II, P. 77). Why does he detach himself from the ethos of his university education? Why does he prepare himself to bear the consequences of isolation? It is established at the very beginning of the novel that he is deeply committed to art: “Stephen did not attach himself to art in any spirit of youthful dilettantism but strove to pierce to the significant heart of everything” (Joyce, 1956, p. 37). His university education does not allow him this possibility ‘to pierce to the significant heart of everything’. Earlier he has been described as “a very unequilibrated young man” (Joyce, 1956, p. 32). He seems to be hoping to find equilibrium through the mediation of art. The disenchantment of the heart symbolised by the ethos of the university education is counterbalanced by the enchantment of the heart symbolised by his commitment to art – the commitment to art is central to both *The Prelude* and *Stephen Hero*. It is certainly art that hopes to encompass ‘the growth of a mind’. Wordsworth introduces at the very beginning of *The Prelude* his major commitment of life, the writing of the long-deferred central

philosophical section of *The Recluse*. Stephen's purpose of cultivating "an independence of the soul" justifies his isolation in the context of his commitment to art (Joyce, 1956, p. 116). But first he must find an appropriate language in order to express the 'independence of the soul'.

Stephen's search for an appropriate language to express himself in accordance with the laws of his inner self points toward that persistently combating desire to free himself from all those hegemonic definitions of his identity authorized by religion, family, nationality, and language. In order to mark off his independence, he must equip himself with a language which could define his self on its own terms. As Wilson argues (2004), "it is the poet's task to find, to invent, the special language which will alone be capable of expressing his personality and feelings" (p. 18). Stephen's search for a language is in fact his search for identity. How could he form his identity through the hegemonic forms of language? His choice of language is "the antique and even the obsolete and too easily rhetorical" (Joyce, 1956, p. 32). Wordsworth in *The Prelude* expresses a similar wish of retrieving a lost poetic language by "listening to notes that are / the ghostly language of the ancient earth" (II, pp. 308-9). Stephen begins to take a keen interest in words. He is conscious of the language others use without realizing the value of words. He absorbs himself in the act of purifying words from their common meanings; he tends to reduce them to mere sounds: "He kept repeating them to himself till they lost all instantaneous meaning for him and became wonderful vocables" (Joyce, 1956, p. 36). He sports with words, pleasures himself with them, meditates on the possibility of dissociating words from their common meanings until words become mere sounds. In his conversation with the dean over the subject of language, he draws an important distinction between two kinds of language: "Words have a certain value in the literary tradition and a certain value in the market-place – a debased value. Words are simply receptacles for human thought: in the literary tradition they receive more valuable thoughts than they receive in the market-place" (Joyce, 1956, p. 33). His distinction between the value of words in the literary tradition and the value of words in the market-place is so perceptive that the dean agrees with him. This distinction between higher value attached to words in the literary tradition and lesser value attached to words in the market-place marks a step forward in the development of Stephen's mind. It is the literary tradition that hopes to supply fresh significance to words. But at the same time it tends to isolate him from others. He becomes quite self-withdrawn after his conversation with the dean. He walks through the Dublin streets whenever he finds an opportunity to do so. Sometimes he is accompanied by his younger brother, Maurice, and at other times one or the other of his university fellows. But mostly his walks are lonely wanderings through the streets of Dublin. Like Wordsworth, he is very fond of walking. Since walking is a self-governing act for Stephen, so in this sense his walks tend to liberate him from the concerns and preoccupations of ordinary life. In *The Prelude*, Wordsworth recalls an exceptionally long walk he undertook along with his university friend, Robert Jones. They travelled fifteen hundred miles' distance, mostly by foot, in fourteen weeks to reach France in 1790. On the one hand, the purpose of this walk was to get away from the laborious academic work; on the other hand, this walk provided them with the opportunity to celebrate the spirit of joy and freedom in anticipation of witnessing the French Revolution that took place the previous year. Stephen's walks often revitalize him against "a life of spiritual paralysis" which is the hallmark of Dublin life (Joyce, 1956, p. 151). He often rehearses his phrases during those walks but at the same time catches glimpses of objects he passes by or whenever an object attracts his attention toward itself. There is a traceable pattern in his walks: "His morning walks were critical, his evening walks imaginative" (Joyce, 1956, p. 74). Like Wordsworth, the romantic verses he composes from time to time are often the result of these wanderings. He writes verses to an unknown girl which seems to fill out the gap created by his sense of isolation. The unknown girl has a real counterpart in his life; she is Emma.

Stephen writes an essay on “Art and Life” for the Literary and Historical Society of the university. This essay gives him an opportunity “to define his own position for himself” (Joyce, 1956, p. 81). At the same time, his essay is the first public expression of his ideas; he fleshes out his ideas which are the result of his knowledge culled from the books on philosophy and literature, and his solitary walks. He combines both knowledge and experience. It is already established in the novel that his knowledge departs from the direction which the institutions of education inculcate. For example, his favourite writers Byron and Maeterlinck, most of all Ibsen, are condemned at the university because they are atheists and represent modern ideas. Before he could formally present his essay, he has already expressed the process of its production with his university fellows. Probably this is the reason why the text of the essay is not included in the novel. In this essay, he challenges the established principle of art – as defined by the Latin poet Horace – which says that “the end of art is to instruct, to elevate, and to amuse” (Joyce, 1956, p. 84). For him, the end of art is art itself. He disengages art from moral concerns. It is exemplified in his conception of the artist and the artistic process: “the artist who could disentangle the subtle soul of the image from its mesh of defining circumstances most exactly and re-embody it in artistic circumstances chosen as the most exact for it in its new office, he was the supreme artist” (Joyce, 1956, p. 82). He substitutes the moral concerns with the idea of the beautiful which he borrows from St. Thomas Aquinas: “His Esthetic was in the main applied Aquinas” (Joyce, 1956, p. 81). When he formally presents this essay to the Literary and Historical Society of the university, he is met with instant disapproval from all. His conversation with the president of the college regarding his essay reveals the conservative nature of education. The president has not even read Ibsen but he passes a harsh and unjust judgment on Stephen’s essay. Though he appreciates the quality of his essay he cannot approve of it by virtue of its secular nature. It is the president who titles his theory of aesthetic “Art for Art’s sake” (Joyce, 1956, p. 100). The president warns Stephen of the dangers of cultivating “the cult of beauty” (Joyce, 1956, p. 101). He does not explain why ‘the cult of beauty’ is dangerous to pursue; he leaves it as that. Stephen’s essay, though disapproved by others, is a sure step forward in affirming his artistic talents. It provides him with a base to construct later structures of his art. From here on through to the middle section of the novel, he boldly shares his ideas with his university fellows.

Stephen finds his own home unpleasant because he is heading in a direction very different to his family’s expectations; it finally results into a complete break with his family who expected of him to share their financial burden. He has already rejected his father’s way of life: “That kind of life I often loathe: I find it ugly and cowardly” (Joyce, 1956, p. 90). He refuses to sign the testimonial for universal peace that “was the tribute of Dublin University students to the Tsar of Russia” (Joyce, 1956, p. 117). His rebellion against the Roman Catholic Church is pronounced complete when he does not make his Easter duty: All that is related to the Church is dull and uninteresting. It angers his mother so much that their relationship is broken off. She tells Stephen: “you suffer from the pride of the intellect” (Joyce, 1956, p. 139). In other words, his mother reckons him among the fallen angels. It clearly signals the parting of their ways. The filial bond is broken off and Stephen is left an orphan in the emotional and intellectual senses of the word – thus creating a disruption in his relationship to tradition. Wordsworth’s imagination has been described as that of an “orphan” because he lost both his parents at a very young age; his mother died when he was eight, and his father died when he was thirteen. It is an actual loss in the real sense of the word but he retrieves through memory the absent father and the absent mother. Joyce is a self-made orphan - and yet he identifies with the Romantics because they are concerned with expressing the consequences of being parentless (not just biologically but culturally and socially) and because they are concerned with self-creation, with making themselves their own fathers, their own begetters (Guinn, 1998). Stephen’s sense of being emotionally and intellectually orphaned sunders him from the earliest-formed bond with the nurturing figure of his mother, and with that he is sundered from his childhood and boyhood; as a result, it accentuates the process of alienation from Irish society. It

marks the dividing line between his earlier past and the present. The continuity of his personal history is broken off.

The idea of “a dull discharge of duties” is loathsome to Stephen (Joyce, 1956, p. 184). He prefers the “life of an errant” to the “one who had accepted the tyranny of the mediocre” (Joyce, 1956, p. 184). He tells Cranly that he wishes to realize independence as a true fact of reality; the purpose of such an existence would be to express himself unpretentiously and to recognize his humanity; he wishes to have “a free and noble life” (Joyce, 1956, p. 189). Love could not give him that strength and power as he hoped earlier. While attending his Italian lecture, he sees Emma through the glass panes of the window. He gives himself up to that sudden impulse of seeking oneness with her. He approaches her with the sincerity of his heart but he ends up in conveying quite the opposite impression. She takes his gesture as a frantic attempt on Stephen’s part to absorb her within his intellectual quagmire. Later, he shares this emotional misadventure with Lynch and undertakes to “live his own life according to what he recognized as the voice of a new humanity, active, unafraid and unashamed” (Joyce, 1956, p. 199). He feels liberated from the coercive pressures of Irish society; his liberated mind gains on the side of the heightened state of sensitivity and receptivity that Wordsworth mentions in *The Prelude*. In *The Prelude*, there is a certain kind of predisposition on the part of Wordsworth to receive liberally and generously what Nature can give. Wordsworth explains this mood of receptivity by offering an analogy of a lute: “in a kindred sense / of passion was obedient as a lute / that waits upon the touches of the wind” (III, pp. 140-2).

In the background of this atmosphere of the mind, one evening when Stephen is walking through Eccles Street, an unpremeditated incident strikes his “sensitiveness very severely” (Joyce, 1956, p. 216). He overhears a trivial conversation between a young lady and a young gentleman: “The Young Lady - (drawling discreetly) ... O, yes... I at the ...cha...pel... The Young Gentleman - (inaudibly) ... I ... (again inaudibly) ... I. The Young Lady - (softly) O... but you’re ... ve....ry... wick...ed...” (Joyce, 1956, p. 216). Though it is a casual bit of conversation, it evokes a special response in Stephen. Before he could actually define what it is, he resolves to gather such moments and record them in a book. He works his experience of the significant moment into a formal definition of it: “By an epiphany he meant a sudden spiritual manifestation, whether in the vulgarity of speech or of gesture or in a memorable phase of the mind itself. He believed that it was for the man of letters to record these epiphanies with extreme care, seeing that they themselves are the most delicate and evanescent of moments” (Joyce, 1956, p. 216). Stephen’s discovery of the ‘the most delicate and evanescent of moments’ marks the point of culmination not only of his ‘growth of the mind’ but also of the novel itself. Before I explain Stephen’s theory of the epiphany, I will first discuss what the ‘epiphany’ is and explore where Joyce’s notion of the epiphany comes from?

The Oxford English Dictionary defines the epiphany as a “manifestation, striking appearance, esp. an appearance of a divinity”. The word originally comes from the Greek word *epiphaneia* which means “manifestation, striking appearance” (Walzl, 1965). In pre-Christian times, it meant the appearance of gods and goddesses. In Christianity, we find the term used to describe the Feast of the Epiphany, the 6th of January when Christ was visited by the three wise men. It is apparent that the epiphany is specifically a religious term, pagan and Christian. As Benziger (1962) argues from the historical perspective that the visionary moments in the Romantic poetry are “derivatives of the whole Western religious tradition” (p. 10). However, the twentieth-century use of the term is secular; here the term means a non-divine revelation. It is well-known that Joyce is the first to make use of it in *Stephen Hero*. The possible origins of the epiphany in Joyce are a matter of speculation. Oliver St. John Gogarty, Joyce’s friend and

schoolmate, gives evidence of Joyce's first acquaintance with the epiphany: "Probably Fr. Darlington had taught him [Joyce], as an aside in his Latin class – for Joyce knew no Greek – that – Epiphany meant – a showing forth. So he recorded under Epiphany any showing forth of the mind by which he considered one gave oneself away" (Cited in Natali, 2011, p. 5). Since Joyce was brought up as a Catholic, it is quite likely that he may have been familiar with the term even before hearing it mentioned in his Latin class. It is evident in *Stephen Hero*; Stephen develops his theory of the epiphany from theology as he was taught in the Jesuitical institutions of education: "the entire theory...arose most conveniently for his purpose out of the mass of Catholic theology" (Joyce, 1956, p. 209). Like Stephen, Joyce's rigorous training at the Jesuitical institutions of education exerts such a powerful influence over his sensibility that in spite of cataclysmic break with religion, he could not wrestle himself free from the use of the religious terminology. Also, Joyce sketched out in his notebook short pieces of writing which were published posthumously under the title *Epiphanies*. They are seventy-one in total, out of which forty survive. He composed these sketches between 1900 and 1904. It is nearly the same time when he was writing *Stephen Hero*. *Epiphanies* offer nothing more than sketches of apparently insignificant details. They may mean very little to the reader because they are not given any context. As Natali (2011) argues, "The conceptual model underlying *Epiphanies* is only exposed in the manuscript of *Stephen Hero*" (p. 2). It marks the beginning of the modern epiphanic tradition in fiction. Maltby (2002) considers Wordsworth and Joyce as "exemplars of epiphanic literature" (p. 4). Langbaum (1983) sees the modern epiphany as essentially a Romantic phenomenon: "the epiphanic mode is to a large extent the Romantic and modern mode – a dominant modern convention" (p. 336). It all comes down to Wordsworth's concept of 'spots of time' as the beginning of the modern epiphanic tradition. It is supported by other notable critics of the epiphanic tradition such as Beja (1971), Nichols (1987), Bidney (1997), and Tigges (1997).

Wordsworth is a "cultural icon" and Joyce comes under the influence of Wordsworth through the cultural spread of his ideas (Gill, 1998, p. 3). In this sense, Joyce comes under the influence of Wordsworth through the mediation of Walter Pater. Meisel (1987) and Poirier (1988) affirm this point. Pater is a key literary figure of the Aesthetic Movement that emerged in response to Victorian moralism in the last quarter of the nineteenth-century. Wilson (2004) gives Pater the credit of playing the same role in England as Stéphane Mallarmé, the key Symbolist, was playing in France. He calls Pater "an English equivalent to the Symbolist theory of the French" (p. 28). Wilson quotes from Pater's *The Renaissance*: "Not the fruit of experience, but experience itself, is the end" (p. 29). Pater's concern with 'spots of time' and 'experience itself' is located in Wordsworth. Perlis (1980) argues that the attraction of aestheticism was not simply its anti-bourgeois, anti-Christian quality but its links to the notion of self-education, self-development. As mentioned above, the president's choice of the title 'Art for Art's sake' in response to Stephen's essay links him with Pater. Stephen takes from Aquinas the idea of the beautiful as he explains to the president, "the beautiful as that which satisfies the esthetic appetite and nothing more – that the mere apprehension of which pleases" (Joyce, 1956, p. 100). It is also well-known that Pater is inspired by Matthew Arnold (even if he departs from him), and Arnold is a great Wordsworthian. The common source of influence on Pater and Arnold is Wordsworth. Delaura (1966) corroborates the same point. It may seem coincidental that Joyce's notion of the epiphany and Wordsworth's notion of 'spots of time' bear a striking resemblance but Joyce's direct acknowledgment of Wordsworth's 'genius' substantiates his debt to Wordsworth. Joyce appreciates Wordsworth the most in the English literary tradition as he calls him a real 'genius': "I think Wordsworth of all English men of letters best deserves your word 'genius'" (Cited in Ellmann, 1966, p. 134). Joyce's acknowledgement of Wordsworth as a 'genius' is consonant with the Romantic conception of 'genius' as an individual with inherent unique qualities. Right from the beginning of the text, Stephen is marked out as an

unprecedented and unique being and he seeks to express it through art. Joyce's notion of the 'genius' of Wordsworth implies that his work transcends national boundaries and cultural differences. Despite obvious borrowings from Aquinas and Pater, Wordsworth's influence is more fundamental to Joyce's notion of the epiphany.

In order to substantiate this point further, I will draw here a word by word comparison of Joyce's definition of the epiphany with Wordsworth's concept of 'spots of time'. This comparison is simply based on the face value of the words both the authors choose to define their key concepts. A fuller analysis of this follows in the next paragraph. Stephen's discovery of the epiphanic moment happens all of a "sudden" and just by chance as Wordsworth writes in *The Prelude*, "to receive it when unsought" (1979, XIII, p. 10). Wordsworth experiences 'spots of time' by "chance collisions and quaint accidents" (I, p. 589). "Spiritual" for Joyce "seems to refer to the world of emotions, art, intuition" (Beja, 1971, p. 74). Like Wordsworth, Joyce foregrounds emotion in Stephen's theory of the epiphany. Earlier in the text, Stephen seeks through the mediation of art "to construct cries for primitive emotions" (Joyce, 1956, p. 37). He expresses similar concern at the later stage of his development that "I feel emotions and I express them in rhyming lines" (Joyce, 1956, p. 181). Wordsworth writes in *The Prelude*, "Emotions which best foresight need not fear, / Most worthy then of trust when most intense" (XIV, pp. 122-3). Wordsworth conveys this impression – "manifestation" – at various places in *The Prelude*: "the power of truth / Coming in revelation" (II, pp. 392-3); "objects recognized / In flashes" (V, p. 604-5); "when the light of sense / Goes out, but with a flash that has revealed / The invisible world" (VI, pp. 600-2). Though Wordsworth does not use the phrase "the vulgarity of speech or of gesture" he does convey the essential meaning implied in Joyce's phrase when he writes at various places in *The Prelude*: "I sought / For present good in life's familiar face, / And built thereon my hopes of good to come" (XIII, pp. 61-3); "That in life's every-day appearances / I seemed about this time to gain clear sight / Of a new world" (XIII, pp. 368-70). Wordsworth refers to it – "a memorable phase of the mind itself" – at various places in *The Prelude*: "Unfading recollections" (I, p. 491); "the earth / And common face of Nature spake to me / Remembrable things" (I, pp. 586-8); "Albeit lifeless then, and doomed to sleep / Until maturer seasons called them forth / To impregnate and to elevate the mind" (I, pp. 594-6); "Invigorating thoughts from former years" (I, p. 622). It is for "the man of letters to record these epiphanies with extreme care". The above-mentioned little piece of vulgar conversation made Stephen "think of collecting many such moments together in a book of epiphanies" (Joyce, 1956, p. 216). Wordsworth writes in *The Prelude*: "Nor should this, perchance, / Pass unrecorded" (II, pp. 377-8). Wordsworth writes about "the most delicate and evanescent of moments" in *The Prelude*: "There are in our existence spots of time, / which with distinct pre-eminence retain / A renovating virtue" (XII, pp. 207-9). It is apparent from this comparison that Wordsworth and Joyce share the common base of their key concepts.

There is clearly a distinction between the epiphany related to 'a memorable phase of the mind' and the epiphany related to 'the vulgarity of speech or of gesture'. Beja (1971) categorizes epiphanies into two types: "retrospective" epiphany, and "the past recaptured" (p. 15). Nichols' categorization, by and large, speaks the same: "proleptic" (specific memory) and "adelonic" (a powerful immediate experience)" (1987, p. 75). In the former category, the experience has already taken place in the past, and it is the force of the present moment which brings it back. The very reason why the moment is brought back to consciousness speaks of its significance in terms of its intense nature. In the latter category, a powerful immediate imaginative perception evokes a special insight into the deep nature of things. Stephen's epiphany at Eccles Street is an example of the latter type. Wordsworth experiences one such moment while entering London sitting among the vulgar people on the roof of a travelling vehicle. Wordsworth's discovery of 'spots of time' occurs at the crucial period of his life; it is not only the

climactic moment in *The Prelude* but also the climactic moment of the growth of Wordsworth's mind. In the first half of the Book XII, he regrets having lost contact with his creative powers in the face of the crises of contemporary times. His earlier excitement about the French Revolution, the lofty hopes and ideals associated with it at last crumble in the wake of large scale chaos, violence, anarchy and bloodshed. He experiences a moral crisis at the degeneracy of the lofty hopes and ideals associated with the Revolution. He realizes that it is against the grain of his personality to lose hope utterly. The discovery of 'spots of time' uplifts him from the condition of "utter loss of hope itself / And things to hope for" to the condition of being assured of his creative powers by calling to mind the earliest 'remembrances' of his childhood (XII, pp. 6-7). It is evident that memory for Wordsworth functions as a restorative agent. It is true that Stephen's discovery of the epiphanic moment occurs not only at the climactic moment of the text but also of the growth of his mind. Like Wordsworth, it reassures him in his creative potentialities but unlike Wordsworth, his sense of being emotionally and intellectually orphaned sundered him from the earliest-formed bond with the nurturing figure of his mother and with that he is sundered from his childhood and boyhood. He forges his new paternity in the form of epiphanic consciousness that seems to compensate for his sense of loss and that marks him out as a unique and unprecedented being.

Most scholars argue that the epiphany is an aesthetic doctrine: For example, Scholes & Walzl (1967), Block (1950), and Hendry (1946). However, Beja (1971) argues that "it is a distortion to look at epiphany primarily in the context of Joyce's aesthetic theories" (p. 80). Also Jones (1973) discusses at length Joyce's aesthetics and arrives at the same conclusion. It seems evident that Stephen's theory of the epiphany is premised on his aesthetic theory. I argue that there is clearly a distinction between the experiential epiphany (the epiphany of the subject) and the aesthetic epiphany (the epiphany of the object). The former seeks 'truth', the latter 'beauty': "truth being desired by the intellectual appetite... beauty being desired by the esthetic appetite" (Joyce, 1956, p. 176). It is also evident that for Stephen, truth and beauty are the components of the same equation but they are by no means the same. Taken together, the notion of the epiphany goes beyond a mere aesthetic end; it is equally related to truth as well. Stephen explains the second category of the epiphany to Cranly. He unfolds the process whereby the aesthetic epiphany can occur. He describes three things necessary for beauty: integrity, symmetry and radiance:

First we recognize that the object is one integral thing, then we recognize that it is an organized composite structure, a thing in fact: finally, when the relation of the parts is exquisite, when the parts are adjusted to the special point, we recognize that it is that thing which it is. Its soul, its whatness, leaps to us from the vestment of its appearance. The soul of the commonest object, the structure of which is so adjusted, seems to us radiant. The object achieves its epiphany (Joyce, 1956, p. 218).

The aesthetic epiphany occurs in *The Prelude* too. The relation between the creative potentialities of the mind and the latent qualities of the object, the eye that sees and the object that is seen is exemplified in *The Prelude*: "hence to finer influxes / The mind lay open, to a more exact / And close communication" (II, pp. 282-4); "that universal power / And fitness in the latent qualities / And essences of things" (II, pp. 324-6); "The excellence, pure function, and best power/ Both of the object seen, and eye that sees" (XIII, pp. 377-8). Likewise, Stephen tells Cranly about the special way of seeing an object: "Imagine my glimpses at that clock as the gropings of a spiritual eye which seeks to adjust its vision to an exact focus. The moment the focus is reached the object is epiphanised. It is just in this epiphany that I find the third, the supreme quality of beauty" (Joyce, 1956, pp. 216-7). The climactic moment of the

aesthetic epiphany is reached when he tells Cranly that “*Claritas is quidditas*” (Joyce, 1956, p. 213). He vows to write “a series of hymns in honour of extravagant beauty” (Joyce, 1956, p. 219). He hopes to make it the touchstone of his values. He does not reach that point of culmination by way of the institutional mode of education; he rather positions himself antithetically to it. Taken together, the epiphany is also an aspect of a much larger concern with learning beyond and in spite of the institutions of education.

3. Conclusion

Stephen’s discovery of the epiphany gives him the reassuring feeling that the ineffectual and hopeless system of education would continue to produce the likes of his university fellows. He loses even the last remnant of respect for the institutional mode of education because it does not make any substantial difference in their lives, as he finds “a day-school full of terrorised boys, banded together in a complicity of diffidence” (Joyce, 1956, p. 238). At the end of *The Prelude*, Wordsworth after having been assured of his poetic gifts, denounces the institutional mode of education on the grounds that it has little to do with ‘real feeling and just sense’. Stephen declares categorically to Lynch that “I will not submit to them, either outwardly or inwardly” (Joyce, 1956, p. 239). His refusal to submit subverts what they stand for, and at the same time affirms his own values. Even though he burns his verses simply because they are romantic he carries on with the romantic aesthetic. At the end of the novel, Stephen declares to Mr Heffernan, “My own mind is more interesting to me than the entire country” (Joyce, 1956, p. 249). He chooses his own mind as an interesting subject of inquiry. He does not state here explicitly that he is going to leave Ireland but his intention is clear. The process of alienation from Irish society is pronounced complete. Religion, language, family, friends and nationality could not integrate him into Irish society. He destroys his family’s expectations of raising their financial condition by joining an honourable profession. He decides to leave the university. He proves himself a miserable failure in love. In short, he pays a heavy price by taking up a radical position which is antithetical to the prevailing hegemonic forms of Irish society, and decides to form his identity on the basis of his commitment to the inner laws of his nature. As Kermode (1957) argues that the isolation of the artist is a price to be paid in order to have the “esthetic image”, which for Joyce is the epiphany (p. 1). Despite all opposition, his ever-growing conviction in the literary art hopes to save him. Like Wordsworth, Stephen’s assurance of his literary talents is affirmed by his discovery of the epiphany.

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