

Joyce's "Epiphany"

[Joyce's 'theory of epiphanies' is rightly considered central to his work. As a young man, he imagined himself as 'a centre of conscious, reacting life', a 'centre of vivification', and 'the intense centre of the life of his age'—all hyper-romantic ideas derived from the *Hero-Worship* of Thomas Carlyle (1841). This gave rise to a theory of perception which placed the young writer at the centre of the world where he received messages in the form of 'speech and gesture' which conveyed to him the 'meaning of the visible world'. Most often, the meaning was a verdict on the vulgarity and the 'spiritual paralysis' of the people around him in repressed, colonial Ireland. But this was boyish thought. In 1907 or so he reached a form of impersonality which made it possible to transpose the personal epiphany to every character and event in such a way that the world of Joycean composition became radically phenomenological. The world was, then, the totality of our perceptual horizons upon it. In their different ways both *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake* convey this complex structuring idea behind which, moreover, lies a constant cosmographical desire to depict in its totality of physical and moral relations what he earlier called 'the reality of experience' (*A Portrait*, Chap. 5.) BS 26.10.2021.]

Stephen Hero

A young lady was standing on the steps of one of those brown brick houses which seem the very incarnation of Irish paralysis. A young gentleman was leaning on the rusty railings of the area. Stephen as he passed on his quest heard the following fragment of colloquy out of which he received an impression keen enough to afflict his sensitiveness very severely.

The Young Lady — (drawling discreetly) ... O, yes ... I was ... at the ... cha ... pel ...

The Young Gentleman — (inaudible) ... I ... (again inaudibly ... I ...

The Young Lady — (softly) ... O ... but you're ... ve ... ry ... wick ... ed ...

This triviality made him think of collecting many such moments together in a book of epiphanies. 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. [SH187-88]

Portrait of the Artist

— You know what Aquinas says: The three things requisite for beauty are, integrity, a wholeness, symmetry, and radiance. Some day I will expend that sentence into a treatise. Consider the performance of your own mind when confronted with any object, hypothetically beautiful. Your mind to apprehend the object divides the entire universe into two parts, the object, and the void which is not the object. To apprehend it, you must lift it away from everything else: and then you perceive it as one integral thing, that is a thing. You recognise its integrity. ...

— That is the first quality of beauty: it is declared in a simple sudden synthesis of the faculty which apprehends. What then. Analysis then. The mind considered the object in whole and in part, in relation to itself and to other objects, examines the balance of its parts, contemplates the form of the object, traverses every cranny of [189] the structure. So the mind receives the impression of the symmetry of the object. The mind recognises that the object is in the strict sense of the word, a thing, a definitely constituted entity.

— Now for the third quality. For a long time I couldn't make out what Aquinas meant. He uses a figurative word (a very unusual thing for him) but I have solved it. *Claritas* is *quidditas*. After the analysis which discovers the second quality the mind makes the only

logically possible synthesis and discovers the third quality. This is the moment which I call epiphany. First we recognise 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. The soul of the commonest object seems to us radiant. The object achieves its epiphany. [190]

Finnegans Wake

all too many much illusiones through photoprismic velamina of hueful panepiphanal world spectacurum of Lord Joss, the of which zoantholitic furniture, from mineral through vegetal to animal, not appear to full up together fallen man than under one photoreflexion of the several iridal?] gradationes of solar light, that one which that part of it (furnit of huepanepi world) had shown itself (part of fur of huepanwor) unable to absorbere, wheras for numpa one puraduxed seer in seventh degree of wisdom of Entis-Onton he savvy inside true inwardness of reality, the Ding hvad in idself id est, all objects (of panepiwor) allsides showed themselves in trues coloribus resplendent with sextuple gloria of light actually retained, untisintus, inside them (obs of epiwo) [FW611]