Chapter

Joyce and the Alienation of the Self

As we know, Joyce bases his first collection of short stories, Dubliners, on the theme of, as he writes to Constantine P. Curran in 1904: "that hemiplegia or paralysis which many consider a city". The city--Dublin--is for him the place or centre of "a special odour of corruption". Joyce says further that every story in the collection is covered by this thought. Thus what is portrayed, in them, is the mental suffering of most of the characters who are caught in such atmosphere.

> Every story in Dubliners is an action defining amid different circumstances of degradation and difficulty in the environment a frustration or defeat of the soul in a different state of strength or debility...the entire sequence represents the whole course of moral deterioration ending in the death of the soul.[1]

Joyce also writes in another letter that in composing the stories he has taken the first step towards the 'spiritual liberation' of his country. His characters are seen hopelessly longing to escape as well from their everyday life which is dull and meaningless. They are, for instance, most of the boys of the first three stories; Eveline of "Eveline"; Little Chandler of "A Little Cloud"; and Gabriel Conroy of "The Dead". Apart from

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[1]Brewster Ghiselin, "The Unity of Dubliners", Twentieth Century Interpretations of Dubliners (New Jersey: A Spectrum Book, 1968), p. 62.

the idea of yearning to go away, characters like Gabriel Conroy and Mr. Duffy of "A Painful Case" still differ from the others. They separate themselves from the world around, feeling their intellectual superiority to other people. They lack true love, passions, and human relationships.

> he(Mr. Duffy)heard the strange impersonal voice which he recognized as his own, insisting on the soul's incurable loneliness. We cannot give ourselves, it said: we are our own....every bond, he said, is a bond to sorrow.[2]

> he(Gabriel)feared they(the lines from Robert Browning)would be above the heads of his hearers. Some quotation that they would recognize from Shakespeare or from the Melodies would be better. The indelicate clacking of the men's heels and the shuffling of their soles reminded him that their grade of culture differed from his....He would fail with them.... His whole speech was a mistake from first to last, an utter failure (pp. 176-77).

Both Mr. Duffy and Gabriel in some sense are like Stephen Dedalus of Joyce's first novel: A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man. All of them are self-possessed. Through their egotism, the final knowledge of the selves they confront towards the end of each story is, however, dissimilar, owing to each particular circumstance and Joyce's thinking developing through each period of writing.

> It is precisely this fiction of self-containment that Joyce defines in successively more elaborate images, from Mr. Duffy's careful control over detail of life through the lightly-bounded ethical world of Exiles and Stephen's "All

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[2]James Joyce, Dubliners (Penguin Books, 1956), p. 109. Further references will be to this edition.

> or not at all" to HCE's solipsistic nightmare. What beats against these people is the evidence of otherness: the ghosts in Dubliners, Richard Rowan's voices on the strand at dawn, Stephen's fear of a "malevolent reality"...[3]

At the very beginning of the story, Gabriel's feeling of superiority is shown through his thinking that other partygoers' grade of culture is not equal to his: "He would only make himself ridiculous by quoting poetry to them which they could not understand. They would think that he was airing his superior education" (p. 177). Moreover we see too, his lack of good communication and understanding of other people. From the first, his conversation with Lily, the caretaker's daughter after arriving at his aunts' is a failure. When asked about her wedding, Lily answers Gabriel very bitterly:

> "the men that is now is only all palaver and what they can get out of you."
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> Gabriel coloured, as if he felt he had made a mistake, and, without looking at her, kicked off his goloshes and flicked actively with muffler at his patent-leather shoes (p. 176).

It seems Gabriel who sees himself as a "well-meaning sentimentalist" feels awkward at such an unexpected response. His sensitiveness is described also at the same moment: "and on his hairless face there scintillated restlessly the polished lenses and the bright gilt rims of the glasses which screened his delicated and restless eyes" (p. 176).

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[3] Hugh Kenner, "Dubliners", Twentieth Century Interpretations of Dubliners, p. 49.

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Gabriel's private self is shaken strongly by his conversation with Miss Ivors, one of the guests. She discovers that he writes a literary column in The Daily Express. She invites Gabriel to a summer holiday in the country of Ireland—in the Aran Isles. But Gabriel would not go, saying he intends to go to the Continent. His reason is this: "it's partly to keep in touch with the languages and partly for a change". Then Miss Ivors assaults him with her idea of nationalism. His only reply is, "to tell you the truth....I'm sick of my country, sick of it!" He dare not say anything much to her, for he considers her a person of his level.

> He did not know how to meet her charge. He wanted to say that literature was above politics. But they were friends of many years' standing and their careers had been parallel, first at the University and then as teachers: he could not risk a grandiose phrase with her (p. 186).

He thinks she tries to make him look ridiculous before people. This incident makes him perplexed and moody for some time. Not very long after this, Gabriel stands near the window, longing to walk alone out there in the snow.

> How cool it must be outside! How pleasant it would be to walk out alone, first along by the river and then through park! The snow would be lying on the branches of the trees and forming a bright cap on the Wellington Monument. How more pleasant it would be there than at the suppertable (p. 189).

It seems he does not want to be in contact with anyone, but to be alone with his own soul. Although everything inside is in merriment, it represents nothingness or a living death to him.

> During the party the living people, their festivities, and all human society seem contrasted with the cold outside, as in the warmth of Gabriel's hand on the pane. But this warmth is felt by Gabriel as stuffy and confining, and the cold outside is repeatedly connected with what is fragrant and fresh.[4]

Then Gabriel is himself again, taking responsibility for carving the goose: "He felt quite at ease now, for he was an expert carver and liked nothing better than to find himself at the head of a well-laden table" (p. 144).

After listening to Mr. D'Arcy's song--"The Lass of Aughrim" which is in old Irish tonality, Gretta, Gabriel's wife, seems strange, standing apart not joining any conversations. "Gabriel saw that there was colour on her cheeks and her eyes were shining." On their way to the hotel after the party, Gabriel is very happy, longing to recall to his wife those joyful moments of their life in the past so that she would forget their dull present. In the hotel room, Gretta is still in the same mood as before when her husband is full of 'impetuous desire'. Finally she bursts into tears, saying that she is thinking about the song. Gabriel is cold and ironical while asking about its connection with her past.

> While he had been full of memories of their secret life together...she had been comparing him in her mind with another. A shameful consciousness of his own person assailed him. He saw himself a ludicrous figure...a nervous, well-meaning sentimentalist, orating to vulgarious and idealiz-

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[4]Richard Ellmann, James Joyce (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), p. 251.

> ing his own clownish lusts, the pitiable fatuous fellow he had caught a glimpse of in the mirror (pp. 216-17).

Here is the first time that Gabriel begins to gain self-knowledge, looking into his own self objectively. This moment comes to a head when Gretta says Michael Furey, her young lover who used to sing that song, died for her.

> So she had had that romance in her life: a man had died for her sake. It hardly pained him now to think how poor a part he, her husband, had played in her life....He thought of how she who lay beside him had locked in her heart for so many years that image of her lover's eyes when he had told her that he did not wish to live (pp. 218-19).

He has never felt like that himself but he knows that such feeling must be love. Thus Gabriel, perhaps has only self-love, knowing well that he never has true love towards anybody. He is like Mr. Duffy of "A Painful Case", lacking love and human relationships. Mr. Duffy finally experiences too, the true essence or the emptiness of his isolated ego:

> He felt his moral nature falling to pieces....He gnawed the recitude of his life; he felt that he had been outcast from life's feast. One human being had seemed to love him and he had denied her life and happiness (p. 114).

He thinks he had sentenced Mrs. Sinico--his "soul's companion"--to death after he broke their intellectual companionship. What shocks him is the way she catches up his hand passionately one night while talking, pressing it to her cheek. And perhaps he is afraid of any further intimacy. That is the reason why Mr. Duffy ends his relationship with her. He has also "a distaste for underhand ways and, finding that they were compelled to meet

stealthily....Those venal and furtive loves filled him with despair." At his last meeting with her, "every bond", he says, "is a bond to sorrow". Two months later, he writes to himself: "Love between man and man is impossible because there must not be sexual intercourse, and friendship between man and woman is impossible because there must be sexual intercourse".

> Witholding love, he has betrayed her and, what is worse, himself. Betrayer, furthermore, of humanity, an "outcast from life's feast," he is alone. Not Mrs. Sinico but Mr. Duffy is the painful case...[5]

Through the personalities of Mr. Duffy and Gabriel, Joyce seems to portray those people who protect themselves firmly from the living death of the outside world and even from human relationships. They are determined to reject all follies, all private and social forces which contribute to the paralysis of their fellow-citizens or other characters of Dubliners.[6] The isolated ego, excluding any social influences and companionship means nothing. "His(Mr. Duffy's)life would be lonely too until he, too died, ceased to exist, became a memory--if anyone remembered him....No one wanted him" (p. 114). He certainly would not be in anyone's memory after death, unlike Mrs. Sinico who still will be there in his memory: "he realized that she was dead, that she had ceased to exist, that she had become a memory", and also unlike Michael Furey who is always in Gretta's

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[5] W. Y. Tindall, James Joyce (New York: The Noonday Press, 1959), p. 32.

[6] C. H. Peake, James Joyce (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1977), p. 34.

memory.

Gabriel has his perception as well near the end of "The Dead": "One by one, they were all becoming shades. Better pass boldly into that other world, in the full glory of some passion, than fade and wither dismally with age" (p. 219). We can foresee that the one who will "fade and wither with age" perhaps is Mr. Duffy. The existence of both him and Gabriel is meaningless for they avoid human relationships and real contact with life, together with its passions. They escape into their spiritual or intellectual realm of books and music. Gabriel's perception suggests some development of idea between "A Painful Case" and "The Dead". He acknowledges now the most precious thing in life is to live in "the full glory of some passion". The true purpose of our existence and the whole universe seem to move towards a great void. The implication of this idea is hinted at the end of "The Dead" and at the beginning of A Portrait:

> His(Gabriel's)soul swooned slowly as he heard the snow falling faintly through the universe and faintly falling, like the descent of their last end, upon all the living and the dead (p. 220).

> He(Stephen Dedalus)turned to the flyleaf of the geography and read what he had written there: himself, his name and where he was.
>
> Stephen Dedalus
> Class of Elements
> Clongowes Wood College
> Sallins
> Country Kildare
> Ireland
> Europe

The World
The Universe

> ....Then he read the flyleaf from the bottom to the top till he came to his own name. That was he: and he read down the page again. What was after the universe? Nothing. But was there anything round the universe to show where it stopped before the nothing place began? It could not be a wall...[7]

Joyce believes the same as he tells his friend Arthur Laubenstein that life is suspended in doubt like the world in the void.[8]

Most critics agree that there is some link of idea between Dubliners and Joyce's later works. The former is the latter's significant prologue:

> In a letter (83) Joyce called Ulysses a "continuation" of A Portrait and Dubliners. This works the other way as well, and we can look at Dubliners as preface to these works, both of which are so firmly rooted in Dublin. Dubliners establishes the cause of the exile attempted in A Portrait.[9]

In A Portrait, Stephen is able to shake off all ties of his own environment: Church, home and country whereas those people of Dubliners are not. He is to lead his life deliberately "in the full glory of some passion" as Gabriel Conroy has contemplated, and to create his works of art objectively from "the reality of experience and to forge in the smithy of my soul the uncreated conscience of my race" (p. 235).

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[7]James Joyce, A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man (London: Heinemann Educational Books Ltd, 1964), pp. 11-12. Further references will be to this edition.

[8]Ellmann, James Joyce, p. 557.

[9]Tindall, James Joyce, pp. 12-13.

> The book's pattern, as he(Joyce)explained to Stanislaus, is that we are what we were; our maturity is an extension of our childhood, and the courageous boy is father of the arrogant young man....Joyce thought of a man's character as developing 'from an embryo' with constant traits.[10]

From Joyce's belief above, we can see through Stephen's childhood period that he is born to be an artist. He is very sensitive to his five senses, as we learn from the start: "His father told him that story...looked at him through a glass: he had a hairy face....When you wet the bed first it is warm then it gets cold...That(oilsheet)had a queer smell" (p. 3). Language or words fascinate him:

> How beautiful the words were where they said "Bury me in the old churchyard!" A tremor passed over his body...He wanted to cry quietly but not for himself: for the words, so beautiful and sad, like music (p. 20).

Moreover through words, Stephen has "glimpses of the real world", being ready to take great part in it in the future, at present he only 'dimly' apprehends life or the world. Stephen is an imaginative child too: Eileen, his neighbour and the girl he say he is going to marry, has long white hands "thin and cold and soft. That was ivory: a cold white thing".

Stephen feels that he is different from other students: "He felt his body small and weak...his eyes were weak and watery". Pretending to be in a group, his soul always stands

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[10]Richard Ellmann, "The Structure of the <u>Portrait</u>", <u>Twentieth Century Interpretations of A Portrait</u> (New Jersey: A Spectrum Book, 1968), pp. 38-9.

apart, sitting in the playroom, "pretending to watch a game of dominos and once or twice he was able to hear for an instant the song of the gas" (p. 9). The first important thing in life that comes to stress Stephen's self-consciousness is his name: Dedalus. His friends at Clongowes find it strange. And one of the most serious incidents of the story, illustrating his high sensitivity, is the unjust punishment from Father Dolan. Stephen is asked twice in the scene what his name is:

> Why could he(Father Dolan)not remember the name when he was told the first time? Was he not listening the first time or was it to make fun of the name? The great men in the history had names like that and nobody made fun of them (p. 48).

From here, we begin to see also the growth of his self-pride. Stephen courageously reports the matter to the rector, rightly knowing that none of his friends would dare to do so. Thus after coming back from the rector's room, he becomes a hero. His insecure soul now is one with the whole world again: "He was alone. He was happy and free; but he would not be anyway proud with Father Dolan. He would be very quiet and obedient". Stephen is now seen like Gabriel Conroy of "The Dead" in the way that both are 'sensitive introverts' saving the self from being injured and humiliated.

Stephen depends more on his inner world as his family condition is getting worse. Tasting the 'mortifying flavour' of life, Stephen's dominant feeling at this period is restlessness. His isolation too is intensified.

> The peace of the gardens and the kindly lights in the windows poured a tender influence into his restless heart. The

> noise of children at play annoyed him and their silly voices made him feel, even more keenly than he had felt at Clongowes, that he was different from others. He did not want to play. He wanted to meet in the real world the unsubstantial image which his soul so constantly beheld (p. 57).

He relies more and more on his romantic reveries, especially as he is searching now in reality for Mercedes of The Counte of Monte Cristo. This private world of his is well-protected: "the adventure of his mind stood in no danger" from everyday life. It is in the company of this spiritual realm that Stephen wants to escape from the various commands of the outer world. They are, to him, just 'hollowsounding voices':

> While his mind had been pursuing its intangible phantoms and turning in irresolution from such pursuit he had heard about him the constant voices of his father and of his masters, urging him to be a gentleman above all things and urging him to be a good catholic above all things. These voices had now come to be hollowsounding in the ears. When the gymnasium had been opened he had heard another voice urging him to be strong and manly and when the movement towards national revival had begun to be felt in the college yet another voice had bidden him be true to his country and help to raise up her language and tradition. In the profane world, as he foresaw, a worldly voice would bid him raise up his father's fallen state by his labours and, meanwhile, the voice of his school comrades urged him to be decent fellow, to shield others from blame or to beg them off and to do his best to get free days for the school (p. 75).

In conclusion, it is all these main issues: religion, home, and country that Stephen is going to deny and from which he will be an exile.

Stephen's loneliness and detachment from his family culminates in the Cork scene. He cannot bear anything about his own father. He feels so lost and mentally sick that he has to recall to himself his self-existence, rejecting also any human relationships.

> By his monstrous way of life he seemed to have put himself beyond the limits of reality. Nothing moved him or spoke to him from the real world unless he heard in it an echo of the infuriated cries within him. He could respond to no earthly or human appeal, dumb...He could scarcely recognize as his own thoughts, and repeated slowly to himself--I am Stephen Dedalus....No life or youth stirred in him...Nothing stirred within his soul but a cold and cruel and loveless lust (pp. 83-7).

Moreover the 'riot' in his mind issues partly from his own developing adolescent "fire of lust". Thus he has his first sexual experience with a prostitute in town. After this affair, he feels nothing but "cold indifferent knowledge" of himself. It is as if his own soul has gone "forth to experience, unfolding itself sin by sin, spreading abroad the balefire of its burning stars and folding upon itself, fading slowly, quenching its own lights and fires" (p. 94). He cannot, however, be in this state for so long. The particular subject of the retreat held in the college, about man's fall, the eternal fire, and torment in hell has a psychological effect on Stephen's sinful soul. He is full of shame and fear:

> Every word of it was for him. Against his own sin, foul, and secret, the whole wrath of God was aimed. The preacher's knife had probed deeply into his disclosed conscience and he felt now that his soul was festering in sin....Shame

rose in his smitten heart and flooded his whole being (p. 105).

Comparing this incident with that of the pandybat, Stephen's ruling and most emphasized feeling which he cannot bear is that of shame. After having confessed, his heart and body are 'purified': "His soul was made fair...once more, holy and happy ....Till that moment he had not known how beautiful and peaceful life could be....How simple...was life after all" (p. 134). His mind is seen now as it was after the pandybat episode: "He was alone. He was happy and free". Perhaps the difference between the two scenes is that with the latter, occuring in his adolescence, Stephen is not as free as he used to be. His childhood is now to him "dead and lost and with it his soul capable of simple joys". Now he is surrounded by the demands of his family, Church, and country. As he tells his friend, Davin:

> When the soul of a man is born in this country there are nets flung at it to hold it back from flight. You talk to me of nationality, language, religion. I shall try to fly by those nets (p. 188).

Stephen's real sense of freedom, however, comes back again through the revelation of his true vocation as an artist at the seashore. His queer name, Dedalus, now shows its true meaning to him:

> a hawklike man flying sunward above the sea, a prophecy of the end he had been born to serve and had been following through the mists of childhood and boyhood, a symbol of the artist forging anew in his workshop....Yes! Yes! Yes! He would create proudly out of the freedom and power of his soul, as the great artificer whose name he bore...
> (pp. 156-57)

Before this he has refused to join the priesthood. For though each of his senses, in his pious life, is brought under a 'rigorous discipline', having no 'temptations to sin mortally', Stephen knows that because of his 'imperfections', he cannot elude his inner 'flood of temptation' and 'unresting doubt'. He knows he can never totally bring under control both his own emotions, for example anger, and the call of his 'insistent voices of the flesh'. He can remember very well that even his masters' judgements were 'childish' and their words and faces expressed anger. Thus Stephen feels the shame of never wholly being free from sin. All this is where his growth of doubts spring from, however

> holily he might live or whatever virtues or perfections he might attain. A restless feeling of guilt would always be present with him: he would confess and repent and be absolved, confess and repent again and be absolved again, fruitlessly. Perhaps that first hasty confession wrung from him by the fear of hell had not been good? Perhaps, concerned only for his imminent doom, he had not had sincere sorrow for his sin? (p. 142)

Then Stephen concludes to himself that his profession is to be a priest of 'the eternal imagination', willing to accept his fall. His own self must stand absolutely by itself, detached from any bonds and judgements. What is seen above all is his aloofness, self-pride, and self-communion. He would appeal to his own inner commands only. As an artist, his spirit would express itself in 'unfettered freedom'.

> His destiny was to be elusive of social or religious orders. The wisdom of the priest's appeal did not touch him to the quick. He was destined to learn the wisdom of others him-

> self wandering among the snares of the world.
> The snares of the world were its ways of sin. He would fall...Not to fall was too hard, too hard... (p. 150)

Stephen tells Cranly, one of his friends that from now on he would become more himself than ever before. In the past he says, he was someone else, "I was not myself as I am now as I had to become". Being totally independent, he is conscious too of his solitary soul: "Away then: it is time to go. A voice spoke softly to Stephen's lonely heart, bidding him go...Yes; he would go. He could not strive against another. He knew his part" (p. 227). "The 'alienation of the artist' is a common place of twentieth century thought; for Joyce that alienation was both a personal need and a creative necessity."[11] Stephen knows too well that his exile and the acceptance of his fall result from his own pride. As he once asks himself: "What had come of the pride of his spirit which had always made him conceive himself as a being apart in every order?" He is seen by himself and his friends, as being like Lucifer, the fallen angel: "what his(Lucifer's)sin was we cannot say. Theologians consider that it was the sin of pride, the sinful thought conceived in an instant...'I will not serve'. That instant was his ruin" (p. 107). A similar expression is declared by Stephen:

> I will not serve that in which I no longer believe, whether it call itself my home, my fatherland, or my church: and I will try to express myself in some mode of life or art as freely as I can and as wholly as I can... (p. 229)

His friends call him an 'antisocial being' and a 'born sneerer'.

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[11]Daiches, The Novel and the Modern World, p. 85.

He, however, tells Cranly that though he has lost all his faith the only thing that would remain with him always is his 'self-respect'. Perhaps the true essence of the world of lost beliefs lies only in man's holding onto his inner life.

> Joyce's self-awareness was extremely important to his art. His subject-matter was esoteric: it resulted from intense self-investigation. His route to understanding of the world was from the inside....know thyself and the world by meditation; being of the twentieth century, he was self-conscious and not God-conscious. His meditations led to his understanding of himself as an artist...<u>A Portrait of the Artist</u>...was the first step towards this understanding.[12]

As a writer, Joyce once tells his brother, Stanislaus, he would like to "put on paper the thousand complexities" of man's mind.[13]

In abolishing all influences, Stephen as an artist will create works of art both subjectively and objectively. They would be subjective because he would purely express all from his inner perception only. And as an alienated artist, he can produce his works objectively and truthfully from the depth of his experience as an Irishman in exile. Actually, he is not able to escape from his entire background or how and where the self is formed. His subject of writing, like Joyce's, would be about Dublin and its people, as Sir Ifor Evans comments in <u>A Short History of English Literature</u>: "Joyce, like Shaw and Yeats, was Irish. Unlike them, he did not reside in England.

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[12]Notes on James Joyce's <u>A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man</u>, pp. 6-7.

[13]Richard Ellmann, "Joyce at 100", <u>The New York Review</u> (1982), XXIX, p. 63.

Much of his life was spent on the Continent, but spiritually he never left Dublin".

As the title of the novel indicates, the artist is still young and immature. There is a lot to be learned. In Ulysses, Stephen, however, has come back from Paris. He tries to mix with the life and people there in Dublin. But most of the time his mind stands apart as usual. He does not really feel he belongs to the place. Besides being locked up in his intellectual thoughts, his mind is full of his own past--especially his mother's death and his refusal to pray for her. Stephen's contemplation on the impossibility of escaping from the senses and the world altogether is shown in the "Proteus" episode--the last part of the first long chapter chiefly deals with his inner monologue. The scene is full of Stephen's intense philosophical and artistic concerns.

> Ineluctable modality of the visible: at least that if no more, thought through my eyes. Signatures of all things I am here to read, seaspawn and seawrack, the nearing tide, that rusty boot...
>
> Stephen closed his eyes to hear his boots crush crackling wrack and shells. You are walking through it howsomever. I am a stride at a time. A very short space of time through short times of space...Exactly that is the ineluctable of the audible....Open your eyes now. I will. One moment. Has all vanished since?...
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> See now. There all the time without you: and ever shall be, world without end.[14]

Stephen in Ulysses, is still Joyce's immature 'persona', as a

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[14]James Joyce, Ulysses (New York: Random House, 1933), p. 38.

mature 'persona' he chooses Leopold Bloom.[15] In his brief spiritual contact with Bloom--'the twentieth-century Everyman', Stephen, a young alienated artist, perhaps has learned something about his own self, life, reality, and the significant sense of man's companionship.

> Meeting human Mr. Bloom and suddenly understanding humanity, Stephen becomes a kind of Bloom, leaving pride for charity, and inhumanity for acceptance of mankind....like D. H. Lawrence, he(Joyce)favors "togetherness", although his word for it is "communion" or "atonement", being at one with another.[16]

What seems to show through the "stream of consciousness" of Stephen, Bloom, and Molly, is that each man is locked up in loneliness. The contact with other individuals is its remedy. "Yet the desire to communicate is also a deeply imbedded human instinct, and the desire to escape from loneliness one of the chief human preoccupations."[17] Stephen can never be a true artist as long as he rejects human relationships and never learns to be self-abnegated. To be one with another probably is the only precious thing of the modern world of lost beliefs as seen through the works of both Joyce and Lawrence.

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[15]Ellmann, James Joyce, p. 359.

[16]Tindall, James Joyce, p. 125.

[17]Daiches, The Novel and the Modern World, p. 8.