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DEPARTAMENTO DE LITERATURA
Seminario de Grado: *El modernismo Literario Anglo-Americano*
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**Informe final de Seminario de Grado para optar al Grado de Licenciado en
Lengua y Literatura Inglesas**

*A PORTRAIT OF THE SUBJECT AS A YOUNG ARTIST,
JAMES JOYCE AND MODERNISM.*

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Santiago-Chile
2010

Acknowledgements:

I would like to thank especially my parents; without their support and confidence my project would never have seen the light.

Also my appreciation to Professor Andrés Ferrada, for all the time dedicated to the teaching practice, and all the patience and perseverance he had with us, his students.

I want to thank also the support of many friends involved in the development of this work: Arturo Seguel, Felipe Larrea, Manuel Alfaro, Pablo Yañez, and of course Carlos Riquelme, that in several ways transmitted me the interest in philosophical and literary matters, and taught me a lot.

Tamara.

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INTRODUCTION

A man of genius makes no mistakes; his errors are
volitional and are the portals of discovery.

James Joyce

Concerning Anglo and American modernist literature, many outstanding writers can come into one's mind, but, certainly, one of the most marvelous and awe-inspiring writers in English at this epoch is James Joyce. This author is well known for his masterpiece *Ulysses*, considered the very best example of what is known as interior monologue and one of the most complex and multifaceted books ever written, but his stories in the *Dubliners* and the narrative *A portrait of the artist as a young man* are definitively part of his work of art.

The magnitude of this author lies in several reasons, but the most important for most of the critics and readers is, essentially, the revolutionary manner of his writing. This particular matter is well shown in all his books, but in this special occasion, *A portrait of the artist as a young man* will serve us as a very good sample of all the richness that can be recognized in Joyce's literature, including his innovative style. The word "revolutionary" here is used in more than one sense. As can be known, one meaning of this word (and the principal one) has to do with the *new*, the innovation and the originality of this writer in his own writing. But Joyce goes further. The innovation in his case goes beyond his literary style, and concerns more than form. His original force permits him to develop topics that were never developed before, and to create a whole *life* just by writing. And literally he creates a life in *A portrait of the artist as a young man*, the life of a man called Stephen Dedalus, from his childhood to his adulthood, including psychological as well as political and social conflicts in the protagonist's life. This is mainly the reason why this book was chosen in order to elucidate the principal thesis: the manner the modern subject is drawn in Joyce's modernist poetics; in *A portrait of the artist as a young man*.

Along these lines, this book represents, without doubt, a very good material to understand many questions related to modernist literature that can be actually situated in our contemporary situation. This is the case of the subject. This concept has been largely studied in classical philosophy as well as in current philosophy, acquiring several different significances

depending on the philosopher, even contradictory meanings. For our purposes, and with a risk of being considered conservative, recognized philosophers will be contemplated in the present paper. Under this category are situated various philosophers that had been important for their postulates and assumptions; including the Greek (Plato, Aristotle) and also important German philosophers such as Kant. In this category the French Descartes is also included. From this group Immanuel Kant and Rene Descartes are going to be applied in the analysis of the subject in *A portrait of the artist as a young man*, including also some considerations from others important thinkers.

Why the *Subject* in *A portrait of the artist as a young man*?

As this specific book is geographically located in Ireland, and it was published in 1916, it counts with all the necessary conditions to be judged as a prototypical example of what can be known as a sample of the modern subject by means of the protagonist, Stephen Dedalus. This is precisely what is going to be proved. Does James Joyce, through his writing, develop a modern subject? Is the subject shown as a result of his circumstances? How does the subject react to the surrounding conditions?

In general terms, the importance of the topic chosen here lies in the consequences that those times have in the present. The construction of a certain subject in these specific circumstances, and the later crisis of modern times are part of what we are living today as global society. This is, in part, the importance that literature has in the life of every human being that create his/her self by means of it. Considering the past conditions one can figure out the present, taking into account a certain tradition through time, i.e. the causes of the effects we see nowadays in many aspect of our life, even taking into account the distance in time and space.

A good understanding of those conditions make a better panoramic view of our own situation today, and we will realize that several aspects of the past are still present these days in our everyday life. This is probably the importance that the concept of subject has in our existence, also.

A different consequence can be the better understanding of the postmodernist subject; the appreciation of the fragmented modernist construction of the subject in postmodern times.

Specifically, the topic of the modern subject can serves us as a good introduction to very general views of the subject as a philosophical category. And the literary base from which

this concept will be analyzed can be a starting point in order to encourage more philosophical analysis in literature, making good use of a rich source. Personally speaking, this kind of analysis has been very profitable in academic terms, mainly because it covers many aspects of culture and knowledge that must be taken into account.

From the literary point of view, the analysis will be complemented with the assumptions of Harold Bloom, a critic that has been working with the author in general, and with this piece of art in particular. This critic has many evaluations on classical and modern literature that is the reason why he is considered pertinent in the present analysis.

Contemplating all this information, the analysis will be developed considering the most outstanding topics of the novel, in order to organize the information in a better way. Those topics include; religion and God, sexuality and women, beauty and art, and politics, among others.

As Joyce's works are noticed by their richness in literary terms (probably that was already noticed by the diversity of themes mentioned), this novel in particular is an excellent source for all the aspects surrounding the modern subject. Those topics are developed in a transversal manner in the entire story of Stephen Dedalus, which comprises all the aspects of his entire life in these relevant features for humanity in general, and for modernist society in particular. The author was very detailed and sensitive in considering the changes at this epoch; physical and psychological changes in the human being, and also physical and political changes in the world. This point deserves special attention, in the sense that the whole story is located at the beginning of the twentieth century, a period of great change for the entire world.

Modernism can be observed as a new kind of *zeitgeist*. This new *spirit of the age*, that was apparently an artistic movement at first sight, covered too many different aspects of the modernist society; just to mention a few: psychology, linguistics, politics, architecture, science, sociology, and so on and so forth. Undoubtedly, art was a great witness of all those transformations. As an example, the most famous painting by Picasso; *Guernica*, is a demonstration of how political conflicts are shown in art, in this case the Spanish Civil War in 1936. As well as in paintings, poetry was to a great extent, a testimony of change. The following quotation is a piece of a poem written by Ezra Pound, called *Hugh Selwyn Mauberley*, which accuses the horror of the Great War in 1914:

“...*THERE died a myriad,
And of the best, among them,*

*For an old bitch gone in the teeth,
For a botched civilization...*”

Thus, millions of examples can be noticed, and *A portrait* is clearly not the exception.

Innovation was also exposed in the literary field by means of forms; consequently new manners appeared in writing, manners that were not used before. This is the case of the *stream of consciousness*, that in order to be more precise we will call *interior monologue*.

“The modernist use of ‘stream of consciousness’, with its reliance on image-association (which was often supposed to be driven by the unconscious), is basic to all the arts. It aims at a greater fidelity to private psychological processes, often with the characteristics stressed by Bergson, concerning the flexibility of our experience of subjective time (dure’e) as opposed to public time.” (Butler 51).

Here we have a consequence of psychology demonstrated in art. But it goes further. The new conception on the processes of the mind and how it works, reconstructs a structure that is the principal focus in the present work: the subject.

This new notion of subjectivity brings a new dichotomy to discussion; the public against the private, the massive and the individual. The building of individuality and the self are central part in those times.

Consequently, the new concepts that appeared here had enormous effects in several fields, and art was again, one of the affected scopes, but this time in a different way: the massive reproductions of pieces of arts thanks to the new technology and the rise of the concept of *kitsch* changed the way in which art was considered before, and art was transformed from the point of view of the public, the audience, the spectator.

“Works of art are received and valued on different planes. Two polar types stand out; with one, the accent is on the cult value; with the other, on the exhibition value of the work...

...With the different methods of technical reproduction of a work of art, its fitness for exhibition increased to such an extent that the quantitative shift between its two poles turned into a qualitative transformation of its nature”. (Benjamin)

Consequently, the perception of the work of art was transformed for the viewer; now millions of people around the world can have access to the most important pieces of art, and this scope at the same time, changes its value from the cult to the exhibition quality.

This, as many other changes in Modernism, are treated in Joyce’s *A portrait of the artist as a young man*, and my aim here is try to demonstrate the new construction of the *subject* based on Joyce’s subjectivity, treating transversally the principal aspects of the

individual from Stephen Dedalus' point of view, which is indeed James Joyce's point of view, due to the autographical character of the novel.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The principal focus in this work is the way in which the Modern Subject is portrayed in James Joyce's modernist literature, specifically in *A portrait of the artist as a young man*. For this reason, literary as well as philosophic sources will be consulted.

In order to explain in a better way these problems, the development of this work will be divided in three important areas: the first one explains the way in which religion is treated in the book, including also the image of God and how these aspects are related to politics, concerning the historical context of the novel as well as the political situation of the country where it is situated. The second one gives an explanation on the way sexuality and the image of women is present in the novel, considering that these aspects are highly important on the story. And finally the third one elucidates the conception of beauty and art accounted in the book.

As the cornerstone of this work is the Modern Subject, philosophy is one of the disciplines that should be dealt with. In the sea of thinkers that can be chosen in order to develop this matter, Rene Descartes, as well as Immanuel Kant, gives a very intelligible and pertinent explanation in this area. For both philosophers the following books are consulted: Rene Descartes: *Meditations On First Philosophy*; Ameriks, Karl; Sturma, Dieter: *The Modern Subject, Conceptions of the Self in Classical German Philosophy*; Melehy, Hassan: *Writing Cogito Montaigne, Descartes, and the Institution of the Modern Subject*; Robert Pippin: *Modernism as a Philosophical Problem - On the Dissatisfactions of European High Culture*. The chief conceptualization here considers Descartes. On *Meditations on first philosophy*, the author gives account of the concept of Subject in a pioneer manner: the postulation of an organic subject in which each part works in order to make the complete system work. Here is almost compulsory to mention the so-called *cogito ergo sum*, which involves all the existence of the subject; the existence based on the thinking (I think therefore I exist). As well as Descartes, Kant plays also an important role in the identification of the Modern Subject; in order to construct a transcendental Subject, his claims against determinism are at the base of this argumentation. For this purpose, Kant's Critique of pure reason will be consulted.

Concerning literary theory, Harold Bloom will be consulted in two books, they are: *James Joyce's A Portrait of the Artist As a Young Man Bloom's Notes* and *Bloom's Modern Critical Views: James Joyce, New Edition*. The first one mentioned is especially useful due to

its deep analysis on the novel itself; it includes an extensive explanation on many significant symbols in the novel as well as reflections made by Bloom that are relevant in the text. The second book mentioned is useful for contextualizing the Author and his work; it consists of a recompilation of several papers and articles related to Joyce's stories and novels.

At this point, an elementary conflict appears.

For a better understanding of the context of the author, Deleuze and Guattari's text: *Toward a minor literature* will be consulted. In broad terms, this text postulates the existence of a minor literature, in countries that are (or were) colonies of a great empire. This minor literature, as an exiled way of writing, plays a revolutionary role in one way; taking the "major" language (the language of the empire) and revitalizing it. In the Kafka's case was German, and for Joyce was English. The aspect of language is especially significant due to the manner in which this is treated in the novel itself; is English the language of the Irish? How does the author consider English? So, from these ideas, the author is a revolutionary agent, as well as the main character: Stephen Dedalus¹.

One possible interpretation (and the conflictive one) for the organic subject postulated by Descartes has to do with theories about social order and the modern state. It can be said, and it sounds very logical, that the organic subject is a metaphor of the manner a society establishes its order: a principal "head" and the rest of the organs functioning to make the complete body work. This main head would be the state, and the rest of the organs represent the people. This idea can be compared to the notion of *Leviathan* by Thomas Hobbes. The subject corresponds to the head, and all his organs function with this in view. But considering (according to Deleuze and Guattari) the modern subject as a revolutionary agent in a minor literature, it would be contradictory to establish the concept of a subject in a powerful position (the head), in other words, a modern/ aristocratic subject. According to this interpretation, it would be impossible to conciliate a powerful subject with a minor subject. This consideration is present in the composition of this work, but not with the purpose of clarifying it.

Another significant aspect that I mentioned before and deserves to be taken into account is the use of language. That notion is crucial when talking about literature, but in this case it

¹ Due to the autobiographical nature of the novel, several notions applicable to Stephen Dedalus can be applied to James Joyce as well.

has two mayor points to consider especially: The use of English as the language of the empire, and the use of English according to the semantic dimension of the narration. The first point is already explained. The second one has to do with grammatical as well as lexical choices that the author made in the composition of the novel. As *A portrait of the artist as a young man* is considered a bildungsroman², the skillful author wrote the novel according to the grammatical and lexical development of each of the conditions of Stephen considering his age and growth. This conception of the use of English is highlighted by Harold Bloom.

Regarding the context of the novel, several books about Modernism and History of Ireland were consulted, for example: Berman Marshall's *Todo Lo Solido Se Desvanece En El Aire*; Michael Levenson's *The Cambridge Companion to Modernism*; David Ayers's *Modernism A Short Introduction* and Kevin Kenny's *Ireland and the British Empire* among others. These books were taken into consideration in order to give a more defined frame of reference of the novel, and also considering the importance of the context and how it influences the author when writing.

Summing up, it is highly expected to fulfill the prospects in this work, considering the spectrum of branches just presented, that all together composes the structure of the Modern Subject represented in Joyce's *A portrait of the artist as a young man*. This novel was published in 1916, but two years before it appeared in a magazine.

"In Ireland, Joyce had published a collection of poems entitled Chamber Music (1907), as well as several short stories. After a nine-year battle with publishers and printers, the short story collection Dubliners appeared in 1914. Under the editorship of Ezra Pound, "A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man" was published in serial form in The Egoist from 1914 to 1915; it appeared in book form in 1916."(Bloom, 11).

As Herbert Gorman said, between February, 1914 and September, 1915, the time in which *the Egoist* published the book in its columns *"it is doubtful if more than a handful of readers realized exactly what had come into English letters"*.³

² A novel whose principal subject is the moral, psychological, and intellectual development of a usually youthful main character, in this case Stephen Dedalus.

³ Herbert Gorman, a writer and literary critic, wrote the introduction of the book in the edition published by Random House.

Chapter One: Religion, Politics and the subject.

In spite of the fact that the main character tries not to be extremely involved in politics, the topic is clearly stated in the novel. In fact, the situation of Ireland in those times is evident; the country, as part of the British Empire, is implicated in a very delicate economic situation, and there are some groups that are pressing for Ireland's independence. One of the leaders of those pressing groups is "Parnell". Even though he is not a character of the novel, he is almost the main character in the conversation of the Christmas Dinner's episode.

Ireland at the beginning of the twentieth century, as part of The British Empire, went through very difficult times, considering the development reached in this country nowadays. Some independence movements were significantly active and the figure of Charles Stewart Parnell represents for many Irish the liberation from this condition. That situation was especially conflictive, due to the fact that Parnell was not Catholic but Anglican, and in the context of the conservative Catholic Ireland in which Stephen grew up, it was very difficult for those movements to develop. In fact, Politics and Religion were both mixed in this situation.

In the book, the political division is clearly established. Mr. Dedalus and Mr. Casey were for Parnell and, consequently against Catholic Church, even though Mr. Casey recognizes himself catholic. On the other hand, Dante Riordan, the governess, was extremely catholic and traditionalist. From his very childhood, Stephen received those political influences in his house, not understanding very well what politics was about. Actually, he felt very angry with himself for not comprehending exactly this topic, and he was constantly wondering who was right.

"Stephen looked with affection at Mr Casey's face which stared across the table over his joined hands. (...) But his dark eyes were never fierce and his slow voice was good to listen to. But why was he then against the priests? Because Dante must be right then. But he had heard his father say that she was a spoiled nun and that she had come out of the convent in the Alleghanies when her brother had got the money from the savages for the trinkets and the chainies. Perhaps that made her severe against Parnell. (...)Who was right then?" (Joyce, 35-36)

In this passage, we can appreciate the first attempts from Stephen to construct opinion and identity, a great challenge considering his short age. At this very stage on his life, his naivety and the fact that he really believes in God makes him believe that Dante is right. But as the novel develops, this position, as others, changes. Even though, he considers also his father's

opinion. Possibly, that's one of the reasons why he always has internal discussions with himself, expressed in the interior monologue form. The subject here is indeed constructing identity based on external factors or stimulus that provides him of important information, though that kind of topics are not of the interest of kids in general. This fact can be explained by means of the extreme sensibility of Stephen, a characteristic that he expands through his entire life, and that finally determines his condition of an artist.

Another demonstration of that sensibility is stated in the considerations that the main character has with the use of language. For Stephen it was definitively an important topic, due to his ability in writing, skill that he showed from the beginning at school.

“Stephen, though in deference to his reputation for essay writing he had been elected secretary to the gymnasium...” (Joyce, 81)

Considering the conditions of Ireland just mentioned, the period of modernism in which Stephen grew up and his receptivity to language, it is almost compulsory to have a point of view regarding the use of English, and this matter again has to do with political issues.

From the beginning of the twentieth century, the name of the country was a controversial situation. The independence movements claimed *Éire* as the official name, as well as several nationalist groups in the island, insisting on the fact that they are Irish, not English, so the country must have an Irish name.

“The Constitution states the name of the country is Éire, or in the English language, Ireland. Normally practice the name Éire is restricted to texts Ireland is used in all English-language texts, and of course equivalent translations are used in other languages.” (proud2beirish.com)

This controversy is naturally explained in the novel.

Observing the conditions surrounding our Subject in the novel, one would expect that Stephen would adjust to the pattern of a *minor subject*. The concept of *minor* is taken here from Deleuze and Guattari's text: *Kafka- Toward a minor literature*.

“The three characteristics of minor literature are the deterritorialization of language, the connection of the individual to a political immediacy, and the collective assemblage of enunciation. We might as well say that minor no longer designates specific literatures but the revolutionary conditions for every literature within the heart of what is called great (or established) literature.” (Deleuze and Guattari, 18)

The three characteristics in the list above are actually present in the figure of Stephen Dedalus, so it is highly expected that he himself represent the Subject portrayed in the novel in a *minor* way, that is to say, in a revolutionary manner regarding his Irish origin, as Kafka did with German, and as the blacks authors did in America with English, also. Certainly, this implies a rejection of the current conditions of the Subject mentioned. Not necessarily a nationalist position toward Ireland from Stephen, but a critical point of view from Stephen with respect to the use of English.

“Since the language is arid, make it vibrate with a new intensity. Oppose a purely intensive usage of language to all symbolic or even significant or simply signifying usages of it. Arrive at a perfect and unformed expression, a materially intense expression. (For these two possible paths, couldn't we find the same alternatives, under other conditions, in Joyce and Beckett? As Irishmen, both of them live within the genial conditions of a minor literature. That is the glory of this sort of minor literature—to be the revolutionary force for all literature. The utilization of English and of every language in Joyce...” (Deleuze and Guattari, 19)

In order to clarify this point, the author offers several instances of criticism on the use of English, questioning its use among Irish people, and expressing the way the Irish face the language, in a casual conversation between Stephen and the dean of the institution where he was studying to become a priest (here he is not longer a little child).

*“He [the dean] thrust forward his under jaw and uttered a dry short cough.
-To return to the lamp, he said, the feeding of it is also a nice problem. You must choose the pure oil and you must be careful when you pour it in not to overflow it, not to pour in more than the funnel can hold.
-What funnel? asked Stephen.
-The funnel through which you pour the oil into your lamp.
-That? said Stephen. Is that called a funnel? Is it not a tundish?
-What is a tundish?
-That. The . . . the funnel.
-Is that called a tundish in Ireland? Asked the dean. I never heard the word in my life.
-It is called a tundish in Lower Drumcondra⁴, said Stephen, laughing, where they speak the best English.
-A tundish, said the dean reflectively. That is a most interesting word. I must look that word up. Upon my word I must.”* (Joyce, 219-220)

In spite of the fact that Deleuze and Guattari were referring to the use of language by the authors of *minor literature*, here the allusion is extended to Stephen considering the fact

⁴ Working-class neighborhood, 2 miles from Dublin's city center.

that he represents James Joyce, indeed. And the quotation above symbolizes the identification that the Irish have respecting English. For many Irish, English is a foreign language that must be (sometimes unconsciously) adapted for the Irish use, as it happened with the word “funnel”, which was certainly an adaptation for the Irish exercise. At this point, it can be said that this situation in the book is an extension of what the author really feels facing the English language. In the majority of Joyce’s biographies it is mentioned the fact that he knew several languages: *“He [Joyce] also had a knack for foreign languages, and in addition to studying Latin and French he chose to learn Italian”*. (Bulson, 14)

Thus, it is evident the detachment that the author felt toward English, and as Stephen is representing James Joyce in the story, he also presented this condition. The remoteness is completely manifest when Stephen thinks:

“The language in which we are speaking is his before it is mine. How different are the words home, Christ, ale, master, on his lips and on mine! I cannot speak or write these words without unrest of spirit. His language, so familiar and so foreign, will always be for me an acquired speech. I have not made or accepted its words. My voice holds them at bay. My soul frets in the shadow of his language”. (Joyce, 221)

In the very same conversation he holds with the dean (passage from which this quote was taken), Stephen declares clearly the distance he has concerning the English language; a language that he feels does not belong to him (to any Irish men either).

Nevertheless, the treatment of the language in this novel goes further. The following aspect has to do with language as well, but from a different perspective.

“In the opening section of chapter one, Stephen's early childhood is presented as a series of sensory images simulating a child's first impressions. Although these images are distilled into seemingly random linguistic fragments, this section is intricately structured. Many of the thematic elements introduced in the first two pages will resurface in expanded form throughout the novel.” (Bloom, 13).

As Harold Bloom remarks, the first section of the book is written apparently in a very simple manner. This situation resembles the way in which a little child would have told the story; explained in very simple syntactic constructions, using a basic vocabulary, and making it consistent with the meaning carried by the sentences (empirical sensations of a little baby, as smells and temperature).

“When you wet the bed, first it is warm then it gets cold. His mother put on the oilsheet. That had the queer smell.” (Joyce, 1)

The allusion of the first sentence “when you wet the bed” establishes the context. The narrator is talking about an intimate experience typically related to infants, in order to make the reader understand the identity of the subject present by the novel from the very beginning of the book. This characteristic can be noticed throughout the entire novel.

In the quotation above, there is a demonstration of making the language (in Deleuze and Guattari’s terms) “*vibrates with a new intensity*”, since the author uses it with special attention and ability, not only to express meaning but also to make the meaning coherent with the form.

Taking into account the main issues regarding political and linguistic facts in the existence of Stephen, the reader can notice the impositions of Irish life in the way the novel describes it. The political aspect mixed with religion, and the position toward the language, are all contextual features that construct the identity and subjectivity of Stephen Dedalus. But in these aspects it also has to be mentioned the Jesuit’s education, factor that is much more related with politics and language than what we think.

At Stephen’s first stage, Clongowes Wood College was the institution in charge of his education. It was a Jesuit boarding school that, according to Stephen’s narration, was extremely catholic and patriotic as well. In this place, students receive instruction in the conventional matters, and a strict religious training, which includes very hard punishments. This last point was especially relevant, since Stephen unfairly suffered once a beating with a whip by the prefect of studies. In addition to that, the bullying he suffered from some classmates made his passing for Conglowes not a really beautiful memory.

Apart from that, and under a critical point of view, the patriotic sense of the priests in the school and the fact that they were involved in the political aspect of the country too is closely related with the construction of the Irish identity for Stephen. Indeed, he built a complete unpatriotic identity at a mature stage of his life and compiling all the previous knowledge he acquired during his childhood. He himself, in a dialog with Davin, determines: *“-This race and this country and this life produced me, he said. I shall express myself as I am. -Try to be one of us, repeated Davin. In your heart you are an Irishman but your pride is too powerful.*

-My ancestors threw off their language and took another, Stephen said. They allowed a handful of foreigners to subject them. Do you fancy I am going to pay in my own life and person debts they made? What for?" (Joyce, 237)

The quotation above is clearly a claim from the very intimacy of the author. Stephen, as well as James Joyce, felt an absolute disenchantment with the figure of the Irishmen, and he is not interested in patriotic or nationalistic values at all. Actually, he expresses himself ashamed of the behavior of his ancestors, who he thinks are traitors to their own language, culture and people. This disillusion is vastly consequential with the historical epoch, since modernism is the cradle of expatriated artists.

"In 1902, dissatisfied and disillusioned with Irish nationalism, Catholicism, and his family background, Joyce left Ireland to spend the rest of his life in exile in Paris, Trieste, Rome, and Zürich; he would visit Ireland only occasionally." (Bloom, 10)

At this point in the novel, Stephen started to break the determinism, and according to Immanuel Kant, he becomes a transcendental subject, one of the mainstays of the Modern Subject.

"When we as rational beings act, he [Kant] says, we must take ourselves to be free. He means that whenever we deliberate or choose we are presupposing freedom, even if we are unaware of the presupposition or consciously doubtful of it. More broadly, whenever we take ourselves to be thinking rationally (even about purely theoretical matters) we must take ourselves to be free, because we cannot knowingly accept judgments determined by external sources as judgments we ourselves have made." (Schneewind, 329)⁵

In simple terms, what Kant is trying to convey is the idea of freedom (with really exists for him) in an absolutely unbiased manner. That is to say, the free judgment should be according to the moral law because the subject itself wants to behave in that way, not for external pressure such as the fear or the obedience to God, but from a very internal desire from the subject to do what he decides to do. That's why he makes allusion to the judgments determined by external sources, saying that those are not decisions made by the subject, those are not free choices. Another important factor here is the rationality. In order to make a free decision, the

⁵ For further Reading on Kant: Critique of pure reason, 1781.

subject should do it in the realm of reason. Whatever escapes to this realm does not belong to the freedom of the subject.

In this sense, considering the final decisions made by Stephen at the end of the novel, as well as his behavior during his years in school, he represents a transcendental model of human being, going against the stream (i.e. external judgments) and rationally constructing his own subjectivity, which considers his political and religious ideals.

“The inauguration of modernity cannot be understood as the discovery that human beings are self-determining and not naturally or theologically dependent or finite in ways previously thought. And this is the beginning of an extremely complex claim in Kant: that his own assertions about human freedom are not matters of fact, or substantial, metaphysical claims. A self-determining freedom is a condition for making any claim about the world or owns our action.” (Pippin, 68)

Therefore, the fact that Stephen represents a transcendental subject puts on his shoulders a significant responsibility, the responsibility of being free, the rationality of making his own judgments and creating his own ideology, and finally, the capability of creating his own future. This particular type of responsibility is not always wanted by the subject, as it can be noticed in the following excerpt:

“Stephen, in the act of being led away, caught sight of MacCann's flushed bluntfeatured face. -My signature is of no account, he said politely. You are right to go your way. Leave me to go mine.

-Dedalus, said MacCann crisply, I believe you're a good fellow but you have yet to learn the dignity of altruism and the responsibility of the human individual.” (Joyce, 232)

From a conventional point of view, it can be said here that our subject is neglecting his legitimate right to decide, but this is not true. Indeed, one way of deciding is rejecting the vote; this position also shows certain features of the subject, his disinterest on citizen processes such as voting, because he thinks it is worthless, is a way of demonstrating his opinion on the matter.

Consequently, this aspect is connected with the feelings of detachment already mentioned. In this sense, the word “individual” is misunderstood, since Stephen is not

neglecting his individuality, but deciding not to vote in order to understand that action as useless, fruitless, or futile.

In simple terms, Stephen is, again, constructing the subject.

Chapter Two: Sexuality and women.

In the construction of the subject, as it is shown in *A portrait of the artist as a young man*, the corporal dimension is inevitably a significant factor. From his very childhood, the body plays an important role in Stephen's life, since at the beginning; he describes in very simple and childlike terms body sensations such as smells, temperature, textures and so on.

From this point on, the reader can realize Stephen's understanding as a physical being, given that the first impressions of the subject are entirely physical.

"In the first six paragraphs of the book, all of three-year-old Stephen's physical sensessight (his father's face), hearing (the nursery tale and song), touch (the wet sheets on the bed), taste (the lemon platt), and smell (the oilsheet and his parents)are stimulated. Stephen's understanding of himself as a physical being is based on these earliest and most lasting memories: "When you wet the bed first it is warm then it gets cold," the child observes. "His mother put on the oilsheet. That had the queer smell." (Bloom, 14).

The descriptions of warm and cold sensations, such as the wet bed, symbolize a prediction of later internal conflicts in the life of Stephen. According to Harold Bloom, those conflicts are related to thoughts of sex and religion, pleasure and guilt, the physical and the spiritual. Thus, the main function of this symbolisms in the first part on the book, is to foresee what is going to happen later in Stephen`s experience, his relation with the sexual awakening and the guilt he feels considering the religious aspect.

This initial emphasis on the physical dimension of the subject is closely related to the construction of an organic subject, that is to say, the very basis of the modern subject in development that at this point it is just beginning to construct himself. At this stage, the subject is not paying attention to the spiritual aspect, but the corporal.

"The first such belief was that I had a face, hands, arms and the whole structure of bodily parts that corpses also have—I call it the body. The next belief was that I ate and drank, that I moved about, and that I engaged in sense-perception and thinking; these things, I thought, were done by the soul⁶. If I gave any thought to what this soul was like, I imagined it to be something thin and filmy— like a wind or fire or ether—permeating my more solid parts." (Descartes, 4)

⁶ In this work, the soul and the mind are equal, and they do not have religious implications.

According to Rene Descartes on *Meditations on first philosophy*, the very first impression we as subjects can have is our body. One can notice its body by the same means that Stephen did; recognizing body sensations. The central point here has to do with the later attention on the soul. Just after the subject had noticed his/her body, the subject will be able to recognize the soul. From that point on, the conscience of the subject started to develop.

“Well, then, what am I? A thing that thinks. What is that? A thing that doubts, understands, affirms, denies, wants, refuses, and also imagines and senses. That is a long list of attributes for me to have—and it really is I who have them all. Why should it not be? Isn't it one and the same 'I' who now doubts almost everything, understands some things, affirms this one thing—namely, that I exist and think, denies everything else, wants to know more, refuses to be deceived, imagines many things involuntarily, and is aware of others that seem to come from the senses? Isn't all this just as true as the fact that I exist, even if I am in a perpetual dream, and even if my creator is doing his best to deceive me?” (Descartes, 5-6)

The emphasis on the body, and the conception of Descartes' subject as an organic being which has a structure, a center and parts that work all in a system leads necessarily to certain inconsistencies with other points of view. Deleuze and Guattari's notion on minor literature and its consequence on the minor subject, and the notion of the organic subject on the other hand, are ideas that do not fit together in a particular interpretation: the structure of the subject in a metaphorical way can be seen very clearly as the way in which the society works. For several philosophy teachers and thinkers, the proposition of the organic subject is a metaphorical representation of the society (very similar to Hobbes' *Leviathan*) which has a central part, the head, and all the rest of body parts work in function of the head, i.e. the modern state and the rest of the citizens in a given country. So, how the notion of a revolutionary subject (the minor one) and the notion of the organic subject (in this aristocratic way of presenting it) can be reconciled? Certainly, at first sight, they cannot, but to find the answer to that question is not the main purpose of this work.

Regarding the process of recognition of the body in the organic subject, it seems that at this stage this development is about to finish (at the first part of childhood in Stephen's life), and the process of recognition of the subject starts. That's the reason why Harold Bloom remarks the fact that the first body sensations symbolize posterior conflicts in Stephen's

development as an adult. After this procedure, the subject begins an important progression consisting of a maturation of ideas concerning his own existence, as Descartes' speech just showed.

Even though the process of body recognition seems to be done, there are many aspects unknown yet.

Sexual exploration is a very significant dimension in the development of Stephen's life. At this point in the novel, Chapter II and III, his sexual desire is uncontrollable, and after wasting the prize money he gained by writing, the atmosphere surrounding Stephen was full of disappointment.

This disenchantment is related to the fragmentation he sees in his own family. Stephen wanted to get together his family with the money he had, but instead he wasted the prize and never could see the family as one, again. Disillusioned and with an uncontrollable sexual desire, he felt in one prostitute's arms one night. The issue in the book, at first sight seems to be very magical. The encounter with the prostitute is narrated in a very poetical manner, even though; it will be a horrible memory the next morning.

"-Give me a kiss, she said.

His lips would not bend to kiss her. He wanted to be held firmly in her arms, to be caressed slowly, slowly, slowly. In her arms he felt that he had suddenly become strong and fearless and sure of himself. But his lips would not bend to kiss her. With a sudden movement she bowed his head and joined her lips to his and he read the meaning of her movements in her frank uplifted eyes. It was too much for him. He closed his eyes, surrendering himself to her, body and mind, conscious of nothing in the world but the dark pressure of her softly parting lips. They pressed upon his brain as upon his lips as though they were the vehicle of a vague speech; and between them he felt an unknown and timid pressure, darker than the swoon of sin, softer than sound or odour." (Joyce, 114).

The description of the moment itself is apparently beautiful, although Stephen, after little meditation realizes his sin. Nevertheless, the author catches the beauty of the moment in a very particular way; he gives the impression of being justifying the sexual encounter with the prostitute.

One important controlling image in the passage above is the kiss. The symbol of the kiss in this specific case stands for the sexual intercourse itself. It represents the coitus, due to the fact that this is not explicitly explained in the novel, but the reader can notice very clearly the sexual act. In this instance, the prostitute is the character who has the control of the situation, she wanted Stephen to kiss her but he does not. The chief cause of Stephen's rejection is the guilt he feels when being with a prostitute. Finally, with a soft movement she got the kiss, while Stephen's auto control vanished.

From this point on, Stephen's conception of women changes, to a very extremist opinion. He started to recognize the incompatibility between visiting prostitutes and venerating God and Virgin Mary. That's the reason why he begins to polarize his opinion. On the one hand, he considers and adores Virgin Mary, and on the other hand he desires prostitutes.

Consequently, the concept of women is transformed into two extreme visions: Mary, as the purest woman, and the prostitutes as embodying the sin itself. In any case, both characters share many similarities. Both Mary and the Prostitute symbolize a refuge for Stephen's soul in despair. Adoration to Mary and the sexual encounter with the prostitute give a certain relief to Stephen's stormy existence, and both encounters, the religious and the sexual one, are narrated in a lyrical manner, in order to give a similar impression to the reader.

At the beginning of the third chapter, Father Arnall, the old priest in Conglowes (the old boarding school that Stephen attended) is giving a sermon in Stephen's new school. He reads some passages from the book of Ecclesiastes, in order to deliver his message. This is an important detail considering the meaning that this book conveys.

"7 Wisdom

*A good name is better than fine perfume,
and the day of death better than the day of birth.*

*2 It is better to go to a house of mourning
than to go to a house of feasting,
for death is the destiny of every man;
the living should take this to heart.*

*3 Sorrow is better than laughter,
because a sad face is good for the heart.*

*4 The heart of the wise is in the house of mourning,
but the heart of fools is in the house of pleasure."* (Ecclesiastes, 7, 1-4)

“[Father Arnall] -Remember only thy last things and thou shalt not sin for ever—words taken, my dear little brothers in Christ, from the book of Ecclesiastes, seventh chapter, fortieth verse. In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.” (Joyce, 123)

Thus, Stephen consciousness was deeply moved. At this stage a real martyrdom begins for Stephen, since he feels guilty for all his sins, mostly for sexual intercourse. This is the time in which he faced the most horrible creatures from hell in his room, when he wanted to be tranquil in order to be alone with his soul. After that ugly image, he sees the sky from his window, amazed by the fact that God have not called him yet. In consequence, he devotes most of his time to pray and adore. He confesses in a chapel near, and he started to deprive his most “obscures” desires. However, the question at the end of the first part of the chapter clearly states Stephen’s uncertainty about what is he doing.

“Perhaps, concerned only for his imminent doom, he had not had sincere sorrow for his sin? But the surest sign that his confession had been good and that he had had sincere sorrow for his sin was, he knew, the amendment of his life.

-I have amended my life, have I not? he asked himself” (Joyce, 178)

That is the seminal doubt, which permits Stephen skepticism to develop from that point on, as well as a denial of religious morality.

In this regards, the change of convictions in Stephen’s subjectivity had a huge impact on the narration itself. The language the author uses is direct and dry, and the events the novel shows adopt a secular manner.

An important demonstration of this is the episode of the bathing girl’s epiphany. He sees in the beach a beautiful girl bathing, who he describes in delicate terms.

“Her long slender bare legs were delicate as a crane’s and pure save where an emerald trail of seaweed had fashioned itself as a sign upon the flesh. Her thighs, fuller and softued as ivory, were bared almost to the hips where the white fringes of her drawers were like feathering of soft white down. Her slate-blue skirts were kilted boldly about her waist and dovetailed behind her. Her bosom was as a bird’s, soft and slight, slight and soft as the breast of some dark-plumaged dove. But her long fair hair was girlish: and girlish, and touched with the wonder of mortal beauty, her face.” (Joyce, 199)

In this sense, the old Virgin Mary's figure was replaced by this girl, since she is described in such a subtle manner, and Stephen gives no more importance to devotion and worship.

The image of this new girl again makes a contrast with the image of the prostitute and Virgin Mary; the portrayal of this heavenly body makes connection with the adoration to Virgin Mary, and distinguishes it from the image of the prostitute. Evidently, Stephen has again extreme visions of woman. The image of the bathing girl is indeed, the last idealistic perception of a woman in Stephen's existence, and another demonstration of his sensitivity toward beauty.

Another important female figure in Stephen's life is the character of Emma, character that also passes Stephen's stages of woman perception. Most of the time, Emma is portrayed as a distant girl but the ideal woman for Stephen. In chapter III, he expressed noticeably his intentions to live with her forever, in the interior monologue manner.

"-Take hands, Stephen and Emma. It is a beautiful evening now in heaven. You have erred but you are always my children. It is one heart that loves another heart. Take hands together, my dear children, and you will be happy together and your hearts will love each other." (Joyce, 132- 133)

Nevertheless, Stephen not always had those heavenly visions on Emma. He also saw Emma with lust in his mind.

"The image of Emma appeared before him and under her eyes the flood of shame rushed forth anew from his heart. If she knew to what his mind had subjected her or how his brute-like lust had torn and trampled upon her innocence! Was that boyish love? Was that chivalry? Was that poetry? The sordid details of his orgies stank under his very nostrils." (Joyce, 131).

As the passage above indicates, Stephen imagined Emma in his most sordid sexual fantasies, but he seems to be remorseful by that.

At the end, the figure of Emma compiles all stages of visions of woman for Stephen. She embodies pure love, feminine care and virginity, but at the same time she stands for the protagonist of sexual fantasies in Stephen's mind. When he finally had a real encounter with her at the university, he describes her in very simple terms, giving the impression that she is no longer the pure and divine girl she was in the past. Now, for Stephen, Emma is another ordinary girl.

Chapter three: The subject as an artist

In the two previous chapters, the matter of the subject presented by James Joyce was developed according to two main aspects of the life of Stephen Dedalus: politics and religion on the one hand, and sexuality and woman on the other hand. These two important areas work as precedent for the most imperative realization of the modern subject in *A portrait of the artist as a young man*, since those aspects are undoubtedly significant in the structure of Stephen subjectivity. Nevertheless, the cornerstone of that subjectivity lies in the construction of the subject as an aesthete, a sensitive subject which is completely vulnerable to what beauty represents; the construction of the subject as an artist.

In the preceding sections, two important philosophers are taken into account to build a theoretical base for the image of the modern subject; Immanuel Kant and René Descartes. Both contributions are essential in creating the panoramic view of what represents the subject in this specific period of time: those philosophical points of view are applied in the construction of Stephen's subjectivity in different manners; Kant and his theory of transcendentalism give an explanation on the denouement of Stephen's life as a potential priest, while Descartes' focus on the body and posterior focus on the soul of the subject, are his principal contribution.

Another important aspect that was not mention before has to do with Stephen's beliefs and religiosity. Descartes's methodic doubt is an appropriate manner of giving explanation to his scepticism on religion, patriotism and on many different matters, since Stephen resigned his circumstances and became another man, a new sceptical and intellectual being.

“So, for the purpose of projecting all my opinions, it will be enough if I find in each of them at least some reason for doubt. And to do this I will not need to run through them all individually, which would be an endless task. Once the foundations of a building are undermined, anything built on them collapses of its own accord; so I will go straight for the basic principles on which all my former beliefs rested.” (Descartes, 60).

Certainly, the foundation for any critical thinking is the doubt, the first phase in the path of questioning any matter. Thus, the methodical doubt is the base in any potential construction of ideology, and clearly, Stephen is not the exception. From his early days he was always questioning difficult tasks, such as politics, in order to reach a determined position.

In addition to Kant and Descartes, another important contribution on Stephen's life was given by Saint Thomas Aquinas, specifically on matters related to beauty. As a very receptive boy, Stephen develops a very interesting and complex theory of comprehension of beauty, which is all based on Aquinas ideas on aestheticism. Stephen was not satisfied with the eugenic argument, since he thinks that this fact does not lead to the esthetic experience, concerning woman's beauty.

Aquina's "*Pulcra sunt quae visa placent*" ("is beautiful the apprehension of which pleases" in Stephen's words), makes Stephen postulate the following: "*-Art, said Stephen, is the human disposition of sensible or intelligible matter for an esthetic end*" (Joyce, 242).

Later on, the character explained this point of view adding:

"-To finish what I was saying about beauty, said Stephen, the most satisfying relations of the sensible must therefore correspond to the necessary phases of artistic apprehension. Find these and you find the qualities of universal beauty. Aquinas says: Ad pulcritudinem tria requiruntur integritas, consonantia, claritas. I translate it so: Three things are needed for beauty, wholeness, harmony and radiance. Do these correspond to the phases of apprehension?" (Joyce 248)

Stephen explains Aquinas' notions by exemplifying with a basket: in order to see the basket, the mind first separates the object from the rest of the visible universe which is not the basket itself; the esthetic image is presented either in space or time. The individual apprehends it as *one* thing, as a whole, that is *integritas*.

Then, the individual pass from point to point, led by its formal lines; he or she apprehends it as a balanced part against part within its limits. Having first felt that it is *one* thing, now the human feels that it is a *thing*, i.e. a complex, multiple, divisible, the result of its parts and their sum, harmonious: *consonantia*.

Finally, Stephen thinks that *claritas* was the artistic discovery and representation of the divine purpose in anything or a force of generalization which would make the esthetic image a universal one, make it outshine its proper conditions. The radiance of which Aquinas speaks in the scholastic *quidditas*, the *whatness* of a thing. This supreme quality is felt by the artist when the esthetic image is first conceived in his imagination.

This description of the esthetic experience, is directly related with the description of Kantian concepts such as *phenomena* and *noumena*:

“Appearances, to the extent that as objects they are thought in accordance with the unity of the categories, are called phaenomena. If, however, I suppose there to be things that are merely objects of the understanding and that, nevertheless, can be given to an intuition, although not to sensible intuition (as coram intuiti intellectuali) then such things would be called noumena (intelligibilia).” (Kant, 361)

In the case of the basket, this object, that for Kant would be an appearance, is categorized as a *phaenomena*.

At first sight, it seems peculiar to establish a direct relation between modernism and a classic philosopher such as Thomas Aquinas who to a great extent is based on Aristotle. It appears as a contradiction, since Joyce belongs to an advanced and different artistic movement, together with several noticeable artists whose motto was “make it new”. But there is no contradiction indeed.

For modernism, several classic allusions are taken into account, especially by James Joyce. Beyond his theory on Aestheticism, a clearer classic reference is present in the novel: Stephen’s last name; *Dedalus*.

Dedalus is a character taken from Greek mythology. He is utilized by the author as a very significant symbol for the purposes Joyce wanted to achieve. This character reveals from the beginning the image of Stephen as the artist subject.

“Stephen's last name and the novel's Latin epigraph from Ovid's Metamorphoses, "Et ignotas animum dimittit in artes" ("And he applied his mind to obscure arts"), refer to Daedalus, an Athenian artist and inventor in Greek mythology. Imprisoned in a labyrinth by the Cretan King Minos, Daedalus (whose name means "cunning artificer") constructs two pairs of wings fastened with wax so that he and his son, Icarus, can escape... Throughout the novel, Joyce employs images of artistry, flight, and escape to represent Stephen's struggle to emerge from his past and become a truly autonomous artist.” (Bloom, 13).

Bloom's interpretation on the name establishes a clear relation between Stephen and the classical period, due to the fact that in this case, Stephen (James Joyce actually), is representing the classical artist who opposing to his romantic counterpart, does not loss his good sense.

Regarding interpretations on images of artistry, flight and escape, a different reading can be made. A good explanation in relation to Stephen inner struggles in his construction as an artist is associated with the labyrinth. This image is especially relevant in symbolizing the internal battle concerning values and convictions; for example religious impositions against sexual desires that, in a certain way "locked in" Stephen in a labyrinth with no way out.

"Stephen's fall from sexual innocence into experience takes place in the closing pages of chapter 2; and when he wanders into the red-light Nighttown district of Dublin, and ends up in the bed of a prostitute, every feature of his earlier fantasy centering on Mercedes is ironically fulfilled. Not knowing where to look for Mercedes, his feet seemingly of their own accord take him "into a maze of narrow and dirty streets." (Dettmar, 29)

In a symbolic way, Stephen embodies himself the myth in order to explain the complexity of modernism. He personifies Dedalus, the cunning artificer stuck inside the maze, and he also discovers the way out, even when everything indicates that he is going to stay there all his life. In this sense he incarnates the transcendental artificer.

But Stephen's name goes further. Before the last apparition of the "epiphany's girl", at the end of the fourth chapter, his name turns into a different meaning not perceived before. He is watching his classmates playing in the beach, while he is thinking of the ridiculous spectacle of naked bodies. His classmates are screaming and calling him in several different ways maintaining the root of his name. Even when this is just a boy's play, this scene is enormously significant for Stephen.

*"Again! Again! Again! A voice from beyond
the world was calling.
-Hello, Stephanos!
-Here comes The Dedalus!
-Ao! . . . Eh, give it over, Dwyer, I'm telling you or I'll give you a
stuff in the kisser for yourself. . . . Ao!
-Good man, Towser! Duck him!*

-Come along, Dedalus! Bous Stephanoumenos! Bous Stephaneforos” (Joyce, 195)

“Now, as never before, his strange name seemed to him a prophecy. (...) A moment before the ghost of the ancient kingdom of the Danes had looked forth through the vesture of the hazewrapped city. Now, at the name of the fabulous artificer, he seemed to hear the noise of dim waves and to see a winged form flying above the waves and slowly climbing the air. What did it mean? Was it a quaint device opening a page of some medieval book of prophecies and symbols, 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 out of the sluggish matter of the earth a new soaring impalpable imperishable being?” (Joyce, 196)

Undoubtedly, his name seems to him a prophecy, since both Stephen’s given and family names are rich with allusion. All the underlined references (underlining added here) refer to Dedalus in his different manners.

According to Harold Bloom, another good example of allusions to classical characteristics is the epigraph of the book; *"Et ignotas animum dimittit in artes"* which means "And he applied his mind to obscure arts". Evidently it again makes reference to Dedalus, the cunning artificer. It is important to notice here that Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* narrates the history of the world from its creation to the deification of Julius Caesar, which can be related to the development of Stephen’s life since his birth to his realization as an artist. In this sense, both stories follow the same line of development: the birth or creation, the development until the final realization.

“Stephen”, on the other hand, is the name of the first Martyr of the Christian church, who was stoned to death for his adherence to the teachings of Christ.

“The gallant young Stephen died a brutal death at the hands of those with whom he had grown up. In the Book of Acts there is an account that Paul was among the onlookers who made no effort to save Stephen. The early Christians buried Stephen in a small chapel in Jerusalem which was dedicated to his memory and was known as the chapel of St. Stephen the Protomartyr (First Martyr).” (www.orthodoxchristian.info)

The interpretation of his name is probably related to Stephen's early devotion to Catholic Church. At a first stage, Stephen spirituality was centered on religious aspects with no possibility of doubt. His entire devotion and convictions lead him to terrible struggles against himself, at a mature stage of his life.

* * *

Taking into consideration all the aspect just mentioned; the different philosophical theories applied on the novel and by Stephen himself, and the different allusions to the classical period concerning the name as well as the epigraph of the book, it is important to notice that the artist subject represented in the novel is not restricted to one philosophical ethic in particular, but it gathers several theories on itself. Many of them can look incoherent in relation to the rest, but all function as part of the great spectrum of features of the subject as an artist.

At the end, it can be concluded that Stephen embodies himself the modern image of the artist and the esthete.

CONCLUSION

Modernism and the subject

Regarding the construction of the subject in the period of time known as Modernism, several important aspects should be taken into account. They are problems first established by philosophers that examined the issue of modernism in connection with the development of the subject. In the special case of Stephen Dedalus, it can be noticed that most of these problems are present in the novel, since the narration is delivered from the subject's point of view.

One of the most significant conflicts in the novel has to do with the separation between reason and passion. This point is noticed by Kant, given that he postulated to make the subject free, the subject itself should make decisions in the realm of reason. Passion is not included in this territory at all. In fact for Kant, the man who is slave of passion is not free. Thus, in order to be free and equal, the human being should make decisions just and compulsorily guided by reason. This situation is represented in the novel mostly by the conflict Stephen had with himself because of his experience with prostitutes, in which the reason and the moral is combined in the figure of the church, and the pressure that religion has over the poor soul of Stephen, a sixteen year old boy suffering hormone's explosions.

Another relevant point on the construction of the modern subject is related to the methodic doubt. This was first a contribution made by Descartes. As it was already exposed, the methodic doubt is a good manner of explaining all the skepticism present in Stephen's mature personality. Most of his opinions and hard judgments find their base on the doubt, the incredulity against all that was obvious before, which is actually the base for the construction of the subject as a philosophical concept as well.

The attention on the body and posterior attention on the soul are also part of Descartes' contributions. It is clearly stated in the novel, since the narration itself shows this development. At the beginning of the novel, most of the impressions are based on a baby's experience. Encounters with colors, textures, temperatures, smells and so on, are part of the early contact of Stephen with reality. Thus, his sexual desires and posterior guilt and attention on religiosity follow the same pattern: consideration of the body dimension of the subject and posterior consideration of the spiritual issues of the subject.

Freedom and determination are two central notions in Kant's philosophy that are also taken into account in the novel as the cornerstone of the birth of the artist in Stephen's life. Since Kant established the existence of the transcendental subject as a completely free subject who determines his/her own destiny, a direct allusion with Stephen's life can be made. All his life, Stephen was taught in order to become a patriotic and traditional priest; all his education was connected with Catholicism, and his family was strongly religious, as most of the families in Ireland those days. After several important experiences, the development of his own ideology and the rejection to religion, he decides to go to the university, and finally become an artist, breaking all the previous predictions made for his adult life.

To a great extent, the demonstrations of this transcendental nature are reflected in art. Art in this case, functions as a special freedom device, since it permits Stephen's liberation from all what he really hates. In this manner, Stephen has an opportunity to express himself by writing, and this works as a cathartic exercise, from all the pressure that the environment puts on his shoulders.

Modern vision of the artist

Even though Stephen embodies the problems of modernism to a great extent, the subject represented by him is not restricted to a single and specific philosophical ethic. On the contrary, the subject here is a construction based on a number of important thinkers that, as it is mentioned, contributed to build the final image of what is called the modern subject.

Among the philosophers that supplied the construction of this subject, we can find Kant and Descartes, but one of the most relevant thinkers that are pertinent in this construction is St. Thomas Aquinas. His theory on aestheticism is especially important since he is quoted by Stephen Dedalus himself, to express his point of view on beauty and art. Most of Stephen's theory on art is based on Aquinas ideas and notions, and this make a difference with the rest of the philosophers. Since Stephen wants to become an artist, his theory on art is one of the main preoccupations in his life. Thus, Aquinas contribution is as important as Descartes and Kant's role, or maybe more.

In relation to contributions for a better understanding of the subject, the classical period should be taken into consideration. From the very beginning the reader can notice that

“Stephen Dedalus” is not a common name. It is indeed very rich in allusions since both, the name and the surname symbolize different characters. Dedalus stands for the famous Greek myth, the architect that was locked in the Minotaur’s labyrinth with his son Icarus. Stephen, on the other hand, stands for the first Christian martyr in the early church. Thus, both allusions has something to do with the life of Stephen, first, his Christian devotion to God and religion, and then the artist represented by the architect, with his internal conflicts symbolized by the labyrinth.

Along these lines, the epigraph of the book represents also a good material for interpretation, and it is also related to the classical period. Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* quotation: *Et ignotas animam dimittit in artes*, as it is mentioned before, makes clear allusion to *Dedalus* the cunning artificer that at the same time symbolizes Stephen. In addition to this, the way in which the story of the world is presented in *Metamorphoses* is directly related to the story presented in the novel. In this sense, the story of the world in Ovid’s work can be considered a bildungsroman of the birth and development of the world, in the same way that *A portrait of the artist as a young man* can be considered a bildungsroman of Stephen’s birth and development as an artist. Thus in this way, the construction of the subject is clearer.

The dimensions of the subject

The novel presents different and clear dimensions in the process of building of the subject, in a transversal manner. In the first section of this work, the main matter explained is the relation between politics and religion in the Irish context. The Irish situation in the time in which Stephen grew up, and how he is under the adult’s influence in creating his own opinion, is an important issue, considering that from his childhood Stephen is criticizing his environment and trying to understand the things that happen around him.

Most of the characters in Stephen’s family have a clear position toward the political sphere in Ireland. Simon, Stephen’s father, is for Parnell and consequently against the religious extremism of this country, which at the beginning of the twentieth century was particularly catholic. Mr. Casey had the same opinion that Simon, even though he considers himself catholic. On the other hand, Dante Riordan, the governess, was exceedingly catholic and very conservative at the same time, and Stephen’s mother was not for, nor against. With all this

potpourri of positions and opinions in Stephen's home, it is very understandable a confusion in the kid's head. Most of the time, the little Stephen was trying to find who was right, and those instances are developed in the interior monologue format.

In this sense, the construction of the subject in political and religious matters began at a very early stage in Stephen's life.

In the second part of this work, the main issue is related to the sexual arousal and the image of women in Stephen's perspective. The initial attention of body issues and later attention on spiritual matters is clearly a Cartesian contribution and Stephen Dedalus represents this in a very clear manner. The uncontrollable sexual desire leads to the experiences he had with prostitutes, but his religious devotion made him fall in a terrible maelstrom that provokes him horrible visions. The guilt was the ruling feeling at this stage, therefore, the image of women should change for him. In this part of the book, Stephen was (paradoxically) developing an extreme devotion for Virgin Mary, and at the same time his experiences with prostitutes showed the worst vision that a man can have regarding women. As a result, the two poles of the image of women for Stephen are exposed; the virgin and the prostitute. There is no an average woman.

Undoubtedly, the most important dimension of the subject explained in this work is present in the third part of it, and it is related to the construction of the subject as an artist. Consequently, the third chapter of this work has to do with aestheticism and art.

Beauty is certainly an important matter for Stephen since he, from his childhood, was extremely sensitive and he always was capable of recognizing beauty around him. This esthete nature leads him to be what he reached at the end of the novel: an artist.

Nevertheless, to become an artist, the subject needs more than just sensitivity regarding beauty. Stephen developed himself a very complete theory on the human conception and appreciation of beauty. This theory was based on St. Thomas Aquinas' aestheticism theory. In the novel Stephen's point of view is plainly explained, while he was talking with a classmate called Lynch.

In consequence, the two previous chapters symbolize the prelude for what is going to be the most significant dimension of the subject represented by James Joyce; the subject as an artist, specifically, the modern vision of the artist as a subject.

In this sense, art and beauty play a very important role; both are devices for liberation and transcendentalism. Since art is what Stephen wants to dedicate his time, art is at the same time an instance of freedom for him. It represents an occasion in which Stephen can express himself as he really is, without any rule governing him, as in the school, and in his house.

Stephen's advancement to become an artist involves both concepts; *modernity* and *modernism*. According to Roger Scruton in his book "*Modern philosophy: an introduction and survey*", both concepts are different. Modern (which is related to modernity) is linked to the problems based on the methodic doubt (such as the separation between subject and object, objectivity and skepticism). Modernist (modernism) on the other hand, is related to the radical rupture with the past; the avant-garde, the "new" as principles of a movement.

In the figure of Stephen, these two notions are present since, the problems represented in the book are precisely the same basic problems of *modernity* (based on the methodic doubt). And, at the same time Stephen represents himself a modernist, because of his rupture with the past and his birth as an artist.

In this sense, the situation just presented may serve as a preliminary study for further investigations on the postmodern subjectivity, due to the fact that it is absolutely necessary to know about modernism in order to understand the postmodern judgment on it.

Another possible utilization may be the study on the relationship of modernity and art. Kant offers a very interesting point of view on the link between understanding and imagination, both ideas that give birth to the aesthetic experience.

Finally, this work may serve as a preparatory study on philosophical matters with a literary base. Since literature can offer very rich sources of information, it would result very successful later investigations on these issues. In the specific case of James Joyce, one important investigation can be made in relation to his books. To what extent is *A portrait of the artist as a young man* a prelude for later and more complex readings of *Ulysses* or *Finnegans wake*?

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