UNIVERSIDAD DE CHILE

FACULTAD DE FILOSOFIA Y HUMANIDADES

DEPARTAMENTO DE LITERATURA

James Joyce's attitude towards religion in "A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man"

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Alumno:

César Sagrista G.

Profesor Patrocinante:

June Harrison G.

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To my parents and my in laws, for their support and patience, and special thanks to Marian, Benjamín and Martín, for giving me the strength to do this.

"Old father, old artificer, stand me now and ever in good stead."

James Joyce, A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man.

1. Introduction

James Joyce's <u>A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man</u> (1916) is quite a very complex literary work that has been the subject of many essays and books of criticism.

An interesting aspect of this novel is that it draws on many details from Joyce's early life. The novel's protagonist, Stephen Dedalus, is in many ways Joyce's fictional double. Many of the scenes in the novel are fictional, but some of its most powerful moments are also autobiographical.

In addition to drawing heavily on Joyce's personal life, <u>A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man</u> also makes a number of references to the politics and religion of early-twentieth-century Ireland.

This essay will deal with an aspect that cannot be ignored nor go unnoticed when we read A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man; Joyce's interest in the theme of religion, or the importance of religion in the development of the artist as a young man, according to Joyce.

2. Hypothesis

That Joyce's rejection of Irish Catholicism reflects the more universal tendency of the age; to substitute any form of institutionalized religion and authority, with a more personal concept.

3. General Objectives

To discover what Joyce's attitude towards religion was, as shown in his book <u>A Portrait of</u> the Artist as a Young Man.

4. Specific Objectives

To show that Joyce reflects an attitude that goes beyond the rejection of Irish Catholicism and represents the wider tendency of the abandonment of all institutionalized religion.

5. Organization of the Analysis

Previous to the analysis, a general study of religion will be shown, including a definition of it, historical context, and Joyce's comments about it.

Then, the analysis will be presented divided into three main aspects: the main character of the novel, Stephen Dedalus, the concept of Epiphany, and next to it, the analysis of \underline{A} Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man, chapter by chapter.

Finally, the conclusions will be given.

6. Religion

In order to specify what is the subject of this work, we need, first of all, to refer to the word "religion" and its meaning.

The word "religion" is strictly from a Latin origin. According to <u>The Oxford Dictionary of English Etymology</u>¹, this word is related to the Latin word "relegere", that means "obligation" and to the word "ligare", "to bind" in English, plus the prefix "-re" that means "once more."

According to the Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English², we have that religion is "the belief in the existence of god or gods", "a particular system of faith and worship based on religious belief" and "a controlling influence on one's life; a thing that one feels very strongly about."

These explanations will be useful for us during the analysis of A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man, in the sense that what we are looking for in it is not just Joyce's attitude towards Catholicism, clarifying that that would be just a part of our work (related just to the second meaning of the word "religion" according to the Oxford Dictionary cited above).

On the other hand, the concept of religion can also be understood by considering its function in human society.

It is a well-known fact that no religion can be possible without the existence of man and that the religious belief is present in the whole human race, since its origins. Religion exists because of man, because it has a fundamental function in his development.

That is why anthropology (the study of the origins of the human race, its development, customs and beliefs³) is very helpful for our understanding of the concept of religion. Anthony Wallace, in his book <u>Religion</u>, <u>An Anthropological View</u>⁴ gives us a very concise description of some general theories of religion according to that science.

As man is constantly changing, his needs are not always the same. That is why the functions of religion vary in time.

Wallace says that for primitive cultures the function of religion was to provide a rational solution to intellectual problems, as a manner of "formula" which yielded a satisfying sense of understanding of the unknown, when they had to face inexplicable natural events. This view of religion is called the "evolutionary theory" of religion, because it consider religion as a tool for "evolution."

In contrast, "devolutionary theories" about religion consider the idea that the world, including mankind, is inexorably becoming worse and worse, and would sooner or later come to an end. In this case, religion is the way in which people could "save their soul."

The "devolutionary" view of religion was widespread throughout the Mediterranean world in the millennia before Christ, when man realized that his social and technical sophistication caused a bad impact in nature, and took force through Christianism. It is very important for our task to mention that this view was more solidly developed in the early twentieth century by the school of Jesuit ethnologists known as the "Kulturkreislehre."

Finally, we have the essentially evolutionary view of religion as "a protection of, and therapy for, emotional problems", that was developed in the early twentieth century, after the irruption of Freud's psychoanalytic theory.

It is important to say that <u>A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man</u> was written when this new view of religion was taking place, during a period of transition, in which the concept of religion was changing.

7. Historical context

Considering the fact that James Joyce was born in the year 1882, and died in 1941, it is important to mention that over the period 1850-1920, Marx, Darwin, and Freud, were transforming the entire way of thinking of Western culture.

For Marx all social reality is class conflict, based on economic self-interest. Freedom is illusory, because people are actually following a script that history has written for them. Marx famously announced that "religion is the opiate of the people", and he was equally scornful of all other claims of spirituality. Art, philosophy, love, justice -- all could be reduced to economic interest.

Darwin's importance was his insistence that humanity must be understood biologically, in the same way as other animals. The human race has simply evolved skills that allow it to dominate nature. Darwin started out as a Christian but became an atheist, and he believed that his findings had eliminated the possibility of a "spiritual" nature.

Freud struck at the belief that reason elevates humanity far above other creatures and that through reason we reach truth. For Freud we are governed by irrational drives, rooted in sexuality. People may think they are free, but in fact they are at the mercy of unconscious drives.

He considered that all religion was founded on the premise of fear (fear of living without one's father, fear of falling into sexual "sin" and fear of death).

C. G. Jung, who was a disciple of Freud, later presented a more positive approach, called by anthropologists the "Jungian theory", According to his point of view, religion was not merely an institutionalized, quasi-pathological symptom of human neuroses (as Freud considered it), but rather as a mechanism by which men transcend the limitations imposed by infantile fixations. In other words, Jung considered that the function of religion was to assist in growth, in the resolution of conflict, and in the treatment of emotional ills.

All those ideas had a great impact on society, and people became to rethink the faith in different terms.

A movement called theological liberalism, or sometimes theological modernism, was a major shift in theological thinking which occurred in the late nineteenth century, calling for freedom of conscience. In his article "Theological Liberalism"⁵, D. E. Miller says that that movement was characterized by "the desire to adapt religious ideas to modern culture and modes of thinking." According to Miller, liberals insisted that the world had changed since the time Christianity had been founded so that biblical terminology and creeds were incomprehensible to people in the late nineteenth century.

A second element of theological liberalism was "its rejection of religious belief based on authority alone." Liberals thought that all beliefs had to pass the tests of reason and experience, and that our mind should "be open to new facts and truth, regardless of where these may originate." For them the Bible was the work of writers who were limited by their times, and in that sense, it was "neither supernatural nor an infallible record of divine revelation", in other words, it did not possess absolute authority. The authority of Scripture, creeds, and the church, was replaced by the "essence of Christianity", what meant that there was "no inherent contradiction between the kingdoms of faith and natural law, revelation and science, the sacred and the secular, or religion and culture."

A central idea of liberal theology was divine immanence. God was "seen as present and dwelling within the world, not apart from or elevated above the world as a transcendent being" thus God was found in the whole of life and not just in the Bible or a few revelatory events. The divine presence could be "disclosed in such things as rational truth, artistic beauty, and moral goodness" Although most liberals attempted to hold on to a core of Christian doctrine, some did carry immanence to its logical end, which is pantheism.

Immanence contributed to such common liberal beliefs as the existence of a universal religious sentiment that lay behind the institutions and creeds of particular religions and the superiority of good works (both in individual and collective terms) over professions and confessions. God was seen as the one who enables man to integrate his personality and

thereby achieve perfection. This of course required the restatement of many traditional Christian doctrines.

Sin or evil was seen as imperfection, ignorance, maladjustment, and immaturity, not the fundamental flaw in the universe. These hindrances to the unfolding of the inner nature could be overcome by persuasion and education, and salvation or regeneration was their removal. Religion represented the dimension of life in which personal values received their highest expression, and its power possessed spiritually therapeutic qualities. Prayer, for example, heightened people's spiritual sensitivity and conferred the moral benefits of stability, self - control, and peace of mind.

Theological liberalism, in sum, was a movement that revealed the change in the view of the concept of religion in western society during the late nineteenth century explained by anthropology as the replacement of a "devolutionary" view of religion by an "evolutionary" concept. In other words, the view of religion adopted by western society in the millennia before Christ, that considered man as a sinner and had the function of "saving" his soul, was replaced by a new concept of religion, by means of which man could recover his quality of "perfect being."

The result of that change was the reformulation and, in some cases, abandonment of the institutionalized religion at that time, Christianism.

8. Joyce's contemporaries

Before revising some of Joyce's comments on religion, let us see some ideas about the topic given by some influential thinkers, colleagues and contemporaries of James Joyce.

Thomas Stearns Eliot, poet born in 1888, in St. Louis, Missouri, considered a pioneer of the modernist movement, believed that unless England and America recovered a form of Christian society, they would fall into the paganism that had overtaken Germany and Russia. But he "knew of only one alternative: a vigorous rediscovery of what it means to live Christianly." ¹²

One of his famous sayings concerning religion and art was "We know too much, and are convinced of too little. Our literature is a substitute for religion, and so is our religion." ¹³

David Herbert Lawrence, novelist, poet and essayist, born in 1885, in Eastwood, Nottinghamshire, said that "a man has no religion who has not slowly and painfully gathered one together, adding to it, shaping it; and one's religion is never complete and final, it seems, but must always be undergoing modification."¹⁴

William Butler Yeats, contemporary and compatriot of his protégé James Joyce, born in 1865, in Dublin, is widely considered one of the greatest poets of the 20th century. He had his own program of spiritual renewal that was a concerted effort on several fronts; he adopted the role of Maker in order to remake not only himself but also his art and his religion. Like Joyce, Yeats wanted to forge the spirit of Ireland in the smithy of his soul, but unlike Joyce he could never satisfy himself that his own soul was itself ready for the task.

Yeats insisted that "no man can create, as did Shakespeare, Homer, Sophocles, who does not believe, with all his blood and nerve, that man's soul is immortal." ¹⁵

He "made a new religion, almost an infallible Church of poetic tradition", and made "poets the prophets of religious revelation, and leaves the "philosophers and theologians" with a minor role. ¹⁶

It is important to say what his ideas about the role of the artist and art were, because they are very related to religion.

Yeats believed, it was the artist, not the priest or the politician, who was charged with perfecting not only his own soul but that of the entire race as well, and that "art existed out of time, and therefore beyond the march of mortality, and that the greater the struggle between the world and the dream embodied in art, the greater the transcendence of the soul in the art."

Yeats had a deep and abiding faith in the connection between art and immortality and described the artist as "the creator not of things but of feelings, unburdened by perishable flesh, and these feelings are of the same ethereal substance as the soul, and God."¹⁸

Finally, we should mention another compatriot and contemporary of Joyce; Bernard Shaw. He was a playwright, essayist, and pamphleteer, born in Dublin in 1876. He insisted that a religion for the contemporary world should be a true guide to daily living, as well as consistent with science.

He also talked about the importance of the artist in religion remarking that "all the sweetness of religion is conveyed to the world by the hands of storytellers and imagemakers. Without their fictions the truths of religion would for the multitude be neither intelligible nor even apprehensible; and the prophets would prophesy and the teachers teach in vain."

9. Joyce's attitude towards Irish Catholic Church

Joyce's acclaimed biographer, professor Richard Ellmann, the author of the books <u>Selected letters of James Joyce</u> and <u>The Critical Writings of James Joyce</u>, among others, wrote an article called "Joyce's Religion and Politics"²⁰, in 1982, that gives us an interesting hint about Joyce's attitude towards the CatholicChurch, his native religion.

In his youth Joyce wrote to Nora Barnacle on August 20th, 1904: "Six years ago (at sixteen) I left the Catholic Church, hating it most fervently. I found it impossible for me to remain in it on account of the impulses of my nature." The Church's attitude to sexuality was particularly repugnant to him. His letter went on: "I made 'secret war upon it when I was a student and declined to accept the positions it offered me." These positions, according to his brother Stanislaus, included that of priest; priests, he said were "barbarians armed with crucifixes."

According to professor Ellmann "Joyce wrote to Nora: "Now I make open war upon it by what I write and say and do." His actions accorded with this policy. He neither confessed nor took communion. When his children were born he forbade their being baptized. His grandson was baptized against his wishes and without his knowledge. He preferred to live with Nora Barnacle for twenty seven years without marrying her. When at last a wedding became necessary for purposes of inheritance, he had it performed in a registry office."

However, Joyce's rejection of the Church was compatible with considerable interest in it and in its procedures. As an example of that, Joyce regularly attended the services of Holy Week. He did so, however, "like a tourist of another persuasion", standing at the back of the church.

But to be opposed to the Church as an institution is one thing; to be opposed to all religious feeling is another. His brother Stanislaus was convinced that James never had religious problems. In his book My Brother's Keeper²¹, Stanislaus says that the "power of life" made him reject the Church. According to professor Ellmann, Stanislaus noted in his diary on 7

August 1905 that "he (James Joyce) believed that in his heart every man was religious. He spoke from his knowledge of himself. I asked him did he mean that everyone had in his heart some faith in a Deity, by which he could be influenced. He said, 'Yes'."²²

10. Analysis of Religion in "A portrait of the Artist as a Young Man"

10.1. Stephen Dedalus

Before starting with the analysis of the novel, we must analyze the name of our hero, Stephen Dedalus, who is, as we have said before, Joyce's fictional double. This is important because the first name of the character is the name of the first Christian martyr, and through his surname Joyce introduces the mythic motif.

Concerning religion, "myth is the theory of ritual, which explains the nature of the powers, prescribes the ritual, accounts for its successes and failures. Together, they are religion."²³ Myths are narratives telling of events in the careers of supernatural beings.

The most common of myths are "myths of origin", i.e. those that "describe the origins of the gods themselves, the various adventures which befell them, and their activities in eventually creating the familiar world of man and nature." Some origin myths are called "culture hero myths" and they "describe the endeavors of a divine or divinely inspired being in bringing to man such cornerstones of his culture as fire, family organization, law and government, and the rules of morality." ²⁵

Joyce uses the name of the figure from Greek mythology, Dedalus, as a background story from which to compare and contrast his story of Stephen Dedalus.

According to Greek mythology, Dedalus was imprisoned with his son Icarus in the Labyrinth he himself had constructed for King Minos. Then, he fashioned wings to aid their escape. Like the Dedalus of Greek myth, Stephen must grow wings so that he may fly above the tribulations of his life. As he matures, Dedalus begins to understand his position in life through a series of revelations, and inspired by a "divine" feeling decides to rise

above the turbulent Ireland of the early 1900s in a rebellion again society and his heritage in order to find his art.

When we already know what the story of Stephen Dedalus is, it is inevitable to mention its similarity to a "culture hero myth", and that makes us think about the title of the first draft of A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man, Stephen Hero.

As we have already said Stephen's name derives from Stephen, the first martyr, who is mentioned in the book of Acts. Before being put to death, Stephen gives his own personal defense for his faith in Christ and therefore, when he cannot be refuted by the Sanhedrin, he is stoned to death. One of the most significant connections Joyce has made between Stephen and his character is that both receive epiphanies through their death in their old lives and rebirth into the new. Stephen is recorded to have said before he died, "Behold, I see the heavens opened up and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God... Lord Jesus, receive my spirit!... Lord, do not hold this sin against them!" (Acts 7:56-60). One can almost see a similar tone to Stephen's last words in the novel, "Old father, old artificer, stand me now and ever in good stead." Stephen, as displayed throughout the novel, achieves several epiphanies, mainly those of his inspiration to write, his realizations of the errors in the church, his thoughts on the beauty of women and in the end, his leaving Ireland for Paris.

10.2. Epiphany

Using the sacred to describe secular revelations given to Stephen Dedalus, James Joyce uses the concept of "epiphany", which in Christian language means "the manifestation of Christ to the Magi according to the biblical account."²⁷

According to Stephen in <u>Stephen Hero</u> the epiphany (from the Greek word, meaning "act of appearance") is the "sudden spiritual manifestation, whether in the vulgarity of speech or of gesture or in a memorable phase of the mind itself." For Stephen and Joyce, the epiphany is the sudden "revelation of the whatness of the thing."²⁸

Epiphany prepares Stephen throughout the novel to accept and be strong in his eventual "martyrdom" of his old life and his rebirth to the new, where his suffering is no longer and he achieves the highest place he desires in the end: that of an artist.

It can be said that James Joyce does not consider his revelations to be divine, nor even influenced by the divine, specially being that he does not have ties with the Catholic Church, his native religion. But, if we consider the Jungian point of view of religion²⁹, we could say that those revelations do have religious origin, in the sense that they assist in growth, in the resolution of conflict, and in the treatment of emotional ills. And in that sense, they are "from the divine."

Thus, the use that Joyce makes of mythology, Catholic saints' names, and the use of religious terms such as "epiphany" could be considered not just as an act of secularization of the sacred, but also as a sacralization of the secular, in this case, the "conversion" of a child into an artist.

From this point of view we could describe <u>A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man</u> as a book that tells us about the efforts of a "divinely" inspired (trough epiphanies) mythical martyr (Stephen Dedalus), in his development into the hero in charge of bringing to man a cornerstone of his culture; art.

10.3. Religion in "A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man"

10.3.1. Chapter I

Religion is an important and recurring theme in James Joyce's <u>A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man</u>. Religion is central to the life of Stephen Dedalus the child. He was reared in a strict, if not harmonious, Catholic family. The severity of his parents, trying to raise him to be a good Catholic man, is evidenced from the beginning, in chapter one. At one point, Stephen expresses his intention to marry the young girl, Eileen Vance, who lives next door. Eileen happens to be Protestant, however, and in response to his Catholic family's shock, Stephen crawls under the table. Stephen's mother assures the others that he will apologize, and Dante adds a threat that eagles will pull out Stephen's eyes if he does not apologize, as

the Bible says in Proverbs 30: 17. Stephen turns these threatening words into a song in his mind: "Pull out his eyes/ Apologize/ Apologize/ Pull out his eyes", 30 as if art could soothe his soul.

In the same chapter we find Stephen's first personal thoughts about existence when, instead of studying, he meditates on himself and his position in the cosmos, acting as primitive men did when they were not able to understand the unknown; turning to god.

He examines his own address written in his geography textbook, beginning with himself and listing his school, city, county, country, and so on in ascending order, ending in "The Universe." But he cannot stop there. He asks "What was after the Universe?" and there he is stuck on that question. For his answers, Stephen, as we have already said, turns to God.

Then, he starts thinking about God, wondering whether the different names for God in different languages refer to the same being, and concluding that the names are in fact all the same being. Through that reflection we can see that Stephen is able, since childhood, to question about God and His characteristics, to set up his own system of beliefs.

Furthermore, he is able to do that without feeling heretical. In fact he dares to address God directly, when the bell rings for night prayers. The chaplain's clear and formal prayer contrasts with Stephen's own quietly murmured prayer for his family's well-being, sure of not going "to hell when he died." ³²

Another interesting scene is that of the Christmas dinner discussion.

This discussion engenders no harmonious Christmas feeling of family togetherness. Rather, the growing boy learns that politics is often such a charged subject that it can cause serious quarrels even within a single home.

The political landscape of Ireland is deeply divided when the action of the novel occurs. Secularists like Mr. Dedalus and Mr. Casey feel that religion is keeping Ireland from progress and independence, while the orthodox, like Dante, feel that religion should take precedence in Irish culture. Stephen at the time attends a Jesuit school, and accepts anything to do with religion as fact. During this time, however, the Catholic Church has

discontinued its support of Stephen's hero Parnell, and not only did it discontinue its support, it condemned him. Two staples of Stephen's life had become exclusive of each other, and that made Stephen question both religion and his heroes. In this case, both could not be right.

To reinforce either ideal, Stephen would look to his family. At Christmas dinner he heard Dante cry, "God and religion before everything! [...] God and religion before the world!"³³ Mr. Casey, retorted, "No God for Ireland! [...] We have too much God in Ireland. Away with God!."³⁴ Clearly, Stephen could not look to his family for answers about religion.

Through that episode Joyce shows us that he was mindful of the shift in theological thinking which occurred in the period he lived³⁵, and there is no doubt that discussions like those were retained in his young memory, influencing his way of seeing religion.

Back at school after Christmas vacation, Stephen listens to a conversation between Wells and several other students. They are talking about a couple of boys who fled the school for wrongdoing and were later nabbed. Wells believes the boys stole wine from the school's sacristy. The other boys fall silent at the horror of this offense against God. Athy gives a different account of the boys' crime. He says they were caught "smugging," or engaging in some sort of homosexual play.

This chapter also explores the frequently arbitrary nature of crime and punishment. The fact that the boys in Stephen's class at Clongowes know that they will all be punished for the transgressions of the two caught "smugging" indicates that they are accustomed to unfair retribution. Furthermore, none of the instances of wrongdoing mentioned so far in the novel have been crimes of malice: neither Stephen when he wishes to marry Eileen, nor the boys caught in homosexual activity, nor Parnell caught in a relationship with another woman, demonstrates any overtill will toward others. None of them robs, kills, or wishes harm directly upon another, yet they are all punished more severely than they deserve.

Joyce explores this idea of undeserved punishment by the Church explicitly when Stephen is painfully punished for a transgression that he has not committed.

During the Latin lesson the prefect notices that Stephen is not working and demands to know why. Father Arnall tells Father Dolan that Stephen has been excused from class work because his glasses are broken and he cannot see well. Stephen is telling the truth, but the unbelieving prefect lashes his hands anyway.

When Stephen later defends himself and denounces the punishment as unfair, challenging for the first time the authority of the Church, he acts as a representative of all the others who are unfairly punished.

There is great symbolic importance in the scene in which Stephen's peers lift him up over their heads and acclaim him as a hero, as it suggests a heroic side of the young boy that we have not seen before. Stephen's summoning of the courage to denounce Father Dolan's injustice is a moral triumph, rather than a more conventional heroic triumph in sports or fighting. Joyce highlights the difference between these two kinds of heroism in the pictures of martyrs that Stephen passes on his way to the rector's office. His walk among the images of upright men suggests that he may be joining their ranks, and his moral victory foreshadows his later ambitions to become a spiritual guide for his country.

Significantly, Stephen's heroic role does not ensure any new feeling of social belonging: after the cheers die away, Stephen realizes that he is alone.

Concerning the theme of religion, Chapter I gives us valuable information about Joyce's attitude towards it.

Here we find that Stephen felt very near to "the spiritual", but he was also undoubtedly "possessed" by the spirit of his time; he was not completely against the Church but he has no problems in defying its decisions and its authority as the only way to know God.

Chapter I gives us some reasons why someone should reject the Catholic Church, or at least why someone's piety could decline.

10.3.2. Chapter II

The early sections of the second chapter are dominated by a sense of decline, which manifests itself in several different forms.

After training with uncle Charles, when he goes to the chapel for morning prayers, "Stephen knelt at his side respecting, though he did not share, his piety."³⁶

Even though he likes re-enacting the adventures of The Count of Monte Cristo with Aubrey Mills, who becomes his constant companion, because he feels that he is different from the other children he knows, and that he is in touch with a higher world. He imagines a future moment in which he will be transfigured by some magic revelation.

The moving men's dismantling of the family home mirrors the dismantling of Stephen's earlier naïve faith in the world. At a birthday party for another child, Stephen feels no gaiety or fun, and merely watches the other guests silently. Though he sings a song with the others, he enjoys feeling separate from the other children.

While the world around him declines, Stephen's own sensitivities become more acute. In particular, we see the development of his attitude toward literature. Just as Stephen identifies with the protagonist of the children's story that his father reads to him at the beginning of the novel, he now imagines himself as the Count of Monte Cristo. Like the count, who is a pursuer of vengeance and a righter of wrongs, Stephen is frustrated with the unfairness he sees in the world. The intertwining of life and literature foreshadows the later ways in which the "Artist" and the "Young Man" of the title—one who creates art, and another who lives life—complement and reinforce each other.

In this chapter he also shows his interest in creating art.

At the birthday party, Stephen is attracted to one of the girls, E. C. At home, Stephen writes a love poem in his notebook, titling it "To E— C—" in imitation of Byron.

When Stephen is a teenager at Belvedere College, we find other proofs of his declining piety.

On a certain day the English master finds heresy in his essay and when discussing about who was the greatest writer with some classmates, he says Byron and adds that he does not care that Byron was an heretic.

Besides, when he remembered his father's command for him to be a good gentleman and a good Catholic, those "voices had now come to be hollow-sounding in his ears"³⁷

This chapter also shows the loss of a good paternal image in Stephen's life.

When Stephen goes with his father to the city of Cork, where his father is auctioning off some property, he feels overwhelmed by a sense of shame and alienation; going from bar to bar with Mr. Dedalus, Stephen is ashamed of his father's drinking and flirtation with the barmaids and regains his grip on himself by telling himself his own name and identity.

Stephen feels distant from his father, and recalls a poem by Shelley about the moon wandering the sky in solitude.

Church becomes a less important part of Stephen's life with every passing day. When his great-uncle Charles asks him to go to church, Stephen remains indifferent and makes excuses.

It is important to remember, at this point, the Freudian idea that religions function "as a protection of, and therapy for, emotional problems." ³⁸

The reason for that declining piety could be that in this chapter we see the young Stephen facing several emotional problems such as his family's declining fortune, his solitude, feelings of alienation from his family and schoolmates, the loss of a good paternal image, the need to find his own identity, and his sexual awakening, and that in helping him, Catholic Church is not being effective.

Undoubtedly, Stephen needs another religion.

That could be the reason why Stephen's meeting with the prostitute and his eventual succumbing to her sexually is described in a manner quite reminiscent of man's relationship to God, where Joyce writes: "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." Such phrases as "surrendering himself...body and mind", "conscious of nothing in the world" give us a sense of man's encounter with the spiritual; an "epiphany."

10.3.3. Chapter III

At the beginning of this chapter we can see that Stephen's new therapy, based on enjoying worldly pleasures, seems to be more effective than Catholicism.

Being unable to focus on the mathematical equation in his notebook, he contemplates the universe, and imagines he hears a distant music in it. He is aware of a "cold lucid indifference" that grips him. Hearing a fellow student answer one of the teacher's questions stupidly, Stephen feels contempt for his classmates.

Now, Stephen seems to be relaxed and happy, daydreaming about the nice stew of mutton, potatoes, and carrots he hopes to have later and thinking about the variety of prostitutes who will proposition him at night.

But although he continues to live in sin, he acts as a religious leader at the University College. Mary fascinates him, and he portrays her in a highly poetic and exotic manner, using evocative words such as "spikenard," "myrrh," and "rich garments" to describe her, and associating her with the morning star, bright and musical.

However, when Stephen muses that the lips with which he reads a prayer to Mary are the same lips that have lewdly kissed a whore we see that he has mysteriously linked the images of the whore and the Virgin in his mind as opposite visions of womanliness. Indeed, Stephen describes his encounter with the prostitute in terms similar to a prayer to Mary: when he kisses her, he "bow[s] his head" and "read[s] the meaning of her movements." When Stephen closes his eyes, "surrendering himself to her," ⁴² this quiet submission mimics the Christian surrender to the Holy Spirit. Moreover, both the Virgin Mary and the prostitute represent a refuge from everyday strife, doubts, and alienation.

At first, Stephen does not see his veneration of Mary as being at odds with his sinful habit of visiting prostitutes, but he gradually becomes more worried by his sins of the flesh. He realizes that from the sin of lust, other sins such as gluttony and greed have emerged.

The school rector announces a retreat that will be withdrawal into inner contemplation of the soul, and of the soul's need to heed the four "last things": death, judgment, heaven, and hell. Father Arnall urges the boys to put aside all worldly thoughts and win the blessing of the soul's salvation.

Walking home in silence with his classmates, Stephen is aggrieved by the thought of the rich meal he has just eaten, and thinks it has made him into a bestial and greasy creature. The next day he falls even deeper into despair over the degraded state of his soul, suffering in agony and feeling a "death chill." He imagines his weak and rotting body on its deathbed, unable to find the salvation it needs. Even worse, he pictures the Day of Judgment, when God will punish sinners with no hope of appeal or mercy.

Crossing the square, Stephen hears the laugh of a young girl. He thinks of Emma, pained by the thought that his filthy sexual escapades with prostitutes have soiled Emma's innocence. With feverish regret, he recalls all the whores with whom he has committed sins of the flesh. When this fit of shame passes, Stephen feels unable to raise his soul from its abject powerlessness. God and the Holy Virgin seem too far from him to help, until he imagines the Virgin reaching down to join his hands with Emma's in loving union. Stephen listens to the rain falling on the chapel and imagines another biblical flood coming.

When the service resumes, Father Arnall delivers a sermon about hell, recounting the original sin of Lucifer and his fellow angels who fell from heaven at God's command, describes the torments of hell in terrifying detail.

The sermon leaves Stephen paralyzed with fear, recognizing that hell is his destination. After chapel, he numbly listens to the trivial talk of the other students, who are not as affected by the sermon as he is. This dissimilar reaction reiterates the fact that Stephen is a social outsider. He experiences spiritual yearnings more immediately and intensely than others, even feeling them physically.

In English class, Stephen can think only of his soul. When a messenger arrives with news that confessions are being heard, Stephen tries to imagine himself confessing, and is terrified. Back in chapel, Father Arnall continues his tour of hell by focusing on its spiritual torments, which horrify Stephen no less than the physical ones have earlier.

Stephen goes up to his room after dinner in order to "be alone with his soul." Stephen feels weak and numb. He admits to himself the horror of all the sins he has committed, and is amazed that God has not stricken him dead yet.

This desperate state contrasts with his joyful condition at the beginning of this chapter; although worldly pleasures helped Stephen in overcoming his emotional problems, and that they were useful to fight against many fears, to fall into sexual "sin" has generated a strong fear of death and punishment.

Springing awake from a nightmare, Stephen rushes frantically to open the window for some fresh air. He finds that the rain has stopped and the skies are full of promise.

In order to overcome the fear of death and punishment Stephen thinks he must go back to the Catholic Church, his religion.

He prays to Jesus, weeping for his lost innocence. Walking through the streets that evening, Stephen knows he must confess. He asks an old woman where the nearest chapel is, and goes to it immediately. He anxiously waits for his turn to enter the confessional. When it is finally Stephen's turn, the priest asks how long it has been since his last confession, and Stephen replies that it has been eight months. He confesses that he has had sexual relations with a woman and that he is only sixteen. The priest offers forgiveness and Stephen heads home feeling filled with grace. He goes to sleep.

The next day he finds himself at the altar with his classmates and receives the Sacrament. While receiving the host an epiphany tells him that "Another life! A life of grace and virtue and happiness!" was possible. "It was true. It was not a dream from which he would wake. The past was past."

10.3.4. Chapter IV

Stephen imposes a new system of religious discipline upon himself that transforms his life. Stephen's rigorous program of spiritual self-discipline is impressive, and demonstrates his extraordinary earnestness. The unbelievable asceticism that he willingly adopts demonstrates his strength of will and suggests his heroism. Stephen displays an astonishing ability to overcome his bodily longings and to affirm the superiority of the soul. In doing so, he proves his similarity to martyrs and saints.

Gradually, however, Stephen comes to accept the fact that God loves him, and he begins to see the whole world as one vast expression of divine love. He is careful not to get carried away by his spiritual triumphs, and he pursues even the lowliest devotion carefully.

However, Joyce suggests that a saint's life may not be desirable for Stephen. Joyce's style, which is richly detailed and concretely sensual in earlier sections of the novel, now becomes extremely dry, abstract, and academic. This style corresponds to Stephen's psychological state: as Stephen becomes more ascetic and self-depriving, Joyce's language loses its colorful adjectives and complex syntax. The very difficulty of reading such dry language suggests the difficulty of the life that Stephen is leading. Importantly, although Stephen explicitly acknowledges that his life has been changed, he does not say that it has necessarily improved. His heroic efforts to deprive himself are impressive, but do not necessarily make him a better person.

When the director, impressed by Stephen's piety, asks him whether he has ever felt the vocation to be a priest, and urges him to consider a life in the church, Stephen is obliged to rethink his religious beliefs, because, as the director says, the priesthood is a very serious decision to make.

At first, Stephen is intrigued by the thought of the priesthood, and pictures himself in the admired, respected role of the silent and serious priest carrying out his duties. As he imagines the quiet and ordered life awaiting him in the church, however, he begins to feel a deep unrest burning inside him.

Through Catholic discipline Stephen is able to overcome the fear of death and punishment, but he is not happier than before; Stephen realizes that the Catholic religion will never satisfy him completely. He does not want to have the life of a priest, he does not want to lose his identity.

Now, he is sure that "His destiny was to be elusive of social or religious orders." He knows that his fate is to learn wisdom not in the refuge of the church, but "to learn his own wisdom apart from others or to learn the wisdom of others himself wandering among the snares of the world."

He walks back home from school and significantly turns his eyes coldly for an instant towards a shrine of the Virgin Mary.

When he arrives home he feels alone and empty, feeling exactly the same as he felt in chapter II. Actually, he is informed that the family will have to move again.

For him all seems "weary of life." 46

He does not know the solution for his existential problems, but the situation now is different; this time, after trying worldly pleasures and definitively discarding Catholicism, he knows the answer is near.

"He could wait no longer"⁴⁷, and he sets off walking toward the sea thinking that "The end he had been born to serve yet did not see had led him to escape by an unseen path and now it beckoned to him once more and a new adventure was about to be opened to him."⁴⁸

He recites snatches of poetry and regards the light on the water. Stephen comes upon several of his schoolmates who are swimming, and they jokingly greet him as they say his name in Greek.

Reflecting on the myth of Daedalus that his name evokes, Stephen ponders his similarity to that "fabulous artificer" who constructed wings with which he flew out of imprisonment. Stephen is suddenly enraptured by this thought, and feels that he will soon begin building a new soul that will allow him to rise above current miseries. Stephen's mental image of "a hawklike man flying sunward above the sea" strikes him as a

"prophecy of the end he had been born to serve and had been following through the mists of childhood and boyhood." Daedalus is a "symbol of the artist forging anew in his workshop out of the sluggish matter of the earth a new soaring impalpable imperishable being." This vision is not simply an image of his future, but of his childhood and boyhood as well. His vision reveals a hidden thread that connects Stephen's past, present, and future into one whole. Most important, perhaps, Stephen realizes that the art that he will forge is not merely a beautiful object, but an entire eternal existence. Through his art, Stephen creates an "imperishable being" very much like a soul—he will not just create literature, but will create himself.

He feels a strong calling, and determines to celebrate life, humanity, and freedom, ignoring all temptations to turn away from such a celebration. "This was the call of life to his soul not the dull gross voice of the world of duties and despair, not the inhuman voice that had called him to the pale service of the altar."⁵⁴

His determination is a religious one, and that is reinforced when the major epiphany in the story takes place; he sees a beautiful girl wading in the water, her skirts hitched up high. He and the girl make eye contact for a moment. Joyce writes "and when she felt his presence and the worship of his eyes her eyes turned to him in quiet sufferance of his gaze..." It is not long after this when Stephen feels the beauty so overwhelmingly that his soul shouts "Heavenly God" in a joyful manner. Stephen sees the beauty of that which is created by God and worships that, not God Himself, "...in an outburst of profane joy". Stephen perceives her as an angel of "youth and beauty, an envoy from the fair courts of life, to throw open before him in an instant of ecstasy the gates of all theways of error and glory. On and on and on and on!". It is as a secular version of the Virgin Mary, Stephen exeperiences a revelation of passionate intensity similar to that of a religious convertion.

10.3.5. Chapter V

In this chapter we see that Stephen has made art his religion, or at least, a substitute for his native religion, and he looks as peaceful as he looked at the beginning of chapter III. But now he is completely free of guilt and sin.

Even though his family environment has not improved, he cheerfully greets his family and jokes when his father calls him "lazy bitch" as if nothing could disturb his happiness. He walks wandering through the rainy Dublin landscape, quoting poems to himself, as if he were praying, and he does not worry when realizes that he is missing his English lecture.

Although he still feels alienated from others and does not share his friends' nationalist fervor, he does not care about that, understanding that his cause, being an artist, is more important.

Stephen looks completely self-assured when he argues with his classmates, and he even is idolized by a classmate for his independent spirit.

He refers to his religion by explaining his aesthetic theory of the ideal stasis or immobility evoked by a work of art, a theory he derives from Aristotle and Aquinas. He also explains the ideals—integrity, harmony, and radiance—that he believes every artistic object must achieve. Stephen's concept of divinity lies in the aesthetic—his God has withdrawn from the world of men, "paring his fingernails in solitude." Stephen's point is that the truly transcendent artist must be above the common fray of mankind.

Stephen awakens one morning in a mood of contentment and enchantment, having dreamed of an erotic union with his beloved, but without feeling fear for falling into sexual sin. Instead, he savours the feeling and composes a romantic poem.

The only idea that disturbs his mind is jealous suspicion about Father Moran's interest in Emma. He accuses himself of folly, and wonders whether Emma has been aware of his devotion to her.

One day, sitting on the steps of the university library, Stephen watches a flock of birds circling above and tries to identify their species. He muses on the idea of flight and on the fact that men have always tried to fly. Stephen's long meditation on the birds circling overhead is an important sign of his own imminent flight. He cannot identify what species the birds are, just as he is not sure about his own nature. All he knows is that the birds are flying, as he too will do. He will build his wings alone, just as his mythical namesake, Daedalus, alone crafted the wings with which he escaped from his prison.

Talking with a friend, Cranly, Stephen admits that he feels he may soon have to leave the university and abandon his friends in order to pursue his artistic ambitions. Stephen says that he feels he must obey the dictum "I will not serve," refusing any ideology that is imposed upon him, even that of friends and family. Cranly warns Stephen of the risk of extreme solitude, but Stephen does not reply; he is completely convinced of becoming a priest of the religion of art.

At this point, the narrative switches to a journal form, composed of dated entries written by Stephen himself, from a first-person perspective. Stephen records his scattered impressions of thoughts, perceptions, and events of each day.

Stylistically, this section is not as polished and structured as the earlier portions of the novel, but this lack of polish indicates its immediacy and sincerity in Stephen's mind.

Stephen notes a conversation with his mother regarding the Virgin Mary, in which his mother accuses Stephen of reading too much and losing his faith. Stephen, however, says that he cannot repent.

In his entry dated April 15, Stephen records meeting "her"—meaning Emma—on Grafton Street. Emma asks Stephen whether he is writing poems and why he no longer comes to the university. Stephen excitedly talks to her about his artistic plans.

This meeting with Emma, however, is concrete, placing Stephen himself in control. The conversation with Emma emphasizes the fact that women are no longer guiding Stephen: his mother no longer pushes him, the Virgin Mary no longer shows him the way, and prostitutes no longer seduce him. Finally, in actually speaking with Emma face-to-face, Stephen shows that he has begun to conceive of women as fellow human beings rather than idealized creatures. In that way he is completely free to be a priest of art.

The following day, he has a vision of disembodied arms and voices that seem to call to him, urging him to join them. The phrase "the smithy of my soul" indicates that he strives to be an artist whose individual consciousness is the foundation for all of his work. The reference to "the uncreated conscience of my race" implies that he strives to be an artist who uses

his individual voice to create a voice and conscience for the community into which he has been born.

Stephen ends his journal with a prayer to his old father, Daedalus, whom he calls "old artificer," 59 to stand him in good stead. In that way he announces he is ready to be an artist for the rest of his life.

11. Conclusions

1. Although most of the authors centre their attention on the theme of a young boy becoming an adult and an artist in <u>A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man</u>, and that religion is just treated as one of the elements that form our main character's environment, we could say that the theme of religion is not peripheral in this novel.

As <u>A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man</u> is a Bildungsroman, religion, a system of beliefs and worship developed as a mechanism to assist growth, is obviously very relevant as a theme.

But, the theme of religion is not relevant just because of that.

We know that the name of the main character of <u>A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man</u> is also very related with the theme.

By giving the main character a religious name, and by using a vocabulary full of words taken from mythology and Catholic Church, Joyce tells us that he is interested in the theme of religion.

2. However, the most satisfactory conclusion we can come to is that <u>A Portrait of the Artist</u> as a Young Man shows us that Joyce's attitude towards religion was not just that of an Irishman against Irish Catholic Church.

The novel shows us the process of Stephen shedding Irish Roman Catholicism and developing his own religion of art which proves to be satisfying in every sphere of his life.

The first chapter of the novel shows us Stephen's attitude towards Irish Catholicism during his early years.

At that time religion, specifically Catholicism, was central to the life of Stephen, who represents the Irish boy brought up in a Catholic middle class Irish family.

But at the same time, Stephen shows certain discomfort from Catholic severity and fundamentalism, reaching the point of setting up his own personal ideas about God, without feeling heretic, and challenging the authority of the Church.

Joyce presents the Catholic Church as an imperfect system that, instead of making Stephen's life more harmonious, is the causer of quarrels and unfair punishments. In other words, in the first chapter Joyce gives some reasons why someone should reject a religious system such as Catholic Irish Church, as I have said before.

Chapter two shows us Stephen faced with several emotional problems such as his feelings of alienation from his family and schoolmates, the loss of a good family and paternal image, the need to find his own identity, and his sexual awakening.

The attitude towards Catholicism that Joyce shows in this chapter is that of rejection caused by the reasons shown in the first chapter and Church's inefficiency in helping him.

But, even though the Church becomes a less important part in Stephen's life with every passing day, his own sensitivities become more acute and shows an interest in reading and creating art, which becomes a kind of "refuge" from the problems of the world and, in that sense, a substitute for Catholicism, his native religion.

Trying to find an escape from his problems, Stephen finally decides to enjoy worldly pleasures and visits a prostitute, which implies the definitive separation from his family and Church.

In Chapter III we find that Stephen's "sinful" new life has been more effective in helping him to put up with his life; he looks happy and relaxed.

Although his piety has almost disappeared, he is very interested in the Virgin Mary and he has linked the images of the prostitute and the Virgin in his mind as opposite visions of womanliness, creating a kind of "private goddess", that he venerates.

Thus, Stephen creates a kind of private religion that, though it is not yet completed and nor even Stephen understands well, it is more effective than his native religion.

But he gradually becomes more worried by his sins of the flesh, and the fear of death and punishment shows him that his new system of beliefs and way of living are not completely good.

That fear becomes unbearable when Stephen listens to Father Arnall's sermon about hell and, hoping to find in the Catholic Church a new life of "grace and virtue and happiness", he decides to go back to it.

In Chapter IV Joyce shows us how Stephen transforms his life adopting a new system of religious discipline, which helps him to fight against the fear of death and punishment, but that does not make him a happier person.

When the director, impressed by his piety, urges him to consider a life in the Church, Stephen is obliged to rethink his religious beliefs and realizes that Catholicism will never satisfy him completely.

Stephen's attitude towards an institutionalized religion such as Catholicism in this chapter is that of total rejection, based on the idea of the loss of identity that it implies. In other words, Joyce shows the idea of rejection of a "devolutionary" concept of religion. ⁶⁰

Now, Stephen is totally convinced that "His destiny was to be elusive of social or religious orders" and that his fate is "to learn his own wisdom apart from others or to learn the wisdom of others himself wandering among the snares of the world." 62

Feeling the same as he did in Chapter II, he proceeds in the same way he did before, taking refuge in art. He walks toward the sea reciting snatches of poetry, trying to understand his new situation and find a solution for his troubles.

When he hears his name in Greek Stephen is suddenly enraptured by the thought that his name is a "prophecy of the end he had been born to serve and had been following through the mists of childhood and boyhood." Thus, Stephen realizes that the definitive substitute for Catholicism is a personal religion based on his artistic sensitivity. Which, unconsciously, had always been his religion in Jungian terms, in the sense that it had been assisting Stephen in the resolution of conflicts, and in the treatment of emotional ills. 64

Stephen is totally determined to be an artist when he sees the "angel of youth and beauty" wading in the water, what reinforces the idea of considering art as something sacred, as the religion that he had been looking for since he was a child.

In sum, this chapter shows the moment in which Stephen finally replaces his native institutionalized religion, Catholicism, because of its "devolutionary" character, by a more personal and "evolutionary" religion⁶⁵, the religion of art that will make him a complete and eternal person, an "artist forging anew in his workshop out of the sluggish matter of the earth a new soaring impalpable imperishable being."

The fifth chapter shows us that for Stephen, art is a religion in all senses, because:

- a) It appeared in his life as the fulfillment of a divine prophecy of the end he had been born to serve, as a prophecy that was confirmed by the appearance of an "angel of youth and beauty," an idea that refers to a certain belief in a superhuman controlling power.
- b) This religion also has a particular system of faith, expressed as an aesthetic theory, and worship, through a life completely devoted to it, supported by a rite of passage⁶⁷ that implies "role change and geographical movement."
- c) We could say that Stephen also has a religious relationship with art etymologically speaking in the sense that he is strongly bound to it, making him reject everything else.
- d) This new religion seems to be more effective than Catholicism, because we find that, although his family has became increasingly impoverished, and that his relationship with his family has not improved, Stephen looks happier than ever.
- e) In Freudian terms, for Stephen art is a religion because it functions "as a protection of, and therapy for, emotional problems."
- f) According to the "Jungian theory", we could say that art is Stephen's religion because he uses it as a mechanism by which he can transcend limitations such as his family's declining fortune, his solitude, feelings of alienation from his family and schoolmates, the loss of a good paternal image, the need to find his own identity, and the fear of falling into sexual sin and to death and punishment. In other words, art assists Stephen in growth, in the resolution of conflict, and in the treatment of emotional ills, what corresponds to the characteristics of an "evolutionary" religion, according to anthropology.

3. All this goes to show that A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man is the history of a personal search in which Stephen Dedalus leaves the Catholic religion behind in order to build his own religion, the religion of art, reflecting the more universal tendency of the age in which the novel was written; to substitute any form of institutionalized religion and authority, with a more personal concept of religion, idea that coincides with that presented by theological liberalists, with anthropology, and with some ideas about religion developed by Joyce's contemporaries.

Although the rejection of Irish Catholic Church is the only explicit evidence of James Joyce's attitude towards religion, it has been demonstrated through <u>A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man</u> that James Joyce is not only a good example of a modernist writer concerning technical affairs, but also concerning the view of religion that was rife in the late nineteenth century.

Bearing in mind the ideas exposed in this essay, we may be able to understand Joyce's ambiguous quotations about religion such as :"All things are inconstant except the faith in the soul, which changes all things and fills their inconstancy with light, but though I seem to be driven out of my country as a misbeliever I have found no man yet with a faith like mine."

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³⁷ Ibid., p. 63.

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⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 79.

⁴¹ Ibid., p. 80.

⁴² Ibid., p. 77

⁴⁴ Ibid. p. 124.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 126.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 127.

⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 130.

⁵⁰ See page 12.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Ibid.

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⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 132. ⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 135. ⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 196. ⁵⁸ Ibid. ⁵⁹ Ibid. ⁶⁰ See pages 4, 8. ⁶¹ Joyce, James. A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man, Wordsworth Editions Limited, Hertfordshire, 1992, p. 124. ⁶² Ibid. ⁶³ Ibid., p. 130. ⁶⁴ See page 6. ⁶⁵ See pages 4, 8. 66 Ibid. ⁶⁷ Wallace, Anthony. *Religion An Anthropological View*, Random House, New York, 1966, p. 127 ⁶⁸ www.memorablequotations.com