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VICO’S LANGUAGE THEORY
IN JAMES JOYCE’S PORTRAIT OF THE ARTIST AS A YOUNG MAN

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Vico's Language Theory in James Joyce's Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man

This study investigates James Joyce's Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man in terms of Joyce's appropriation of Giambattista Vico's language theory in the development of an aesthetic that begins with A Portrait. While critics tend to agree that a Vichian influence exists in both Ulysses and Finnegans Wake, there is little acknowledgment that a similar influence is found in A Portrait and there is, at present, no critical writing that locates the influence of Vico's language theories in A Portrait.

Most Joyce studies have concentrated on locating the Vichian influence based on an understanding of his historical theory of the corso/ricorso. This study examines the heart of Vichian language theory: (1) in order to understand the institutions in society, one must understand the process that created them; (2) that the created cannot be removed from the process of creation; and (3) that language, itself, is creative. Human institutions were understood by Vico to follow the order of language; the evolution of one was the development of the other. According to Vico, there were three language forms: the divine, the heroic and the human. Although each language tended to dominate the other two forms in their corresponding historical ages, the presence of all could be found in each age. Joyce relied directly on Vico's language theory, not its historical application.

Vico's language theory provides the parallel between the corso/ricorso in historical and autobiographical writing. Joyce's interest in Vichian history has little plausibility, but the problems he encountered in shaping the amorphous materials of Stephen Hero into art continue to engage quite general critical interest. Chiefly, Vico's theory of the creative function helped Joyce focus on the artistic moment as he selected harder from the autobiographical materials of A Portrait than found in his initial focus in the human hero of Hero. The signal example of this focus is Joyce's refinement of the epiphany. As to form in A Portrait, the narrator's human compass of the divine, heroic and human languages results in a deliberate coherence of the creative process: first, expression; then interpretation; and then the fully human creation -- the artist.
Art is not an escape from life.

Steven Hero (86)

In memory of my father, Frank Bolles
And for the future, my son, Brendan
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CHAPTER I
THE VICO/JOYCE CONNECTION

Literary critics continue to rely heavily on early interpretations that the influence on James Joyce's writings by the 18th century Italian philosopher, Giambattista Vico, is chiefly limited to Finnegans Wake. Such criticism is based primarily upon a sketchy understanding of Vico's view of history as found in the corso/ricorso. Joyce critics generally accept that the Vichian influence is found in Ulysses, but to a much smaller degree than is found in the Wake. As Patrick White stated, "That Joyce somehow applied Vico in the writing of Ulysses is not in question." However, while it is known that Joyce "read and digested" Vico's Scienza Nuova about 1905, little has been written that locates a Vichian influence in Joyce's earlier works, Dubliners and A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man, both of which were written and published after that time. Margaret Church in "A Portrait and Giambattista Vico: A Source Study," mentions that "Vico's influence may be found as early as Dubliners," but her main thrust is to place A Portrait in a Vichian perspective. She contends that Joyce used Vico in his work much earlier than has usually been acknowledged, and that her examination of A Portrait "will demonstrate Joyce's significant debt to Vico." I agree with Church's general statements that A Portrait shows a definite Vichian influence; however, Ms. Church bases her argument upon the initial Vico/Joyce connection set forth by Beckett (Our Exegmination . . .). Such interpretation has led Ms. Church and others to analyses centrally concerned with structure and pattern. While it is true that
Joyce used the Vichian pattern as a structural "trellis" in the *Wake*. This insistence by the critics in looking for structural "keys" to Joyce's work has led criticism away from pursuing the question of why Vico's "New Science," stirred Joyce's imagination. By attempting to fit the *Portrait* into a pattern corresponding to simplistic notions of the Viconian structure of corso/ricorso, Ms. Church strained to make the five chapters of *A Portrait* fit the structural boundaries of Vico's stages as she understood them. Briefly, Vico's pattern of history consist of the corso (three stages): (1) the age of the gods, (2) the age of the heroes, (3) the age of the humans; and the ricorso or the "return," whereby the cycles return again to the age of the gods. To make the five-chapter structure of the Portrait correspond with Vico's three ages plus the ricorso, Ms. Church finds in the novel "two rounds of the Age of the Fathers," corresponding to Vico's age of the gods. Fortunately, because of a study by Joyce Henseler, Joycean scholars need no longer attempt such contortions in order to redeem the fullness of the Vico connection. In a 1970 doctoral dissertation, Henseler (thoroughly grounded in both Vico and Joyce) rigorously describes the corso/ricorso and then applies this knowledge to the ten thunder words found in the *Wake*. Though Henseler's work is done specifically on the *Wake*, her findings suggested to me that critics had dealt as cavalierly with the connection between Vico's language theory and Joyce's earlier works as they had done in the past with Vico's theory of corsi/ricorso and the *Wake*.

Historically, Joyce's critics pursued Vico's influence on Joyce's writings by (1) concentrating on a superficial and often erroneous understanding of Vico's corso/ricorso view of history and (2) virtually ignoring the richness of Vico's language theory as it may apply to the development of Joyce's aesthetic. Just as there had been, until Henseler's writing, no thorough-going analysis of the *Wake* from a Vichian perspective, there has been a similar lack of criticism that deals with the
More specifically, in the criticism, one finds no discussion at any level that acknowledges Vico's systematic treatment of the creative process and its possible influence on Joyce's early writings.

My intent here is to give an adequate description of Vico's theories regarding the process of creation (a theory which includes not only the artist and his art but also the development of language) as Joyce chose to appropriate and apply his understanding of that process and, especially, as it affected his style of writing in A Portrait. Specifically, I shall look at Joyce's style of narrative development as it emerges in his use of the autobiographical mode, and the "epiphany." I shall show that an understanding of one aspect is necessarily dependent upon an understanding of all as they occur in both Vico and Joyce's idea of the process of creation. Perhaps one of the greatest problems in reading both Joyce and Vico is that attempts to isolate particulars in both men's works come up against the universality of what both men were attempting -- Vico in his theory, Joyce in his art. Attempts to isolate particulars often constitute a failure to enter the distinctive circle or circularity of their world view. While we may understand what is needed to enter a writer's world in an historical sense, what we are asked to do with Vico and Joyce is to enter their world at the level of creation -- not an entering into a world where language reflects the world, but with an understanding that we are entering into a world where language itself is creative. And, finally, that the product of creation for both men is not simply the end product, but cannot be removed from the process itself.

Some critics suggest the roots of Joyce's distinctive narrative style can be found as early as Dubliners, particularly, "The Dead". Hans Gabler states, "'The Dead' has been widely interpreted as signaling a new departure in his [Joyce's] art, leading to achievements such as the first chapter of A Portrait." Others show the development of Joyce's literary devices by contrasting Stephen Hero to A Portrait.
according to Robert Ryf, was written some time between 1901 and 1906, "with most of the writing having been done in 1904."\textsuperscript{10} As Ryf points out,

The relationship between \textit{Stephen Hero} and the \textit{Portrait} is complex. A pronounced difference in tone is evident between the two versions. Also, a marked increase in Joyce's creative and technical powers is clearly manifested in the \textit{Portrait}, which is a substantially greater artistic achievement than \textit{Stephen Hero}. The reasons for these differences are not clear . . . [my emphasis].\textsuperscript{11}

Ryf goes on to point out significant differences in Stephen's aesthetic in the transition from \textit{Stephen Hero} to \textit{A Portrait} -- especially concerning the doctrine of the epiphany -- "implied in the \textit{Portrait}, it is stated in \textit{Stephen Hero}."\textsuperscript{12} Ryf also notices that in \textit{A Portrait} "more of Joyce's material is embodied than is true in \textit{Stephen Hero}, where the presentation tends toward exposition."\textsuperscript{13} Ryf also notices that "The Dead" marks a departure -- "a considerable advance" over other stories in \textit{Dubliners}. Ryf feels that content is presented visually in "The Dead" and in \textit{A Portrait} rather than "discursively" as found in the other stories of the \textit{Dubliners} and \textit{Stephen Hero}.

Still other critics notice that the thread of narrative progression can be found running through all of Joyce's works. In a recent work, John Paul Riquelme studies the connection of the narrator (teller) to the story (tale). Riquelme maintains that the thread of narrative style progresses from \textit{Dubliners} through to \textit{Finnegans Wake}. He states, "The relationship is closest [in early and late writings] in the following areas: the representation of the artist as character and narrator, the linkings of ends to beginnings, and the attempt to present the source of writing."\textsuperscript{14} I agree with Riquelme; however, as we are only concerned with Joyce's earlier writings in this study, the discussion shall deal only with what Riquelme found in those works.

Riquelme notes numerous differences between the style found in the various early writings, but a large portion of his thesis is concerned with showing that the "first and last narrative segments in Joyce's writings are of special importance," i.e. the first and
last portions of *Dubliners*. He traces the movement of narration from "The Sisters" where he finds alternating "self-narration" and "the first-person presentation of scene and dialogue." In the three stories of *Dubliners* that are told in the first-person, he finds:

The self-narration of thoughts . . . primarily consonant rather than dissonant; that is, the narrator does not frequently allow his adult consciousness to intrude as he evokes his earlier thoughts.

As Riquelme moves through the stories, he shows the narrator increasing both his and the reader's distance from the young boy's perspective. Then, in the conclusion of his discussion, he states:

At the end of "The Dead," Joyce as teller has moved beyond the Stephen of the journal. At the same time as he revivifies a seemingly dead and deadening Irish world, allowing it to live and speak, he bridges the apparently uncrossable chasm between first- and third-person narration... Iterative and singular, mythic and individual, cultural and mental have come to nest within one another as permanent features of Joyce's fiction.

Riquelme's comparisons of *Hero* and *A Portrait* are generally consistent with previously mentioned criticism that shows *A Portrait* to be the superior product: *Hero* has "no structural design or coherent complexity of implications," contains "excessive rumination and overblown language," "the narrator's relationship to his character does not develop significantly with changes in the register of the language," and the book "places the reader at a greater distance from the character as the source of thinking." Noting the striking differences between the two works, he asks, "What happened between 1904-1914 in Dublin and Trieste?" However, his answer is to look only at changes within the texts in structure and style. Surprisingly, Riquelme assigns Yeats as the source of Joyce's discovery of a "cultural consciousness." Joyce was no admirer of the sort of fixedness in the mythic past that Yeats represented and Joyce's portrayal of a cultural consciousness in *A Portrait* was much more Vichian than Yeatsian (both of which shall be discussed in later chapters).
consciousness mentioned by Riquelme is very similar to the narrator whose voice "represents the . . . group mind of the occasion" or "the spirit of the occasion as experienced by the chief participants" found by Homer Obed Brown in the first pages of "The Dead." 24

Where Riquelme fails to credit a Vichian influence in the "cultural consciousness" found in A Portrait, he has no timidity in mentioning the possibility of a Vichian influence as early as "A Painful Case" in the character of Duffy:

He had an odd autobiographical habit which led him to compose in his mind from time to time a short sentence about himself containing a subject in the third person and a predicate in the past tense: 'Duffy's habit is reminiscent of The Life of Giambattista Vico Written by Himself, an autobiography in third person and past tense that Joyce would have known. 25

While a case can possibly be made for showing a Vichian influence on these earlier works, my purpose here is to show that a general silence reigns over the connection between Vico's language theory and what occurs in A Portrait.

Joyce critics tend to agree (1) a continuity of narrative method runs through Joyce's work, sometimes beginning as early as "The Dead" (and Riquelme looks for the Vichian influence as early as "A Painful Case") and always culminating in The Wake, and (2) that the differences between Hero and A Portrait mark a radical departure in Joyce's style. Quite often, critics taking up with this line of inquiry are faced with the placement of the narrator in Joyce's works. Yet, they are reticent even to pose the question of interpretation (Ryf approaches the question by pleading ignorance) of why the differences, but rest content in simply "showing." While there is general agreement that a thread of continuity in narrative style runs from early Joycean writing to the end and even though the fact of Vichian influence is investigated as early as "A Painful Case," there is silence on the question of interpretation: Did Vico's theory speak to Joyce as early as 1905?
Such criticism as it relates to Joyce's narrative style and to the placement of the role of the narrator in relation to Joyce or to Stephen Dedalus is not without value to this study; rather, many of these same critics have reached conclusions that only serve to support the presence of a Vichian influence in Joyce's early writing. I am not suggesting that Joyce's style was somehow miraculously transformed by the reading of Vico, but that Vico's theories spoke to views that Joyce was already formulating in his search for an aesthetic that centered on what was alive in language or "words."


2. The 1905 date comes from Fisch & Bergin (The Autobiography of GIAMBATTISTA VICO, Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1944, p.97). While Joyce may not have read Vico as early as 1903, he certainly knew of him as early as 1903, for he noted the following information in his 1903 review of J. Lewis McIntyre's Giordano Bruno: "Coleridge, whose speaker in 'Kubla Khan' had 'drunk the milk of paradise' was a student of both Bruno and Vico (In Richard Ellmann, ed., The Critical Writings, New York: Viking Press, 1959, p.134).


4. Approaches, p. 79.


6. Padraic Colum, Our Friend James Joyce, 122,123.


11 Approaches, p.42.

12 Approaches, pp. 49-50.

13 Approaches, p. 56.


15 Teller and Tale, p. 98.

16 Teller and Tale, p. 98.

17 Teller and Tale, p. 98.

18 Teller and Tale, p. 130.

19 Teller and Tale, p. 88.

20 Teller and Tale, p. 90.

21 Teller and Tale, pp. 88-89.

22 Teller and Tale, p. 79.

23 Teller and Tale, p. xv.

24 Quoted by Riquelme in Teller and Tale, pp. 89-90.

25 Teller and Tale, p. 115.
CHAPTER II
THE THREE LANGUAGE FORMS

In order to understand from a Vichian perspective, the appropriation of language as creation as found in *A Portrait*, some discussion of Vico's language theory is necessary. Even further, an understanding of the creative process -- as shown by Joyce through the person of Stephen and as expounded as theory by Vico -- is predicated first by an understanding of their use of the term "presence" and how such presences come to be "bearers of truth" in both Vichian language theory and in Stephen's developing consciousness.

To understand Vico's placement of these manifestations or presences in the development of language, some discussion of his three language forms (divine, heroic, human) and their corresponding "ages" is necessary. Vico saw that, historically, the order of human institutions follows the natural order of language; the evolution of one is also the development of the other. In the *New Science*, he traces this movement, beginning with earliest man.¹

**Divine Language:**

According to Vico, early man (of the divine age) was rich in imagination, but he was also "lost in ignorance" and, of necessity, made himself the measure of all things (*NS* 120). The first men perceived nature as having passion as they, themselves, had passion (*NS* 180, 186, 220, 404, 1098, etc.) For these individuals, passions and practices were not separate; what was felt, was also established in lasting practices. For
example, Vico describes the first men as finding the divine presence of God as the sky, who spoke to them in thunder and lightning. In their terror, they took refuge in caves, dragging with them the women with whom they wished to copulate away from the eyes of God. This is what is known by Vico as their certain or established practices, i.e. a more settled way of life -- a home place, the institution of marriage and so on. That which profoundly moved them, that which had "presence," was taken by them as expression: the fierce thunder storm was not "rain" or "lightning" rather, their experience was that "The sky was angry; God speaks in thunder."

For both Vico and Joyce, the ability to profoundly experience the movement of the divine as felt "presence" was available to ancient man (and, potentially, to modern man). This openness to such presences is seen in Stephen (A Portrait) in his acknowledgement to Cranley that there are things in his experience to which he must only respond on the grounds of powerful "feeling." Stephen, in attempting to make Cranley see why he [Stephen] will not take communion, can only explain his refusal on the grounds of fear:

--I fear many things: dogs, horses, firearms, the sea, thunderstorms, machinery, the country roads at night.

--But why do you fear a bit of bread?

--I imagine, Stephen said, that there is a malevolent reality behind those things I say I fear. (243) [My emphasis]

In the Wake, the fact of connection to Vico's primordial thunder by the thunderwords is agreed, but here is the same primordial connection already in A Portrait and, surely, ripe for interpretation and for the question "why" that probes beyond the fact of influence to investigate its nature. We find in Stephen those same "frightful practices," that Vico found in men of the divine age: practices arising out of the intense emotion of fright. (NS 183, 1098)
**Heroic Language:**

Stephen, as a child of the modern world, must communicate his thoughts and feelings through the spoken word. According to Vico, the first humans of the divine age, attempting to communicate what which profoundly moved them, necessarily gesticulated or imitated nature, i.e. the magical thunderbolt symbol:

Thus the first language in the first mute times of the nations must have been with signs, whether gestures or physical objects, which had natural relations to the ideas [to be expressed]. (NS 401)

These first children of the human race, not being able to form intelligible class concepts of things, had a natural need to create poetic characters. Whereas the first men of the divine age responded to the divine expression by straightforward action (i.e. running to their caves), when the divine interpretation was recast as heroic, men enacted these scenes in the heroic expression of mimesis. By imitation and dramatic gesture, expression of the divine was achieved in heroic forms. In this way, the heroic age came into being.

Vico referred to early men's practices as "fearful" or "frightful" practices and gave examples of their corresponding heroic forms -- forms that modified the primordial fear. For example, the divine Jove was now expressed as an an eagle. In this way, an heroic forefront overlaid the receding divine world -- issuing in the heroic age, where the heroic form of language (Vico's second "mute" language) dominated men's imaginations. This does not mean that the divine language was obliterated; rather, that the divine ceased to be the dominant form of language. Jove, in a sense, became smaller. As the divine Jove took on the more particular shape of the eagle, more refined practices of settled life prospered. The hero, dressed in his robes decorated, perhaps, with the thunderbolt and eagle, held the auspices in settling disputes and represented the Vichian archetype or "group consciousness." Stephen's
still more refined interpretation of "fearful presences," i.e. the "bit of bread" of communion, recapitulates this genesis in articulate prose (human language.)

**Human Language:**

The heroic, arising as mimetic interpretation of the divine, was interpreted, in its turn, and had its own form of creation, found in their lasting practices. Just as Stephen "divined" the host -- felt its terrifying presence, interpreted its meaning and placed the interpretation in the context of practice (the refusal to take communion) -- so also did the men of old. The difference between Stephen and the men of the heroic age, is that while Stephen relies on the heroic (that felt first as presence and then placed in an embodied form: thunder, dogs, etc.) -- he must communicate with Cranley through human, articulate language.

According to Vico, in men's earliest times, the poetic character (Jove) preceded the human word. The consciousness of the poetic was not separate from the "thing," for these men, no abstract relationship existed between the poetic character (the sign and later the word signifying the sign) of the thunder god and the god himself: Rather, Vico finds:

... that first language ... was not a language in accord with the nature of the things it dealt with ... but was a fantastic speech making use of physical substances endowed with life and most of them imagined to be divine. (NS 401)

For early man, "poetic characters ... explained everything appertaining to the sky, the earth and the sea ... denoting all flowers, for instance by Flora" (NS 402) Thus, Vichian theory holds that man first spoke in poetic language, not prose:

The nations formed the poetic language, composed of divine and heroic characters, later expressed in vulgar speech (human) and finally written in vulgar characters. (NS 456)

These first children of the human race experienced the world as divine -- the experience was the language. There was no separation in their experience of the
divine as separate from the world: the world was the body of God. For Vico, humans experienced the divine first as a presence, without reflection, but later interpreted and related given presences to other presences, forming poetic universals. In this use of language, men are not changing the meaning, but changing their relationship to the meaning in order to appropriate it and manipulate it. We find this in Joyce's naming of his protagonist "Stephen Dedalus." The Stephen of the novel is the creation, the son (Icarus) that addresses the "Old father, old artificer" at the end of the book. Yet, he is also the "creator," the Greek "Dedalus" known to them as the keeper of the creative principle. Riquelme comments on this same phenomenon, but in reference to Joyce:

For Ovid, Daedalus and Icarus are separate. For Joyce they are not. Stephen as character and as narrator is both the immature and the mature artist, both Icarus and Daedalus. 2

Joyce's use of "Dedalus" does not suggest "comparison," as shown by his notation in a Zurich notebook: "Metaphor prefer to comparison. Comparison makes folks wait and tells you only what something is like." 3 Vico stated:

Thus the mythologies . . . must have been the proper language of the fables; the fables being imaginative class concepts . . . the mythologies must have been the allegories corresponding to them. (NS 403)

All the first tropes are corollaries of this poetic logic. The most luminous and therefore the most necessary and frequent is metaphor. It is most praised when it gives sense and passion to insensate things . . . . Thus every metaphor so formed is a fable in brief. (NS 404)

Joyce says, "is like," the implication being that Joyce's tendency was to use metaphor in a Vichian sense. The movement of the divine in the process of creation, for Joyce, is not "like" something else. Rather, the movement of the divine in the process of creation is creation. The divine, first taken as expression, is then interpreted, and is finally manifest in the creation -- that the divine is expressed in the formation of the passional life, in the formation of the artist, as it were. The process of creation for Joyce is the creation of the artist. The revelatory quality of the universal is for Vico
the verisimilitude of the divine language as understood through the creative process. Only in this way can sense be made of Stephen’s being both father and son, creator and the created. Truth is not taken by either Joyce or Vico to be static, but is revealed only through the process that creates.

Like the men of the heroic age, Stephen begins to form similar poetic universals. The things of his imagination, developed in part through his reading, i.e. The Count of Monte Cristo, were beginning to signify not just random characters from a book but whole categories in his imagination: “The figure of the dark avenger stood forth in his mind for whatever he had heard or divined in childhood of the strange and the terrible.” (62) This is but the uncertain and crude beginning that later becomes certainty through action in Stephen’s refusal to take communion (the conversation with Cranley referred to earlier in this chapter).

Vico’s view is that these three language forms have been found together from the beginning:

We must establish this principle: that as gods, heroes and letters began at the same time (for they were, after all, men who imagined the gods and believed their own heroic nature to be a mixture of the divine and human natures), so these three languages began at the same time, each having its letters, which developed along with it. They began, however, with these three very great differences: that the language of the gods was almost entirely mute, only very slightly articulate; the language of the heroes, an equal mixture of articulate and mute, and consequently of vulgar speech and of the heroic characters used in writing by the heroes ... the language of men, almost entirely articulate and only very slightly mute. (NS 446)

In Vichian theory poetry preceded prose. It is not without significance that Stephen in his “becoming” an artist first concentrates on the “villanelle” prior to his writing of the prose diary entries with which the book ends. As Jane Harris points out in her study of the autobiographical mode, and here specifically in reference to A Portrait.

The diary entries which conclude the text represent the more mature artist’s judgement on the rigidity of the formally enunciated esthetic of the dialogue
and express the inspiration of the new found freedom, demanding that the artist continue his quest because the living esthetic can not be frozen.4

Harris refers to Stephen's discussion with his classmates on aesthetics. While Harris is correct in her assessment that Stephen's diary notations mark a turning point in his practices, she does not understand the true significance of the entire section in the novel on aesthetics (pp. 204-215). I shall discuss the section on aesthetics more fully in Chapter IV.

Speech followed the mute languages "when the so-called articulate languages were invented, it [speech] advanced to ideas made certain by spoken formulae" (NS 1045). Vico stated that these early men, in their need to communicate, mimicked in sound that which passionately moved them: "At the same time that the divine character of Jove took shape . . . articulate language began to develop by way of onomatopoeia" (NS 447). For example, they mimicked the sounds of thunder and lightning (Zeus = Greek's whistle of lightning). This is not like the present situation, Vico tells us, whereby when we wish to articulate our understanding of spiritual things, "we must seek aid from our imagination to explain them and, like painters, form human images of them" (NS 402).

In the Portrait, when Stephen tries to understand the words of the litany, "Tower of Ivory . . . House of Gold," (35) in connection to the Virgin Mary, there is nothing in his experience where both word and image can be connected: "How could a woman be a tower of ivory or a house of gold?" (35). It is only when he unites a real girl's image with the words, that the words come to have meaning:

Eileen had long thin cool white hands . . . They were like ivory . . . That was the meaning of Tower of Ivory ... Her fair hair had streamed out behind her like gold in the sun. Tower of Ivory. House of Gold. By thinking of things you could understand them. (42-43) [my emphasis]
Stephen must make the words live by overlaying them with the heroic image of a real
girl of his experience. And, it is only by interpretation that includes reflection that
Stephen binds together image and word. The words of the litany are empty vessels for
Stephen until his own powers of reflective thinking endow them with meaning, an
interpretation fully achieved and brought to definite practices only on the literate
page.

According to Vico, in the beginning, the divine tends to preponderate. Vico
spoke prophetically. He threatened that we were entering a new age of degeneracy of
human language and somewhat incoherently promised salvation in his terms of a
present return to old ways. Joyce did not follow this scheme, but variously
appropriated it. He was freed to divest the prose of human excess, and thus assumed in
his art a balance of human, heroic and divine factors. Joyce found the material for
redemption of language sufficiently in his own life and the Dublin of his times. The
men in the heroic age made the sky God small, and appropriated Him as the eagle of
their own auspices. Joyce reduced Dedalus to the small figure of Stephen, found in the
personal memoirs of a young man growing up in Dublin and, in this way, issued in his
own distinctive practice of literature.

The movement of Joyce's language in A Portrait has been commented on
(without reference to Vichian theory) by Marguerite Harkness:

He [Stephen] is . . . creating his own language pattern that supplies the words
with the meaning he wishes to communicate. . . . He begins with sounds; later
layers of meaning (e.g. bell, 9) . . . as well as rhyme (8), poetry (10), and
onomatopoeia (suck, 11).

Harkness suffers here all the embarrassments of the too human Stephen Hero. When
Joyce was writing Stephen Hero, he was in a heroic relationship to the fully human
novelist he was to become. Harkness as the critic stands in this same immature stage of
development; she gets a picture or image (heroic form) of what is happening in the
novel in her imagination, but has no way of bringing it into fruition in her prose form. Her aspiration, the desire found to develop "upwards" in her criticism, overshadows her practices -- any full sense of meaning is lost by the deficits in her own use of language. Less important is the error in her statement that Stephen is "creating" his own language; only late in the novel do we find Stephen's conscious attempts to create his own language. Rather, this is Joyce creating.

According to Vico, a "felt presence" is taken humanly (comes into dominance) first as expression, is then interpreted and finally acted on in certain and sustainable practices. This movement is characterized by three stages or "moments": (1) expression, (2) interpretation and (3) creation. These stages are never clearly articulated by either Vico or Joyce as specifically the human process. They are evident to criticism only after the actual formation process has been completed. In Vichian theory, and as shown by Joyce in *A Portrait*, the distinctly human act of creation is never arrived at until these stages have been completed and issue in their lasting practices.

The following chart shows the three language forms, their relative positions (dominant, secondary or tertiary) in each of Vico's "ages," and the relationship they hold to each stage in the process of creation. The heroic and divine languages are mute languages; only the human language form is articulate.

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The value of Vico's divine and heroic ages must be left to reconstructive historians and ethnologists to decide. Literature's autonomy also means that it must be left finally with the writer and the language and the page. My claim is that the critic, likewise situated, follows the human order of expression, interpretation and creation: the text, then some grammar (in this case, Vico's) and then their actual practices.

The corso/ricorso as commonly understood is simply an offshoot of this distinct Vichian position. The notion of repetition depends on the surface theory, understood before Henseler as being simply "cyclical." However, critics have relied on a superficial understanding of the cycles with no comprehension that in each age the structures of the past are present in the structures of the present. Vico's theory relied on the understanding that while a particular language form dominated the other two forms, the excluded forms were found at other levels. For example, human language's tendency in the human age is to exclude both the divine and heroic from the initial stage of the creative process, that stage we have come to know as "expression." However, the heroic language form is found to be present in the human age at the second stage of the process -- "interpretation." And the divine language form is found in the human age at the third stage of the process -- "creation." The idea of the corso/ricorso depends entirely on the deeper nature of Vico's underlying theory that allows these different permutations within each age.

Joyce, with his propensity for things musical, would have understood this domination of certain language forms within each age just as certain themes, having somewhat distinct stages of development, tend to dominate at various times in a fugue. The themes are often carried by different voices or parts in turn and gradually build up into a rather complex form.

The theory also explains Joyce's rejection of those of his contemporaries who were intent on pursuing the ancient Irish myth, the pursuit of the dead "certum" in
Irish literature. It was not that he failed to see the process out of which myth was created; rather, he saw that attempts to sink oneself forever in the dead past were simply ossification, a going-back that killed true creativity in an age that was capable of being informed by reflection, or in Vichian terms, "fully human." 6

What we must understand is that, for both Vico and Joyce, images don't express prior feelings; rather, the individual is arrested by a presencing that will come to be interpreted later. Stephen's inarticulate cries, when he is in the grip of a powerful presence, are very like the first cries of primitive man trying to express the movement of emotion:

He felt some dark presence moving irresistibly upon him from the darkness, a presence subtle and murmurous as a flood filling him wholly with itself .... and the cry he had strangled for so long in his throat issued from his lips ... a cry which was but the echo of an obscene scrawl which he had read on the oozing wall of a urinal. (99-100)

We find all three language forms alive and moving in Stephen's consciousness: the divine as "presence" (divine language-mute), being recast in heroic images (heroic language-mute) and, hence, recast again in human language through Stephen's thoughts and speech (articulate - the writing found in the novel). For example, what Stephen first feels at the level of profound feeling, he must next interpret. He transfers the feeling to the unspecified and "unsubstantial" form of Mercedes, a vaguely heroic form described only as an "image," but dredged up in his consciousness and dominated by the language describing her in the novel he has read. (64) He further attempts to overlay this interpretation with the form of Emma in heroic personification; but his heroic images of her are those of the female as elevated or fallen (the heroic forms of the female of the Catholic church -- Mary, the Madonna, or Mary Magdalene, the prostitute (the "Hairy Mary" of Irish street talk). Finally, the fully human is the divine language personified in the prosaically actual: the girl on the Strand. This "vision," this unnamed, but "real" girl on the beach, epitomizes this
wordly embodiment where the divine achieves dominance without dominating the other two language forms. She is the female, for Stephen, through which all forms run: divine, heroic and human. She is part of the physical world; yet, there is about her image that which stirs and makes present for Stephen the divine. But she is also heroic; she remains an "image" that overlays heroically without dominating the divine character, the divine language of the felt presence. And yet the whole scene is described through the medium of human language without it, too, attaining dominance overall. This is Joycean balance; the critic finds the process in the text from the off-balance anticipations to the fully realized creation.

Richard Peterson has argued that Joyce uses an Aristotelian narrative form of the novel in *A Portrait*, stating that Stephen's soul has to be expressed through his own living body. However, Stephen's language development throughout the novel and Joyce's appropriation of the "mute" language of the body can hardly be viewed as less than "Vichian." Aristotle's embodied form or active principle in the thing will happily equate to two Vichean principles, but Vico shares with us the distinctly human consciousness of active principle and thing as codeterminants with human language. Aristotle is too heroic for us or, if you prefer, we are too human for him. Aristotle says, "Man is the rational animal." But Aristotle's principle of reason has split for us into human language on the side of the observer and the moving principle on the side of the observed. The moving principle in Stephen is creation, not reason, and this is why he sees something in the girl on the beach with which neither Aristotle, nor Peterson presumably, is spiritually comfortable.

Joyce is attempting to realize of the full values of the mute languages. This gives a balance to his prose and sets his aesthetic goal. For example, embodiment in the novel is always connected with regeneration; disembodiment is connected only to images generally recognized as frozen in one stage in the life cycle: death.
At this point, we can see where we have passed beyond Vico and his philosophy. What is now brought into view is the way the Vichian language forms are brought into balance and given their full value within the human age, with Joyce achieving the balance within the medium of the present. This balance forms the Joycean aesthetic and is accessed for the reader of Joyce by the reconstructive track referred to here as expression, interpretation and creation. In the remainder, I will explore the more dynamic requirement of the aesthetic. I believe A Portrait can be fruitfully read as narrative that proceeds in terms of bringing elements into balance, but, in order to do so, involves further out-of.balance elements. These out-of-balance elements need to be brought into balance in turn. My view is that Joyce's prose style explores its theme by following out this type of progression -- with A Portrait (the first and simplest of Joyce's major works) seen as his first major exploration of this aesthetic method.

1 The New Science of Giambattista Vico (Ithaca, New York: Cornell Univ. Press, 1944). All direct quotations from the main body of Vico's book will be noted in the text of this study by section number as illustrated in the following form: NS 110.

2 Teller and Tale. p. 63.


6 According to Fisch and Bergin, editors of the New Science, for Vico the thought of modern men differed from that of men of the "divine" or "heroic" ages because these modern men were "enlightened by fully developed natural reason." In my thesis, it is in this context that the term "fully human" shall be used.
CHAPTER III

AUTOBIOGRAPHY: THE PERSONAL RICORSO

If we choose to examine Joyce's first complete novel in this light, keeping in mind the three language forms, one will see why Joyce did not use the original title, Stephen Hero, for his later work, A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man. In the title, Stephen Hero, one sees only a mention of the hero with little suggestion of the artist or "creator." Since the word "hero" is the heroic couched in human language, Stephen as "Hero" is the movement from the human (Stephen) to the heroic (Hero). The larger suggestion of the poetic universal is, of course, found in the word "Hero," but with no suggestive tension whatever with the divine (the creative). The heroic, "incapable of reflection . . . creates or evokes the universal of the imagination, the phantastic universal."¹ It is not plausible that the young man of Stephen Hero could become a "hero," since it is through a hero's deeds that they become known. Also, the Stephen of Stephen Hero was indeed reflective within the novel and perhaps Joyce recognized this contradiction in the transition to A Portrait.

In the title, Stephen Hero, all we find is the movement from the human name to the expansion that would capture the heroic form, "hero." This leaves us with only two parts in balance (the heroic and the human) rather than the required three parts in balance (the divine, the heroic and the human). Joyce simply appropriates these three forms in the title of A Portrait and brings them into balance. The title of A Portrait distinctly acknowledged the divine in the word "Artist" and contains the notion of creation, i.e. a portrait, together with the notion of a creator, "The Artist."
heroic age, the highest form of art was the pictorial -- in painting, sculpture -- as found in the pictorial representation, a "Portrait." We find the human as an abstract concept: the words "Young Man." There is no heroic form or image to be found in "Young Man;" neither is there a suggestion of creation. Rather, there is only to be found here an abstract concept, modified by the word "as." Since it is the artist (Joyce) that is creating the title of his autobiographical work, the "as a Young Man," suggests the human (reflective) ability to know one has been in that condition. The "as" shows the power of the modern or "fully human" to reconstruct appearance from memory, an ability not found in men of the divine and heroic ages.

A "portrait" implies in Vichian terms an image which makes visible that which is unseen -- the artist -- and carries with it the idea of a manifestation of the divine. According to Vico, "When we wish to give utterance to our understanding of spiritual things, we must seek aid from our imagination to explain them and, like painters, form human images of them." (NS 402) The artist, for Joyce, holds the auspices of art in the same way the priest, for Vico, holds the auspices of religion:

... in keeping with the full meaning of ... the term 'divinity' ... from divinari, to divine, which is to understand what is hidden from men -- the future -- or what is hidden in them. (NS 342)

The artist, like the priest, interprets the divine, gives the divine communicable form and is the keeper of the creative principle. The artist in the human age is novelist -- for Joyce this was the highest form of art.

Joyce resolves the former problem of the modern hero in the progression from portrait/artist to a fully heroic embodiment as found in his later work, Ulysses. With the figure of Bloom, who is indeed a heroic figure corresponding to the figure in the title (Ulysses), we find a hero of the modern world equipped with human language, with the ability to reflect and presented to us in human language form -- the written
word -- without the human language form gaining dominance to the exclusion of the other two forms. Here, in the title, as in the book, the artist retreats. This placement of the artist in the work is significant in terms of the placement of the narrator in Joyce's works. As Riquelme points out:

The concept of the narrator has come in for much abuse in Joyce studies . . . Joyce's narration forces us to reconsider any unquestioned notions we may have about the narrator as a unified self and about narration as voice. . . . . Joyce's *narrator* and *teller* are in flux; they are not stable entities.

If Riquelme means stability to signify lack of movement, he is correct. If he means lack of purpose, he is wrong. Changes in relationship of narrator and artist are always purposeful in Joyce's work.

This movement is seen by William Noon in Joyce's work. He sees in the transition from *Stephen Hero* to *A Portrait* "a shift in the style from the simple narrative presentation to ingenious symbolic statement." He further comments on Joyce's later works:

Finally if we look ahead to *Exiles* and *Ulysses*, we notice an increasingly marked withdrawal on Joyce's part from the aesthetic engagement in which the youthful Stephen becomes involved.

What Noon fails to see is that Joyce has reached a point in his mastery of his own narrative form that corresponds to the location of narrator/artist. Because Joyce's aesthetic is contained within the later works themselves, the aesthetic no longer needs to be stated. The young artist, Stephen, being the aesthete that he is, must necessarily play with aesthetic theory, just as the artist in *A Portrait* must be visible (the novel is autobiographical after all).

This full significance is claimed by Joyce's writing his first major work as an autobiographical novel, a reflection of the process at work in "the work." As pointed out by Thomas Connolly, "*A Portrait* departed from the conventional lineal and consecutive narrative of the standard novel of the period." It is not to be inferred that
autobiography was a new form, rather what was innovative was Joyce's appropriation of the form. Joyce's own certainty is found in the boldness of beginning his mature artistic life with such a work, rather than ending his life with an autobiography.

In the *Portrait*, the "going-back" occurs first where it properly should -- at the very beginning. Much has been written concerning the opening pages of the novel, but I shall risk belaboring a point. This is indeed where the novelist travels back in order to meet himself, the personal ricorso: "This moo-cow...met a nicens little boy named baby tuckoo [Stephen]" (1). The "paradoxical return" that Henseler found in the *Wake* is the same return upon the reality of one's own life that Stephen writes of in his journal as he goes "to encounter for the millionth time the reality of experience" (253).

But we must look for fulfillment of the aesthetic balance within the language that Joyce uses from the beginning of the novel. Within the requirement of aesthetic balance, the heroic presence of the baby is deficient, not in human language (the name "baby tuckoo" is given), but in divine language. We must supply this to make the epiphanic moment -- the baby as created. If we look closely Joyce's prose suggests this completion in the neologism "nicens:" not just a little boy, but a "nicens" one. The word is created, filled with emotion: a "nice" one at that. This is Stephen's first "showing forth" or moment of epiphany.

In *Stephen Hero*, epiphany is a "sudden spiritual manifestation." In *A Portrait*, it is "radiance . . . a spiritual state very like to that cardiac condition . . . the enchantment of the heart." (213) In *Stephen Hero*, epiphany is not so much "shown" as it is described or defined. In *Stephen Hero*, Stephen states:

*I speak from my soul.*

-- *Soul?* (Cranley)

*Yes: from my soul, my spiritual nature.* (142)
In contrast with Peterson’s "Aristotelean" interpretation (previously discussed), we find over and over again in *A Portrait* the moment of epiphany portrayed as definitive presence for Stephen -- the heroic in relation to the divine, or as creation. Although William Noon sticks to abstract language, he sums up very well Joyce's complexity:

The complex experiments with language which are carried on in the later works of Joyce are part of Joyce’s effort to find what symbols at the verbal level, capable of interpreting the ineffable epiphanies of experience, and of making these "sudden spiritual manifestations" permanently available through words for the apprehension of other minds. 6

The deficiency in this quotation looks out at the reader through the term "ineffable," a name that Joyce, contrary to Noon, gives full value and content of its own by showing in mute language form (albeit written on the page in human language) that which is "not to be spoken" or "unutterable."

Throughout *A Portrait* runs the "language of the soul" -- repeated references to Stephen’s "soul" and its development as seen through Stephen’s consciousness. Elmann calls this development, “the process of gestation” and describes the process running through the novel (296-299) 7 One also finds, in the novel, a close connection to the language of the soul and the epiphanic moment. Much has been written about Joyce’s use of the epiphany. William Noon calls Gabriel’s epiphany in "The Dead," the "radiant moment of insight." 8 Morris Beja’s "working definition" of the epiphany is a:

...sudden spiritual manifestation, whether from some object, scene, event or memorable phase of the mind -- the manifestation being out of proportion to the significance or strictly logical relevance of whatever produces it." 9

Beja views the epiphany as the source of true knowledge perceived through the imagination. Generally, these views are consistent and accepted among Joyce critics and remain close to the definition of epiphany as set forth in *Stephen Hero*. "...a sudden spiritual manifestation, whether in the vulgarity of speech or gesture or in a memorable phase of the mind itself" (211).
One can view the sudden spiritual manifestation felt first in the emotions as the normal form of the mute divine language in human times. What speaks to Stephen in mute form (discussed more fully in the following chapters) is the most powerful bearer of truth in the novel. It is certainly one of the most effective narrative devices that Joyce employs in *A Portrait* and what is regularly effective cannot be condemned syntactically as "not strictly logical" (Beja) nor reduced to semantic vacuity as "ineffable" (Peterson). This is the truth that speaks fully at last to Stephen on the beach; this is "nicens" now fully realized in the process of the book. If we search for a hint of the artist's discovery of the connection, we find it:

> He heard a confused music within him as of memories and names which he was almost conscious of but could not capture even for an instant ... to recede, to recede, to recede ... Again! Again! Again! (167)

The going-back is accomplished by the artist who understands the common, but unformed source in baby tuckoo: a present and also universal origin revealed through the epiphanic moment.

With this appropriation of present origins, Joyce rejected the literary vogue in Ireland, the "Celtic Revival," of his time -- a movement that identified with the second heroic age in Irish mythology and that romanticized past ages and peasant life.

Stephen looks upon the "droll statue of the national poet of Ireland," thinking:

> ... though sloth of the body and soul crept over it like unseen vermin, over the shuffling feet and up the folds of the cloak and around the servile head, it seemed humbly conscious of its indignity. (180)

As early as 1904, Joyce was expounding views that denied a creative movement frozen in the past and foreshadowed the beginning lines of *A Portrait*:

> The features of infancy are not commonly reproduced in the adolescent portrait for, so capricious are we, that we cannot or will not conceive the past in any other than its iron, memorial aspect. Yet the past assuredly implies a fluid succession of presents, the development of an entity of which our actual present is but a phase only. 10
Here we have Joyce's own problem that Vichian language theory did not by any means solve, but helped Joyce to dissolve in his creation of *A Portrait* by "stripping away" the fat from the heavy apparatus and abstract "false" consciousness that permeated *Stephen Hero*.

An autobiography implies self-reflection; similarly, the "coming-to-be" is always a subsequent self-interpretation. What is at work in this process as found in *A Portrait* are powers that address one ambiguously; and only after interpretation can the full significance and "truth-bearing" power be known. This is not an abstract formation, but is ontological in nature. Joyce's remark that "a portrait is not an identificative paper but rather the curve of an emotion" is a late interpretation -- the power to determine one's own practices. The "Young Man" is not yet an artist, but has only his certainty of direction. Stephen's original sense of uncertainty found in the novel -- his difficulty in asserting himself -- was because the self to be asserted was not yet fully formed. He was not sure who he was; however, by the end of the novel, we find Stephen "acting" with certainty. The "Artist" of the title points forward, leaving room for the mature (human) novelist, but the portrait of an artist (the implication being all artists) completes the heroic phase (the archetype being all artists).

Stephen's certainty is more particularly this general certainty of being an artist, achieved, at least by the time the portrait is finished. Stephen is hardly the mature artist that we find in the Joyce who writes the novel. The truth of what Stephen has become and is also "becoming" is found in what he does -- the lasting practices abundantly clear by the end of the book are those generalities by which any young man is well-launched, but not yet a particular artist. To live one's life in a way that has vitalized the heroic practices required that the personal ricorso must be performed by Stephen, and any artist, over and over again in each generation. As explained by Henseler, the true ricorso was "the act of mind's descent into its cultural past to retrieve
the vivifying powers of an earlier time for present use." And this is Stephen's journey that is completed within the novel.


2 *Teller and Tale*, p. 246.

3 *Joyce and Aquinas*, (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1957) p. 34.

4 *Joyce and Aquinas*, p. 35.


6 *Joyce and Aquinas*, p. 70.


8 *Joyce and Aquinas*, p. 70.


12 *Vico's Doctrine*, p. 45.
For Joyce, expression without passion did not lead to true creation: "There cannot be any substitute for the individual passions as the motive power of everything."¹ In Joyce's very early critical writings, we find him attempting to deal with the question of the viable in art as early as 1900:

The great human comedy, in which each has a share ... The form of things, as the earth's crust, are changed .... But the deathless passions, the human verities which so found expression then, are indeed deathless.²

Other theorists have attempted to deal with the problem of defining the process of creativity in their theories of art. However, when we look at such theories through an understanding of Vico, we can see not only what is unique to Vico, but also what is unique in Joyce's appropriation of Vico's thought.

Vico felt that early men created, aided by the powers of their imagination, first through mimesis:

All the arts of the necessary, the useful, the convenient ... were invented in the poetic centuries before the philosophers came, for the arts are nothing but imitations of nature and in a certain way 'real' poems [made not of words but of things]. (NS 217)

However, Vico's aesthetic theory is mimetic only for people of the divine and heroic ages. For modern humanity, a strictly mimetic theory would mean that artists would simply be making copies of what had come before -- imitation of the "certum" of literature. What must enter into the process of creativity for humans who are "fully human" is their ability to reflect -- an informed and interpreted mimetic.
In order to see the closeness of Joyce's theory of creation as found within the novel -- revealed both within and by its entirety -- and Vico's theory of creation, we must see the manner in which their theories differ from other theories. Other theorists have held views that include both the notion of "man as maker" and creation as founded upon the "imagination." Benedetto Croce's work, known to Joyce (as Vico was also known to Croce), best exemplifies artistic theories of the "imagination." While it can be said that Joyce does take up with views that are similar to Croce's idea of man as "maker" and that what is created is always a spiritual creation, these views were not unique to either Croce or Joyce (or even to Vico). One can trace these views as far back as Augustine: "The invisible things of God are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made." The problem here with other theories is their neglect of the second step in the process of creation -- interpretation by reflection.

Theories of art, such as Croce's, that only go as far as arriving at the "expressive" stage in the creative formation process fail to take the further, and necessary, step from which true creation emerges and from which the work is derived. By not understanding the historical formation process, these artistic theorists construct their own "pseudo-myths." When the ideal is viewed as being somehow separate from what is real and moving in the creative process that issues in practices, theories of art arise that tend to propogate notions of "art for art's sake." Such views tend to look at the universal as that being "above and beyond" the mundane world. On the other hand, when art is viewed as strictly mimetic -- creation as taken with no view to process at all -- one finds theories that tell us, "A rose is a rose is a rose." This notion would have us view a multitude of given presences simply as multitude of given presences.

Croce, however, commits neither of these errors when he states, "Every true intuition or representation is also expression." There are two forms of knowledge,
Croce tells us in the beginning pages of *Aesthetics*: intuitive and logical. Intuitive knowledge is obtained through the imagination, grants knowledge of the individual, of individual things and produces images. Logical knowledge, on the other hand, is acquired through the intellect, gives knowledge of the universal, of relations, of relationships between things and produces concepts. He states, "To intuite is to express; and nothing less (nothing more, but nothing less) than to express." Like others before and after him, Croce sees expression of the ideal as the final movement of creation, leaving out altogether the interpretive stage as either unimportant or not necessary to artistic formation.

Joyce rejected an aesthetic that was strictly mimetic. He also (like Vico) abandoned the rationalistic theories of creativity of their time in order to adopt a theory to which the essence of creativity is imagination, passion, sense rather than intellect. But, for Joyce the process also included reflection, a uniting through the moving process of the two forms of knowledge that Croce held separate. In *A Portrait*, we find Stephen attempting an explanation, for Lynch, of his views on truth and beauty through an emphasis on understanding:

> To speak of these things and to try to understand their nature and, having understood it, to try slowly and humbly and constantly to express, to press out again, from the gross earth or what it brings forth, from sound and shape and colour which are the prison gates of our soul, an image of the beauty we have come to understand -- that is art. (206)

The understanding Stephen describes is not that which comes and remains constant, but an understanding that must constantly be pursued -- a ricorso-like process that must be repeated not once, but over and over again. The process moves; the only static thing in the movement found by Stephen is the "esthetic emotion." (205) And that emotion is experienced in the moment of "arrest." (205) And that moment (Stephen explains to Lynch) must be understood.
Lynch fails to grasp the significance of what Stephen is saying and asks for "definitions" of art and beauty, ignoring the "process" that Stephen pursues. Stephen then approaches the subject by way of understanding and comprehension:

The first step in the direction of truth is to understand the frame and scope of the intellect itself, to comprehend the act itself of intellection. The first step in the direction of beauty is to understand the frame and scope of the imagination, to comprehend the act itself of esthetic apprehension. (208)

The "act itself of esthetic apprehension" and "the frame and scope of the imagination" can be viewed as being the ephipanic moment, in this case the moment when one is profoundly moved at the level of feeling, at the level of imagination -- in other words, the first step in the process of creation: experience taken as expression. Stephen is saying that one must next attempt to interpret what has been framed in the imagination. Stephen, like Joyce, did not use words carelessly. "Apprehension" here is used in its historical sense, "to seize." Simply, Stephen attempts to make Lynch understand that one must comprehend that which is "captured."

However, again Lynch does not understand and asks for a definition of beauty (208). In a final attempt to communicate to his fellow students that which is different in his own theory of esthetics, Stephen grounds their thought in a general theory known to them all (Aquinas). It is at this point that Stephen departs from the established theory of Aquinas, stating:

Mac Alister ... would call my esthetic theory applied Aquinas. So far as this side [the confines of the discussion -- the attributes of beauty, truth] of esthetic philosophy extends Aquinas will carry me all along the line. When we come to the phenomena of artistic conception, artistic gestation and artistic reproduction I require a new terminology and a new personal experience. (209)

Aquinas' criteria, as stated by Stephen, are "integritas, consonantia, claritas" (212) -- unity, harmony and clarity. Stephen moves on clarity and converts it to radiance: "wholeness, harmony and radiance." (212). Radiance is not Aquinas' term but is uniquely Stephen's. The first two terms used by Stephen and Aquinas are congruent.
However, Aquinas' term "clarity," conveys only "clearness" with a suggestion of its Latin root "brightness." Stephen's use of "radiance" carries with it not only a sense of "brightness," but also a state of glowing energy. Stephen refers to the "fading coal" of Shelley (213). The "moment" of the epiphany is when this "clear radiance of the esthetic image is apprehended luminously by the mind which has been arrested . . ." (213) [my emphasis] The instant is silent and static; the image is charged with the warmth found within the word, "radiance."

His fellow students fail utterly to see the radical significance of Stephen's hypothesis and departure from Aquinas' theory. (Somewhat in the same way that some critics, i.e. William Noon, have failed to see that Joyce's writing of this episode was not misunderstood Aquinian theory, but was intentional.) Stephen's "playing" with Aquinas' theory constitutes an intentional reappropriation of medieval theory. In Stephen's conversion of clarity into radiance, he expresses his own version of "felt presence" or "epiphany." The epiphany defined by Stephen is the felt and mute presence of the divine made manifest in (heroic and mute) expression. Stephen's theory of the "enchantment of the heart" (213,217) is an aesthetic that allows human language to undercut its own tendencies of domination and exclusion of the heroic/divine on behalf of creativity. Stephen's "radiance" returns us to the divine and heroic in their mute balance. "Clarity" signifies a lack of return that quickly presses on toward comprehension or "clearness," making the goal the merely human and abstractive intellect found in the philosophic.

However, Stephen's conversation -- the explication of his aesthetic -- cannot be disassociated from what Joyce does in the narrative to show the fullness of the aesthetic that runs throughout the book. The debate in the criticism has run "Is Stephen's theory also Joyce's theory?" Well, yes it is; but not in isolation. Joyce's aesthetic balance is achieved, not shown simply through Stephen's words, but is shown
heroically in the narrated life of Stephen, presented by the artist (Joyce) in human language -- the written words of the novel. That which Joyce shows outside Stephen's conversations must be taken together with what occurs through the entire narrative - - not simply as a theory reflected through the human language spoken by Stephen. But Joyce's aesthetic must be taken as it is shown by the inclusive presence of all three language forms moving through the narrative. Each time Stephen reaches a point in the discussion where understanding might break through to Lynch, a disturbance from the ordinary world breaks the continuity:

-- The appearance of a "fat young man, wearing a silk neckcloth" (210)
-- "A long dray laden with old iron . . . the harsh roar of jangled and rattling metal." (209)
-- "A fine rain began to fall . . . . The rain fell faster. (215)
-- "Some girls stood near the entrance door." (215)

The divine/heroic intrudes in their mute form: the "harsh roar" (like thunder), the silent "rain," the human images. Vico felt that "Poetic truth is metaphysical truth, and physical truth which is not in conformity with it should be considered false." (NS 205) Stephen seems to be somewhat aware of this in his comments to Lynch, "We are all animals. I also am an animal. . . . But we are just now in a mental world." (26-207) Lynch, however, seems threatened by the dichotomy. As the noisy dray passes, he "closed his ears and gave oath after oath. Then he turned on his heel rudely." (209) Joyce's introduction of disturbances from the life world into the narrative tends to undercut the human language which dominates Lynch's mind as it dominated Aquinas' (and still threatens to dominate Stephen) at the expense of the actuality of the divine and heroic. Similary, Stephen's point of departure ("radiance," which may be taken as the key to the mundane) signifies his certainty that articulate (human) language must not undercut the divine, but must return on profoundly experience, and found
presences. But Lynch, seeking the clarity of definition, the devices exemplary of human language vanity, helplessly places the truth of the physical world beyond the life world itself.

The full significance of the section in the novel on aesthetic theory is (1) Stephen's repeated insistence upon an artistic theory that includes the full process of expression, interpretation and creation; and, (2) the repeated and persistent intrusion in the narrative of the divine, cast in the heroic form, when human language threatens to dominate and obscure the other two language forms.


3 Croce's Aesthetic was first published in English in 1909.


6 Aesthetics, p. 8.

7 Aesthetics, p. 11.
The tendency for human language dominance to divide the natural from the supernatural -- the world/spirit split -- is shown in the novel as a form of death, carrying with it a sense of "falseness." In the novel, it is this out-of-balance element that must be brought back into balance. In the Portrait, we find Stephen confronting over and over again those things which threaten to separate the physical (the life world) from the soul (the divine). While Stephen is open to "presences" very early in his experience, the truth of these presences -- epiphanies -- can only be read in retrospect and verified only by (and through) the certainty of Stephen's lasting practices. The things that finally issue in these practices arise first out of Stephen's being profoundly moved, and are only later interpreted together with other given presences. More often than not, the "presencing" found in the novel is a dark one. By watching the movement and development of these presences throughout the novel, we can come to read them as harbingers of those things that Stephen finally chooses to accept or reject.

It is not so much the institutions of his time that Stephen comes to reject; rather, the deadness he sees and comes to reject is found in the individuals representing the institutions. Stephen does not reject the life that flowed through and created what had been handed down to him from the past:

The crises and victories and secessions in Roman history were handed on to him in trite words in tanto discrimine and he had tried to peer into the social life of the city of cities through the words implere ollam denarium which the rector had rendered sonorously as the filling of a pot with denaries. The pages of his
timeworn Horace never felt cold to the touch even when his own fingers were cold: they were human pages: and fifty years before they had been turned by the human fingers of John Duncan Inverarity and by his brother, William Malcolm Inverarity. Yes, those were noble names on the dusky flyleaf and, even for so poor a Latinist as he, the dusky verses were as fragrant as though they had lain all those years in myrtle and lavender and vervain; but it wounded him to think that he would never be but a shy guest at the feast of the world's culture and that the monkish learning, in terms of which he was striving to forge out an esthetic philosophy, was held no higher by the age he lived in than the subtle and curious jargons of heraldry and falconry. (pp.179-80)

This is the ricorso in its best aspects: the making present in the present the "dead" certainty of the ancient world. The sense of life that Stephen feels rising from the pages of his book is created partially through his knowledge of and feeling of kinship to previous Irish readers. These were real people who had lived real lives. Stephen's sense of "community" is not marred here; there is in his understanding a continuity between past and present.

Stephen is appalled by his teachers' lack of feeling toward what they teach. Joyce saw the dangers of human language dominating people's consciousness with no connection to nor knowledge of the language's ontology. That is, like Vico, Joyce saw that when the divine ceases to be felt, life ceases to be formative. For words to acquire their full potential, speakers of a language must have some understanding of where the words came from -- their history. In Stephen's conversation with the Dean of the college, who is attempting to recruit Stephen for the priesthood, the priest (an Englishman) fails to recognize the old English word "tundish," thinking it an Irish word since it was used by Stephen. Stephen thinks: "His language, so familiar and so foreign, will always be for me an acquired speech. I have not made or accepted its words..." (189) (my emphasis). He sees a man ignorant of his past, even of the words of his own race, a man for whom language is dead.
When Stephen prepares to leave for France, he knows what he will do will somehow be connected to his love of words: "Words. Was it their colours?" (166) These are his certain practices. He is in the process of becoming an artist -- an artist whose world only allows language that creates. Stephen first expresses what he feels of the divine through images, but then must pass to interpretation of these presences in order to arrive at creation. This process culminates in the confidence we find in Stephen's statement near the end of the book, "I am not afraid to make a mistake, even a great mistake, a lifelong mistake and perhaps as long as eternity too." (247)

In the scene with the Dean, Stephen thrice discovers the dean's ignorance of his own -- English -- language and its subtleties (187-189). The Dean doesn't see the full significance or potential of the word "lamp" as Stephen uses the word metaphorically in connection to Aristotle and Aquinas as bringers of light. The Dean can only drone on and on about lamps in the usual sense of the word. The Dean, mired in the positivity of words, utterly fails to see the distinction Stephen makes regarding the word "detain." Stephen states:

I remember a sentence of Newman's in which he says of the Blessed Virgin that she was detained in the full company of the saints. The use of the word in the marketplace is quite different. I hope I am not detaining you.

--Not in the least, said the dean politely. (188)

Stephen's perception of the subtlety of Newman's usage -- the "holding in an elevated position" -- is totally lost upon the Dean. Not only is the priest ignorant of the word he uses, but of the words used by others -- including the great thinkers of the religion he is supposed to represent. Marvin Magalaner has commented on this scene, portions of which are found in Stephen Hero:

From a vignette of twenty-two lines in the earlier version, the incident is given a full eight pages in A Portrait. Many of the ingredients of the long colloquy in the later novel are scattered her and there throughout Stephen Hero but are not fused and given dramatic continuity by presentation in one episode.

1
Magalaner accounts for this difference by concentrating on the figure of the Dean. He represents "the Jesuits as an order . . . not merely the role of one dean of studies but of the imposing organization . . . the paralysis of the spiritual life . . . symbolically rendered." Magalaner neglects the emphasis that Joyce insists must be placed on language. The Dean is a Joycean archetype, symbolizing a keeper of the spiritual world gone dead under the positivity of words:

"My soul frets in the shadow of his language." (189)

Stephen's soul fretted in the presence of other "speakers" of language, also, and Joyce shows the mind/body split reflected through their use of language. For Joyce, language not only was capable of creating, but was capable of revealing the truth of its speaker. The sheer volume of the preachings found in Chapter III of the novel (pp. 108-135) is not inserted simply to show what was perpetrated upon the young men's psyches by the priests. Rather, Joyce illustrates here the use of language by men whose daily existence was a struggle to remove themselves from the physical realities of their bodies (and for whom the divine was a frozen form). Similarly, but in opposition to these "keepers of the auspices" are the speakers of "soft language" -- the "goatish creatures with human faces" (137) -- the grotesque example from Stephen's imagination that exemplifies those sunken only in the physical. Stephen did not stand apart from these goatlike creatures; he was seeing himself as susceptible to sinking beneath the merely physical. Necessarily, Stephen walked a fine line. Because of his openness, his vulnerability to powerful feeling, he knew he could come under the sway of both sides. That is, he was open on the one side to the disembodied influence of the Jesuits, on the other to degraded nature. However, his way was finally neither of these.

Those things that Stephen comes to reject carry with them, in his consciousness, a sense of disembodiment, especially the severing of "head" from "body."
In his first tremulous encounter with the overwhelming authority of the Jesuits, he approaches the rector of Clongowes, "He saw the rector sitting at desk writing. There was a skull on the desk and a strange solemn smell..." (56). The interview ends successfully (or so Stephen thinks at the time) and:

The rector held his hand across the side of the desk where the skull was and Stephen, placing his hand in it for a moment, felt a cool moist palm. (57)

Joyce's language here is strange: it is as though Stephen is placing his hand both within the rector's hand and within the skull itself. What appears for the moment to be triumph for Stephen is marred by the presence of the skull. Through his father's recounting of a conversation with the rector about the incident, Stephen finds that what he took most seriously was a matter of levity for both the rector and his father (72). The truth that the skull reveals is explained in part to Stephen through the father's story; however, the greater truth of the presence of the skull is more fully revealed to the reader when taken together with other disembodied images that recur throughout the book.

One evening when Stephen is at his aunt's house, a "skull appeared suspended in the gloom of the doorway...asking: --Is that Josephine?" The aunt answers, "No, Ellen, It's Stephen." She is asked a question by the aunt, but doesn't answer and says instead: "I thought it was Josephine. I thought you were Josephine, Stephen." She repeats this several times, and "fell to laughing feebly" (68). The entire mood of the house changes for Stephen after this occurrence: "He felt himself a gloomy figure..." (68). The passage is puzzling; one might read it as simple irritation on Stephen's part for being taken as a girl. However, the larger significance to the passage must be taken with the sense of "wrong femaleness" that tends to permeate Stephen's images of the Jesuits. Stephen does not want to have hover about him that sense of "wrong femaleness" that he finds in the Jesuits. The significance of my phrase "wrong
femaleness" includes a particular gloominess or loss of radiance. Stephen's own body being male, this misperception of him signifies that same loss of radiance.

Stephen sees the Jesuits as attempting to make the students equally disembodied. For example, Stephen watches from the dressing room on the evening of the Whitsuntide play, seeing "the excited prefect ... flapping the wings of his soutane nervously." Very soon afterward, he observes in the chapel, "A pinkdressed figure, wearing a curly golden wig and an oldfashioned straw sunbonnet, with black pencilled eyebrows and cheeks delicately rouged and powdered." It is one of the students, Bertie Tallon, dressed up as a girl to perform the sunbonnet dance. Stephen hears "the old lady and the priest laugh together and heard the boys' murmur of admiration ... A movement of impatience escaped him." (74) He leaves the chapel and the schoolhouse. Stephen's feelings are not yet fully understood by Stephen; his experience is only understood at the level of emotion. He is unable to read the full significance of those things that speak to him in mute form. When he goes back to the school, again the narrative voice informs: we find the "painted" boys and the priest's dress closely linked. Stephen remembers,

You could always tell a jesuit by the style of his clothes. At that same moment he thought he saw a likeness between his father's mind and that of this smiling welldressed priest: and he was aware of some desecration of the priest's office. (84)

Again, it is not the institution nor "office" that repulses Stephen, but the holder of the office. Joyce's mastery of his medium is bound up with the use of these minor epiphanies. His method is to link the heroic (the image) with that first strong emotion Stephen experiences from the image, seen here as a feeling of "falseness" and degradation. At this point, Stephen has only come to understand the feelings as somehow portraying a "falseness," a feeling that similarly (divinely) linked with feelings about his father. This "wrong" feeling about his father is first experienced
when he accompanies his father to the medical school and sees his father sunken in remembrances of a dead past. That past rises up in Stephen’s consciousness as a shocking vision of a degraded physical world exemplified by the carved word *Foetus* (89).

This sense of degradation is even more readily apparent to the reader when the connection is made between the costumed boy’s “rouged” cheeks and Stephen’s recurring images of the Jesuits and their flushed faces during their “outbursts of trivial anger” (151). In this section, Stephen experiences in his interactions with others the same products of suppression that he had felt issuing forth in the priests. By suppressing all that was natural, by attempting to sever mind from body, trivialities became gigantic sources of irritation both to the priests and to the boys who were attempting to emulate the priests. But even at this juncture, Stephen cannot fully interpret or reflect upon what he first feels, and then overlays with images of Jesuits, dead medical students and the painted boy. The full weight of the images as bearers of truth have yet to be understood. In this way, Joyce uses the epiphanic device to heap image upon image (similar to the inverted pyramid found later in the “midden heap” of the *Wake*) until the full power of Stephen’s reflective interpretation reveals the truth of what has first spoken to him at the level of expression. The truth of “presence” does not come to Stephen in a linear manner, but only speaks with its full force when he interprets presences in light of former presences.

The matter of dress arises again for Stephen in his conversation with the director of the college (the Jesuit Formation Provincial). The director, Stephen believes accurately, is about to invite him into the priesthood. The priest begins to speak about the various orders, “The capuchin dress, he thought, was rather too ...” (154). Stephen hesitates at expressing an opinion and the director goes on at some length and this part of the conversation ends with the director stating:
Just imagine when I was in Belgium I used to see them out cycling in all kinds of weather with this thing up about their knees! It was really ridiculous. Les jupes they call them in Belgium.

The vowel was so modified as to be indistinct.

--What do they call them?

-- Les jupes.

--0." (155)

A whole range of memories is evoked for Stephen by the priest's words -- the Formation Principal's borrowing of strength from vulgar "speakers of soft language" is decisive when taken together with the memories. A sense of caution results and the determination enters upon which Stephen's refusal of the priesthood will turn:

The phrase on the priest's lips was disengenuous for he knew that a priest should not speak lightly on that theme. The phrase had been spoken lightly with design and he felt that his face was being searched by the eyes in the shadow. (155)

The priest's face is "shadowed" and spectre-like, ominous in its imagery -- bringing fully to earth the skull theme that is now resolved.

Feelings of bad omen and wrong femaleness permeate the section. While the truth may not be fully revealed to Stephen at this point, his image of the priest's face on parting is a human judgement, "a mirthless reflection of the sunken day" and tells us of a being condemned to mock what is sacred, and of Stephen now turning to look elsewhere for the creative life. This section fully foreshadows Stephen's subsequent actions. Shortly after this encounter, Stephen makes his decision not to enter the priesthood. He has come to understand the truth of what first spoke to him profoundly as feeling (expression). However, he acts with certainty only when he interprets these expressions in light of the presence of other profound feelings (subsequent expressions).
It must be emphasized that because Stephen was open to being profoundly moved, that we was also open to being taken in by the Jesuits and similarly by his father -- he was at risk in his "unknowing." On the other hand, only because he was at risk was he able to find his own, true direction. That is, only when Stephen was incapacitated by his experience was he susceptible both to ruin or to finding a true way. In retrospect, however, he is able to interpret the truth of his divinations. Stephen is very much aware of his being "at risk" in this way, as shown through his awareness of the invisible "presence" behind the host (his conversation with Cranley about his refusal to take communion). Open to being claimed by the church or the medical profession, he is also able to ferret out the "falseness" that is continually connected with their images. It is, finally, his reflections on the Jesuits' "deadness" and disembodied separation from their sex that turns him away from the church -- the threat to his own "maleness" that he must constantly fend off. Similarly, it is the threat "to abase his intellect" (90) that turns him away from medicine.

The images of "wrong femaleness" and disembodiment are not just confined to his teachers, but are revelatory to Stephen in other relationships. As a young Irish Catholic, he hears from mother and church that he must "mortify" his senses (150-151) -- that the truth of the physical world is to be ignored and the laws of the church obeyed. Stephen struggles with this division of mind and body; whenever he becomes threatened by the dichotomy, Joyce shows him becoming occupied by the excluded fraction. Just as the intrusions from the life world entered into the student's aesthetic discussion, we find this device repeated in other situations.

Those things that come to Stephen in mute form (divine and heroic language) from the natural world are often experienced in a way that comforts and soothes a situation that Stephen has perceived as a threat to his wholeness of being. After the incident of the costumed, painted boy in the gymnasium, Stephen retreats to a lane and
breathes the air, thinking, "That is horse piss and rotted straw ... It is a good odour to breathe. It will calm my heart." (86) After his decision not to enter the priesthood, as he crosses the bridge to go home, his eyes "turned coldly for an instant towards the faded blue shrine of the Blessed Virgin" (162). As he follows the lane to his home, The faint sour stink of rotted cabbages came towards him .... He smiled to think that it was this disorder, the misrule and confusion of his father’s house and the stagnation of vegetable life, which was to win the day in his soul. (162)

Stephen’s smile signifies the epiphany entering the mundane (radiance). In the one instance he has calmed his "heart; in the other, won his "soul." These are the elements that must be continually brought into balance by the aesthetic requirement. Similarly, Stephen releases himself from the sounds of his mother’s piety (closely linked in the narrative to the sounds of a "mad nun screeching in the nuns’ madhouse" (175):

As he walked down the avenue and felt the grey morning light falling about him through the dripping trees and smelt the strange wild smell of the wet leaves and bark, his soul was loosed of her miseries. (176)

By returning to the humanly articulated senses, Stephen unites those things in his being that threaten to divide mind from body. Joyce reveals through the narrative a “showing” of the aesthetic at work in the work -- the truth of Stephen’s aesthetic shown in ways the young Stephen is unable to show through his words to his classmates.

This sense of balance eventually gains a foothold in Stephen’s perception of women. The sexually maturing Stephen’s thoughts at night are originally dominated by images of Emma/Eileen/Mercedes figures that alternate between the sexual and the spiritual. However, when images do not release him from the urgings of his body, we find him in the company of a Dublin whore, "surrendering himself to her, body and mind." (101) Yet this and similar episodes leave him feeling disgusted, drained -- feelings very much in tune with his feelings about the "speakers of soft language." Not
only does he feel degraded, but the female image in that particular aspect is a degraded image.

Emma is a major figure in Stephen's efforts to cast the female image in its appropriate form. In his real life dealings with Emma, he is rendered indecisive and paralytic. He experiences this first at a feeling level, albeit disturbing, but with little or no interpretation. However, what comes to him finally as "truth" about Emma is revealed in two ways in his consciousness. There is too much of the Madonna associated with Emma. She is linked in Stephen's memory with memories of Eileen (69) -- the "Tower of Ivory, House of Gold" of the litany. She is repeatedly cast in Stephen's conscious remembrance of her as a "cowl-like" figure (which might also be construed to be a death-like image):

He heard what her eyes said to him from beneath their cowl and knew that in some dim past ... he had heard their tale before. (69)

He could remember only that she had worn a shawl about her head like a cowl and that her dark eyes had invited and unnerved him. (82)

Ten years before she had worn her shawl cow-like about her head. (248)

The Madonna image is also linked with his remembrances of Emma's keeping company with priests and her apparent pleasure at being in their company. Bitterly, toward the end of the novel, he sees her and thinks, "She has no priest to flirt with ... remembering how he had seen her last." (216) Later, in the same section, he recalls a conversation with her in which they banter about Stephen's being a monk or a heretic. When Stephen states, "I was born to be a monk," he is telling the truth. What Emma fails to see is that he is the monk of "monkish learning" whose works he has appreciated earlier in the book and he is the "celebrant ... in a church without worshippers." He thinks:

A monk! His own image started forth a profaner of the cloister .... No, it was not his image. It was like the image of the young priest in whose company he had seen her last, looking at him out of dove's eyes... (222)
This image (the casting of imagination in heroic language) that speaks to him is not that monk; Stephen, the priest, is not the profamer of the cloister. The truth of both images is that he cannot be the monk as Emma would have him but must be a priest without a church.

At this point in the novel, the images that come to Stephen create feelings of "rude brutal anger" (222) that root out any remaining instants of ecstasy attached to the girl. He realizes that she is unable to give herself fully to any man and that her attraction to him was because she thought he was a half-monk, a candidate for the priesthood of the contemporary Irish church similar to the one who was "but schooled in the discharging of a formal rite" rather than to himself "a priest of eternal imagination." (p.221) She is linked in his mind with all the other female forms of Ireland that he felt were debased, but had at one time either beckoned to him or taunted him: "the flowergirl....the hoyden....the kitchengirl....a girl...from Jacob's biscuit factory." (222)

Joyce uses the device of heaping image upon image to form the collective image that Stephen comes to interpret as false woman. And it is out of this falseness that Stephen finally rejects both collective images -- Madonna on the one hand and Prostitute on the other.

But where the previous female forms (images) had personified for Stephen the dichotomy of mind and body, the grand significance of the sensational "epiphany" of the novel, the girl on the Strand (171-173), presents the female form in its unity. This is a "real girl" of the physical world; and, for Stephen, the reconciliation of image, lifeworld, and ecstatic feeling (epiphany at its most joyous -- the most powerful form of the "enchantment of the heart" found in the novel). This divine and heroic language form speaks mutely to Stephen through the image of the girl: "Her image had passed into his soul for ever and no word had broken the holy silence of his ecstasy." (172)
This image releases the female in Stephen's consciousness from the "bat-like" dark presences that recur with previous female images (220, 224) and achieves the aesthetic balance.

Only after Stephen has seen the girl on the beach does he link the bat-like images of the hoydenish Irish girls with the bat-like image of Emma (221) and thus come to reject both through the revealed truth of what first came to him as image. But as with the case of the priesthood, the aesthetic theory, and the medical profession (as he experiences them), the truth of Stephen's profound feelings are revealed by his certain practices found at the end of the novel.

We find this same narrative device employed by Joyce in Stephen's rejection of those of his contemporaries whom he sees as portraying deadness of spirit, the same disembodiment, that he finds repellent in his teachers and that he has battled within himself. His rejection of Cranley near the end of the book follows the same pattern: images, without reflection or understanding, occur first:

Why was it when he thought of Cranley he could never raise before his mind the entire image of his body but only the image of head and face? (178)

Cranley's face appears to Stephen as:

... the face of a severed head or deathmask ... It was a priestlike face, priestlike in its pallor, in the widewinged nose, in the shadowing below the eyes and along the jaws, priestlike in the lips that were long and bloodless and faintly smiling. (178)

When Stephen comes to fully understand Cranley by the end of the novel, he knows their friendship is over. He realizes Cranley is the Irishman who will "bow his mind" (245) to the women of Ireland, which in effect means bowing his mind to the dead practices of the church that rules their minds and bodies. He sees Cranley as the "child of exhausted loins" (p.248), a disembodied Irishman born to a nation mired down in exhausted practices.
Stephen’s rejection of Cranley does not signify a rejection of his countrymen. It is not the Irish whom Stephen rejects, just as it is not all females whom he rejects, but the ossification of forms taken by the Irish, sunken in ignorance—rigidified Catholicism and Irish myth:

The grey block of Trinity on his left, set heavily in the city’s ignorance like a great dull stone set in a cumbrous ring ... and while he was striving this way and that to free his feet of the reformed conscience he came upon the droll statue of the national poet of Ireland ... It was a Firbolg in the borrowed cloak of a Milesian. (p. 180)

At this point, Stephen’s ability to interpret is developed in a way that wasn’t available to him in the earlier stages of his development. Stephen rejects that in the Irish consciousness (whether typified by the priests or by Cranley) that renders the Irish insensible. But his sympathies lie with that which he sees as alive in the Irish, albeit fettered and stupified, and by what humanity he sees still present in such types as Lynch and Davin, “the young peasant” (181).

Lynch, eater of cowdung (205), is one of the best representatives of degraded nature in the book, and even though Stephen sees him as “reptilelike,” he still finds in Lynch a tiny light of humanity. While the soul of Ireland may be wizened, for Stephen it is not yet dead. Davin, however, represents for Stephen the unformed strength of Irish imagination and intelligence, the raw feeling of “terror of soul of a starving Irish village” and the “hidden ways of Irish life.” (181) The story Davin tells of the Irish peasant woman stays in Stephen’s memory as the symbol of “a type of her race and his own, a batlike soul waking to the consciousness of itself in darkness and secrecy and loneliness.” (183)

The truth of the vision evoked by Davin is revealed to Stephen in a dream near the end of the novel:

Strange figures advance from a cave. They are not as tall as men. One does not seem to stand apart from another... They peer at me and their eyes seem to ask me something. They do not speak. (250)
This is the collective image (poetic universal) of the native soul of Ireland and
Stephen's Irish soul. They are not separate, just as for the people of the heroic age, the
poetic character of the eagle was not separate from God himself. They are mute; they
have no language (just as the girl on the Strand had no language). They are "the
uncreated conscience of his race" that Stephen must indeed "forge in the smithy of his
soul," and which must be forged again and again in the process of creation. The cave is
the same "strange dark cavern of speculation" (178) that Stephen earlier "turned away
from ... feeling that it was not yet the hour to enter it." (178). This is the same dark
cavern where "the soul is born .... a slow and dark birth, more mysterious than the
birth of the body." (203) And it is the cavern from which finally emerges the
collective soul of the men of Ireland.

Stephen's mission, as he finally sees it in the Portrait, is to release the Irish
souls from their bondage, from the cave as it were. Vico's men of the first times fled to
the caves both from fear of the thunder (God's voice) and to hide themselves as they
bred with the women they dragged to those same caves (NS 4, 510). Joyce's goal is to
free them from their fear of God and their fear of their own bodies. He must, as Vico
required, release them from "those chains of religion by which the giants were
chained under the mountains" (NS 539). Unlike Vico's giants, Joyce's cavemen are, of
course, short Celts -- not as "tall as men," -- a peculiarly human and distinctly Joycean
twist.

Vico stated:

Men first feel without perceiving, then they perceive with a troubled and
agitated spirit, finally they reflect with a clear mind. This axiom is the principle
of poetic sentences, which are formed by feeling of passion and emotion,
whereas philosophic sentences are formed by reflection and reasoning. The
more the latter rise toward universals, the closer they approach the truth; the
more the former descend to particulars, the more certain they become. (NS 218)
We have seen Joyce develop his art in this way. Stephen's progress is exactly that stated in the first sentence above. Joyce, however, did not rest content to let his passion form solely poetic sentences (that was for the very young artist to do), but endowed his young artist with the power to interpret what comes to him first through the emotions so that he could reach the final stage -- human creation. Stephen is both the universal and particular -- the artist in its universal aspects and the particularity of Stephen. The book is likewise the created individual, both universal and particular -- the book as the completed portrait of the universal "artist" and the particularity of this story. As a result, Joyce's artistic approach is toward truth and certainty through language -- a creative process from which the truth will emerge. Neither Vico nor Joyce viewed language as that which represents truth, but language as the activity of truth-making -- language as creating truth. For neither was the use of language external to the tool itself.

Joyce's appropriation of "epiphany" is the most powerful narrative device working in the novel. Attempts to isolate these presences found in the novel from one another will always end in defeat for the critic who takes them in isolation and denies the circularity that spirals from this novel through to Finnegans Wake.

Vico felt that if you lack your beginning, you lack your "continuity as well" (NS 399). We have seen the novel fulfill this Vichian requirement -- that what began early in Joyce's career can be seen as a continuity that runs all the way through from A Portrait to Finnegans Wake.

Vico wrote:

The first language had been hieroglyphic, sacred or divine; the second, symbolic, by signs or by heroic devices; the third, epistolary, for men at a distance to communicate to each other the current needs of their lives. (NS 432)

But Joyce brings these three historical stages onto the working novelist's desk and into "certum" of literature. We can view Joyce's first major novel, A Portrait, as the sacred
work -- the novel of the epiphany. Similarly, I suggest Ulysses can be viewed as Joyce's heroic work -- symbolized by the presence of Bloom. The Wake is the epistolary where the enigmatic "letter" of the midden heap gains full presence. But all are formed by the written word. They are shadings of a single aesthetic balance, that progresses in terms of difficulty of topic within a unified form. Language for Joyce was not the vehicle for the representation of the truth of universals or particulars, but was the individual activity through which universals and particulars appear. Vico's indispensable concept consists in the speculative idea of language, that mute powers and forms are already language. But Vico was no novelist, and his idea -- perfectly pre-adapted to the novelist's working craft of human language -- could not be realized without the Joycean wordsmith's proof by actual creation.


2 Time of Apprenticeship, p. 111.
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