THE SEARCH FOR MEANING IN CONTEMPORARY LIFE

a study of a central theme in the works
of
James Joyce and T.S. Eliot

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INTRODUCTION

In this paper I shall discuss the search for meaning in contemporary life, a central theme that appears in the works of both T. S. Eliot and James Joyce. I shall begin my discussion by suggesting how the just-born individual's impressions of the life around him first fall into and out of a meaningful pattern. I will then consider an adult world in which life has apparently no order or meaning and suggest several possible reactions of the individual to this world. I will proceed to discuss the search for meaning and conclude with a "final synthesis" in which the fragments of life come together into some kind of a meaningful pattern for the seeker. The substance and the illustrations of this discussion will be taken from a generous selection of the works of T. S. Eliot and James Joyce.

My development of this theme will, I hope, make possible a fuller appreciation of the works of Eliot and Joyce. Granted: a discussion of ideas or theme has no more value in explaining the living work of an artist than bones can have for explaining the meaning of life. Nevertheless, an understanding of theme is, I think, the first step in the direction of the total experience in literature.

This discussion will also be valuable, I hope, for the personal interest that a concept such as the search for meaning may hold for the reader himself. This concept, at least to the writer of this paper, is intensely interesting.

I should mention that the general idea and the plan for this paper is entirely my own, although perhaps my original source of inspiration was some lines spoken by John Tanner in the Third Act of Man and Superman:

> I tell you that as long as I can conceive something better than myself I cannot be easy unless I am striving to bring it into existence or clearing the way for it. That is the law of my life. That is the working within me of Life's incessant aspiration to higher organisation, wider, deeper, intenser self-consciousness, and clearer self-understanding.

Another source of inspiration perhaps was the excitement caused by reading Colin Wilson's The Outsider and Religion and the Rebel. One line from Religion and the Rebel I remember in particular:

> Morality is the power of higher forms of life to achieve yet more life; sin is the drifting of higher forms of life towards an animal level.

Although I am no longer a Bernard Shaw or Colin Wilson enthusiast, they probably provided the initial inspiration.

As far as the discussions of individual works, which form the substance of this paper, are concerned, I have tried to combine original ideas with the views of several critics. I have relied on criticism most heavily in trying to understand The Waste Land and Ulysses, while in Dubliners and A Portrait of the Artist I have used a very minimum of help. The other works discussed are, more or less, a synthesis of research and originality in which I have used criticism as an aid to understanding rather then in the discussion itself.

I have written this paper with the assumption that the reader is familiar with the works discussed, but although this familiarity is desirable, I do not believe it is absolutely necessary.

I

Life begins for the individual with the unconscious assimilation of seemingly unrelated impressions or fragments of life, which are conveyed by five brand-new senses. T. S. Eliot gives expression to this process in Animula:

> 'Issues from the hand of God, the simple soul'
> To a flat world of changing lights and noise,
> To light, dark, dry or damp, chilly or warm;
> Moving between the legs of tables and of chairs,
> Rising or falling, grasping at kisses and toys,
> Advancing boldly, sudden to take alarm...

And in James Joyce's A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man the just-born Stephen Dedalus also becomes aware of apparently unrelated fragments as he hears a "mooow," sees a hairy face, feels warm and then cold, smells something queer, and learns of lemon platt:

> Once upon a time and a very good time it was there was a moocow coming down along the road and this moocow that was down along the road met a nicens liitle boy named baby tuckoo...
> His father told him that story; his father looked at him through a glass; he had a hairy face.
> He was baby tuckoo. The moocow came down the road where Betty Byrne lived: she sold lemon platt...
> When you wet the bed, first it is warm then it gets cold. His mother put on the oilsheet. That had a queer smell. (1)

As the senses mature and begin to work together, meaningless fragments begin to fall into a meaningful pattern. For the "simple soul" in Animula:

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1. James Joyce, A Portrait, p. 245.

> Retreating to the corner of arm and knee,
> Eager to be reassured, taking pleasure
> In the fragrant brilliance of the Christmas tree,
> Pleasure in the wind, the sunlight and the sea;
> Studies the sunlit pattern on the floor
> And running stags around a silver tray....

For Stephen too form gradually begins to emerge from chaos as he understands the meaning of the family pattern through words such as "mother," "father," and "uncle." "When they were grown up he was going to marry Eileen."

It seems, however, that fragments of life, like the tiny glass pieces in a turning kaleidoscope, fall into a meaningful pattern and then to the dismay of the individual shift just when they seem to have formed a pattern of wholeness, harmony and radiance. In Animula the "simple soul"

> Confounds the actual and the fanciful...
>
> The heavy burden of the growing soul
> Perplexes and offends more, day by day....

And for Stephen the ritual of a meaningful pattern is questioned by his classmates at school:

> --Tell us, Dedalus, do you kiss your mother before you go to bed?
> Stephen answered:
> ---I do.
> Wells turned to the other fellows and said:
> ---O, I say, here's a fellow says he kisses his mother every night before he goes to bed.
> The other fellows stopped their game and turned round laughing. Stephen blushed under their eyes and said:
> ---I do not.
> Wells said:

> --O, I say, here's a fellow says he doesn't kiss his mother before he goes to bed.
> They all laughed again. Stephen tried to laugh with them. He felt his whole body hot and confused in a moment. What was the right answer to the question? (2)

As Stephen grows older, he finds it increasingly more difficult to find the order and harmony in his family pattern that had once given to his life form and meaning. And he does not feel integrated into the pattern of play that means so much to his classmates:

> The wide playgrounds were swarming with boys. All were shouting and the prefects urged them on with strong cries...He kept on the fringe of his line, out of sight of his prefect, out of the reach of the rude feet, feigning to run now and then. He felt his body small and weak amid the throng of players and his eyes were weak and watery. (3)

Stephen can no longer see things as part of a meaningful, well-integrated pattern. Almost symbolically, it seems to me, his eye glasses get broken, and he can no longer see things as before:

> ....his spectacles had been broken in three pieces... That was why the fellows seemed to him smaller and farther away and the goal posts so thin and far and the soft grey sky so high up. (4)

The disintegration in the form of a once-ordered world continues as Stephen becomes aware of injustice and disorder in the educational-religious pattern. He had seen this pattern once as a just and meaningful one in which a

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2. Joyce, ~~James~~, A Portrait, p. 253.
3. Ibid., p. 284.
4. Ibid., p. 292.

did the right thing. And if he just once did make a mistake, he would go to confession to the minister, "and if the minister did it he would go to the rector; and the rector to the provincial: and the provincial to the general of the jesuits."

> That was called the order: and he had heard his father say that they were all clever men. (4)

But Stephen discovers disorder and injustice when Father Dolan punishes him most unjustly for not having his glasses in class. Since Stephen was a superior student, it would have been reasonable and just if Father Dolan had shaken hands with him:

> ...at first he had thought he was going to shake hands with him...but then in an instant he had heard the swish of the soutane sleeve and the crash.(5)

Stephen is perplexed and disillusioned:

> It was unfair and cruel because the doctor had told him not to read without glasses....(6)

The old pattern of meaning is no longer as real. Part of the pattern, however, rearranges itself when Stephen goes to the rector, who excuses him and promises that he will speak to Father Dolan. It seems that once again fragments will be replaced by a meaningful synthesis:

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4. Joyce, A Portrait, p. 292.
5. Ibid., p. 297.
6. Ibid., p. 296.

> He told them what he had said and what the rector had said and, when he had told them, all the fellows flung their caps spinning up into the air and cried:
> --Hurroo!
> They caught their caps and sent them up again spinning skyhigh and cried again:
> -- Hurroo! Hurroo! (7)

But in the next chapter this crucial incident in Stephen's life is treated by his Father and Father Dolan as a big joke:

> -- I told them all at dinner about it and Father Dolan and I and all of us we all had a hearty laugh together over it. Ha! Ha! Ha! (8)

It becomes clear to Stephen that this new arrangement of the fragments cannot last for long.

Thus far we have considered fragments--disordered impressions as opposed to pattern or form which could relate diverse impressions into a meaningful synthesis---as they are apprehended by the senses of undeveloped youth. Before we continue to discuss the search of the individual for a synthesis or pattern that would make life meaningful, let us pause to consider an adult world perceived as consisting of fragments only.

II

> Unreal City.
> Under the brown fog of a winter dawn,

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7. Joyce, A Portrait, p. 304.
8. Ibid., p. 320.

A crowd flowed over London Bridge, so many,
I had not thought death had undone so many. (9)

Contemporary life may be without life, without real substance or meaning. Thus the protagonist in T. S. Eliot's The Waste Land asks

What are the roots that clutch, what branches grow
Out of this stony rubbish?

The answer:

You cannot say, or guess, for you know only
A heap of broken images, here the sun beats,
And the dead tree gives no shelter, the cricket no relief,
And the dry stone no sound of water. (10)

The question of whether branches of meaning grow forth from roots which lie firmly within the ground is answered in terms of certain despair. There seems to be nothing more integrated or substantial here than fragments of images, which lie in a dry and sterile waste land.

Thus the blighted land in which nothing lives or can grow becomes Eliot's central image expressing the apparent lack of meaning in contemporary life. The basic imagery, as Eliot states in the Notes of The Waste Land, comes from Jessie L. Weston's From Ritual To Romance, in which Miss Weston shows how the ancient fertility rituals used to promote abundance for peoples dependent upon the fertility of their lands for life gradually evolved into the Christian myth of The Search for the Holy Grail.

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9. T. S. Eliot, "The Burial of the Dead."
10. Ibid.

The myth concerns a blighted land in which nothing can grow because of the impotence of a Fisher King. Only when a quester enters the land with a lance to search for the Grail can fertility be restored. It is significant that the myth of the Grail is concerned with spiritual regeneration and not only with physical fertility.

Eliot introduces us to the seer of the waste land, a charlatan with a cold:

> Madame Sosotris, famous clairvoyante,
> Had a bad cold, nevertheless
> Is known to be the wisest woman in Europe,
> With a wicked pack of cards. (11)

Miss Weston has pointed out that Tarot cards form a part of the fertility ritual.(12) Thus by placing these cards in the hands of this fortune teller Eliot is ironically expressing the faint hope of regeneration that today's fertility cult could evoke.

The figures on the cards Madame Sosotris pulls from the deck(13) suggest the hopeless condition of the land. "The man with three staves," as Eliot tells us in his Notes, is the Fisher King whose impotence has caused the land's sterility. He appears throughout the poem,

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11. ~~Ibid~~. Eliot, "The Burial of the Dead"
12. Jessie L. Weston, From Ritual to Romance, pp. 74-75.
13. As Eliot states in his Notes, he has departed from the exact constitution of the Tarot pack.

but we see him most distinctly fishing in tumid streams surrounded by fragments which suggest death and sterility:

> A rat crept softly through the vegetation
> Dragging its slimy belly on the bank
> While I was fishing in the dull canal.... (14)

Belladona, "The lady of situations," is also a part of Eliot's Tarot pack. Her very name and epithet suggest a kind of cheapness that is not compatible with fertility, spiritual or physical. Eliot follows up his ironic introduction of Belladona--ironic because she is the antithesis of the spirit which the deck usually symbolizes--by introducing several other ladies of situations. Consider Lil, who has smothered fertility by having a shoddy abortion:

> You ought to be ashamed, I said to look so antique.
>
> I can't help it, she said, pulling a long face,
> It's them pills I took, to bring it off, she said...
> The chemist said it would be all right, but I've
> never been the same. (15)

Consider the typist:

> The typist home at teatime, clears her breakfast, lights
> Her stove, and lays out food in tins.
> Out of the window perilously spread
> Her drying combinations touched by the sun's last rays,
> On the divan are piled (at night her bed)
> Stockings, slippers, camisoles, and stays....
>
> He, the young man carbuncular, arrives,
> A small house agent's clerk, with one bold stare,
> One of the low on whom assurance sits
> As a silk hat on a Bradford millionaire.

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14. T. S. Eliot, "The Fire Sermon."

15. T. S. Eliot, "A Game of Chess."

> The time is now propitious, as he guesses,
> The meal is ended, she is bored and tired,
> Endeavours to engage her in caresses
> Which still are unreproved, if undesired.
> Flushed and decided, he assaults at once;
> Exploring hands encounter no defence;
> His vanity requires no response,
> And makes a welcome of indifference. (16)

Here the act of love, which can create spiritual life as well as physical is quiet, meaningless, mechanical, sterile. The only reaction that the act has created is the typist's mechanical response:

"'Well now, that's done: and I'm glad it's over.'"

Paraphrasing John Crowe Ransom, Cleanth Brooks in commenting on this part of The Waste Land says: "Love is the aesthetic of sex; lust is the science. Love implies a deferring of the satisfaction of the desire; it implies even a certain asceticism and a ritual. Lust drives forward urgently and scientifically to the immediate extirpation of the desire." This act of lust between the typist and the clerk, he suggests, is symbolic of secular and scientific attitude causing, in part, the waste land. (17)

The "one-eyed merchant" is another ironic member of the Tarot pack. "One-eyed" suggests a disability in the merchant as the "bad cold" does in Madame Sosostris. Another card in the deck, which is blank, symbolizes, as Elizabeth Drew points out, the secrets of the ancient

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16. Eliot, "The Fire Sermon."

17. Cleanth Brooks, T. S. Eliot, B. Rajan, Ed., p. 17.

fertility cult, which the merchants once carried to distant lands. (18) We meet this merchant later as Mr. Eugenides, a man unshaven and crude, whose only cult is one of perversion:

> Under the brown fog of a winter noon
> Mr. Eugenides, the Smyrna merchant
> Unshaven, with a pocket full of currants...
> Asked me in demotic French
> To luncheon at the Cannon Street Hotel
> Followed by a weekend at the Metropole. (19)

The Phoenician Sailor appears in Eliot's Tarot pack as the "drowned Phoenician Sailor" with the epithet "Those were pearls that were his eyes." We meet him again in the section "Death By Water" a drowned man, "a fortnight dead." Although water has up to this point appeared as as symbol of the land's condition only because of its absence, it now appears in excess as something to be feared, something needed but undesired. What were once organs of sight and vision have now become lifeless pearls.

Thus I have tried to suggest how Eliot through his use of the fertility myth, his imagery, and some of the characters of the land expresses the state of the land as a condition of physical and spiritual stagnation and meaninglessness. Later we shall return to The Waste Land to discuss the possible means of salvation which appear but which are almost completely unheeded.

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18. Elizabeth Drew, T. S. Eliot: The Design of His Poetry, p.72.

19. Eliot, "The Fire Sermon."

James Joyce also gives expression to the apparent futility and meaningless in contemporary life in Dubliners, which is, as the author states, "the moral history" of a city that seemed to him "the center of paralysis." Let us take a look at this city by examining some of the stories in the series.

"The Sisters," the first story in Dubliners, sets a mood which suggests the atmosphere and general condition of the land. The story is concerned with the reactions of a young boy to the paralysis and death of a priest. The boy feels an unhealthy attraction toward the priest's condition of paralysis:

> It filled me with fear, and yet I longed to be nearer to it and to look upon its deadly work. (20)

All of the elements in the story contribute to create an unpleasant and diseased atmosphere. Consider, for example, the picture of the priest in boy's memory:

> When he smiled he used to uncover his big discoloured teeth and let his tongue lie upon his lower lip.... (21)

The mood set by "The Sisters", then is present throughout Dubliners.

In "An Encounter" two youths skip school to seek romance and adventure in an unexplored section of Dublin.

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20. James Joyce, Dubliners, p. 19.

21. Ibid., p. 23.

Instead of the romance suggested to them by their books of the wild west, they find the sordid reality of a pervert whose "mind was slowly circling round and round in the same orbit." (22)

The theme of illusion, and the disillusionment following an encounter with apparently valueless reality is repeated in "Araby." Here a boy goes to a fair called Araby late at night seeking mystery and enchantment:

> The syllables of the word Araby were called to me through the silence in which my soul luxuriated and cast an Eastern enchantment over me. (23).

Instead of enchantment he finds a few tired people milling about and overhears a most exotic conversation:

> 'O, I never said such a thing! '
> 'O, but you did!'
> 'O, but I didn't! '
> Didn't she say that?'
> 'Yes, I heard her.'
> 'O, there's a ..fib!' (24)

The absence of love seems to be for Joyce as much as for Eliot a gross symptom of a waste land. Corley and Lenehan, two stupid, insensitive beings, who appear as "Two Gallants" illustrate the sterile and meaningless attitude toward love. Corley makes good his boast that he can get from a servant girl her money as well as her "love," while Lenehan, who envies Corley, wishes for

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22. Joyce, Dubliners, p. 36.
23. Ibid., p. 42.
24. Ibid., p. 45.

"some good simple-minded girl with a little of the ready."(26) In "The Boarding House" Polly Mooney seduces Mr. Doran, a boarder at her mother's house, and then waits absent-mindedly while her mother, "a determined woman" blackmails Mr. Doran into marriage. The loveless contract arranged, Mrs. Mooney calls her daughter:

> 'Polly! Polly!'
> 'Yes, mamma?'
> 'Come down, dear. Mr. Doran wants to speak to you.' (27)

Then she remembered what she had been waiting for. Little Chandler's reaction to his wife's photograph in "A Little Cloud" suggests again the sterile nature of a relationship supposedly founded on love:

> He looked coldly into the eyes of the photograph and they answered coldly. Certainly they were pretty and the face itself was pretty. But he found something mean in it. Why was it so unconscious and ladylike? The composure of the eyes irritated him. They repelled him and defied him: there was no passion in them, no rapture. (28)

Mr. Duffy in "A Painful Case" is paralyzed by his intellectual attitude toward love. Although he considers falling in love, he decides to break it off, for his mind tells him that "every bond is a bond to sorrow." (29) Filled with despair at his inability to love he realizes too late that "he had been outcast from life's feast." He knew that "he was alone."

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26. Joyce, Dubliners, p. 68.
27. Ibid., p. 80.
28. Ibid., p. 94.
29. Ibid., p. 223.

The family institution, likewise, is sterile and paralyzed. We have already suggested the family relationship in "A Little Cloud." Little Chandler realizes that the family institution is for him a meaningless prison:

> It was useless. He couldn't read. He couldn't do anything. The wailing of the child pierced the drum of his ear. It was useless, useless! He was a prisoner for life. His arms trembled with anger and suddenly bending to the child's face he shouted:
>
> "Stop!" (30)

In "Counterparts" Farrington, who has been humiliated by his boss and who loses to a mere boy in a test of strength, comes home and beats up his son, who has stayed up to cook supper for him. The story concludes with his return to home and family and ends on this note:

> ' 'O, pa! ' he cried. 'Don't beat me, pa! And I'll... I'll say a Hail Mary for you... I'll say a Hail Mary for you, pa, if you don't beat me...(31)

"A Mother" repeats the theme of paralysis within the family. The mother, who "had become Mrs. Kearney out of spite" and who "respected her husband in the same way as she respected the General Post Office," tries to run the musical career of her weak, intimidated daughter.

The paralysis of politics is set forth in "Ivy Day

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30. Joyce, Dubliners, p. 95.

31. Ibid., p. 110.

in the Committee Room." Here the painfully pale and selfish actions of the members of the political committees forms a pathetic contrast to the ideal of Parnell, who is dead.

"The Sisters," which we have already mentioned, suggested a theme of religious paralysis. In "Grace" this theme is continued as a Mr. Kernan, an extreme drunkard, is taken by his friends to a businessman's retreat for spiritual regeneration. Mr. Cunningham, the most intellectual and best informed of Kernan's friends, supports the institution of the church and of the pope in particular and thus unknowingly suggests the condition of religion:

> 'Tell me, Martin. Weren't some of the popes..of course, not our present man, or his predecessor, but some of the old popes..not exactly...you know...up to the knocker?'
>
> There was a silence. Mr. Cunningham said:
>
> 'O, of course, there were some bad lots...But the astonishing thing is this. Not one of them, not the biggest drunkard, not the most..out-and-out ruffian, not one of them ever preached ex cathedra a word of false doctrine.' (32)

We can imagine how effective the priest, who will "speak to business men..in a businesslike way," will be in respiritualizing the "gentlemen", who "produced handkerchiefs and knelt upon them with care," especially Mr. Kernan.

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32. Joyce, Dubliners, p. 183.

Thus in Joyce's statement of the waste land, of the apparent lack of meaning in contemporary life, we have a case of disease and paralysis expressed by youthful disillusionment, the absence of love, and the hollowness of the institutions of the family, politics and religion.

We have discussed Eliot's seemingly sterile waste land and Joyce's apparently paralyzed city and might well ask again:

> What are the roots that clutch, what branches grow
> Out of this stony rubbish?

Let us now return to the individual who lives in this land and consider his several possible reactions to the condition of meaning which exists for him in the land about him.

III

Considering the existence of meaning in life, the most common attitude, perhaps, is that the world "has meaning for me." Life has significance and justification and is not composed of disordered fragments. Patterns made possible by religion, family, etc. make the idea of fragments unreal to the individual, and so there is no incentive or cause to search for meaning.

We must not take the attitude of enlightened Sophomores have and say that an individual who accepts meaning without a search leads a life of illusion among fragments. Fragments are one way of perceiving the world and thus can only exist in relation to the mind of an individual. Whether fragments exist as an objective reality, it would be quite difficult to say.

The second possible attitude is that the individual may be aware of meaninglessness but lack the desire, energy, and strength to look for the meaning he thinks may exist. This is the case of the "simple soul" in Animula. Here the lame soul cannot advance to the warm reality and becomes misshapen and paralyzed, neither living nor dead:

> Issues from the hand of time the simple soul
> Irresolute and selfish, misshapen, lame,
> Unable to fare forward or retreat,
> Fearing the warm reality, the offered good,
> Denying the importunity of the blood,
> Shadow of its own shadows, spectre in its own gloom...

Prufrock of T. S. Eliot's The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock is likewise aware of the meaninglessness of his life:

> I should have been a pair of ragged claws
> Scuttling across the floors of silent seas,

as well as of the possible meaning there exists to be found:

I have seen them riding seaward on the waves
Combing the white hair of the waves blown back
When the wind blows the water white and black.

But he lacks the strength necessary to go after it. He will stay out of the life-giving waters and walk along the beach, unhappy and frustrated:

I shall wear white flannel trousers, and walk upon ~~the beach~~ the beach. This awareness of the lack of meaning coupled with the inability to act, to seek something real and meaningful is also expressed by Eliot in The Hollow Men:

Between the idea
And the reality
Between the motion
And the act
Falls the Shadow.

We find this same spirit in The Waste Land in which the arrival of spring, the time of rebirth, is lamented:

April is the cruelest month...(33)

The physical and spiritual inertia of the dead season seems more desirable:

Winter kept us warm, covering
Earth in forgetful snow.....(34)

Looking into the eyes of "the hyacinth girl" the poem's protagonist is aware of possible life and meaning, but he is overcome by paralysis:

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33. Eliot, "The Burial of the Dead."
34. Ibid.

> .....I could not
> Speak, and my eyes failed, I was neither
> Living nor dead, and I knew nothing,
> Looking into the heart of light, the silence.(35)

This second reaction of the individual in contemporary life, which we are discussing--the awareness of possible meaning in a meaningless existence coupled with the inability to act, this state of paralysis--is, as we have already suggested, one of the central themes in Dubliners. "Eveline" gives us a good illustration of this condition. Eveline is a servant girl, who is painfully conscious of the commonness and futility of her life in Dublin. She feels that meaning in life can only become real by eloping and escaping from Ireland with a man who loves her:

> She stood up in a sudden impulse of terror. Escape! She must escape! Frank would save her. He would give her life, perhaps love, too. But she wanted to live. (36)

But at the last moment, right before sailing time, she is paralyzed with a complete inability to act. She is afraid of spring, "The cruelest month," and its life-giving waters:

> All the seas of the world tumbled about her heart. He was drawing her into them: he would drown her. She gripped with both hands at the iron railing.
>
> 'Come!'

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35. Eliot, "The Burial of the Dead."

36. Joyce, Dubliners, p. 50.

> No! No! No! It was impossible. Her hands clutched the iron in frenzy. Amid the seas she sent a cry of anguish. (37)

> She set her white face to him, passive, like a helpless animal. (38)

We have already mentioned Little Chandler in "A Little Cloud" who is aware of futility and wants to escape:

> ...his soul revolted against the dull inelegance of Capel Street. There was no doubt about it; if you wanted to succeed you had to go away. (39)

But, like the others, he cannot act:

> It was useless, useless! He was a prisoner for life.

It should be mentioned here that Joyce is not suggesting that Eveline or Little Chandler could find life and meaning simply by leaving Dublin. Indeed, Gallaher, Little Chandler's friend who has left Dublin, is quite common and probably leads a life at least as futile as that of Little Chandler. Even Little Chandler is aware of this:

> He was beginning to feel somewhat disillusioned. Gallaher's accent and way of expressing himself did not please him. There was something vulgar in his friend which he had not observed before. (40)

I do not think that the reader expects that Eveline will necessarily find life by eloping with Frank. Joyce is not implying that a golden world is anywhere but in Dublin.

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37. Joyce, Dubliners, p. 51.
38. Ibid.
39. Ibid., p. 83.
40. Ibid., p. 87.

He is merely expressing the paralysis that prevents the people from seeking meaning.

The third possible reaction of the individual to apparent meaninglessness in contemporary life is the decision to search for a meaningful pattern into which life's fragments will fall. Let us now consider in some detail the direction that the search for meaning in contemporary life will take for Eliot and Joyce.

IV

In Eliot, of course, we cannot follow the search of a single protagonist as we can with Joyce's Stephen Dedalus; however, Eliot's poems, considered in the order in which they were written, do show a search and a gradual climb toward meaning. Let us consider this development.

The Waste Land as far as we have considered it has offered no real hope of fertility and meaning. The protagonist of the poem, however, gradually becomes aware of possible sources of meaning as he walks through the barren land. In Part III, "The Fire Sermon," he sees primarily the sterile, loveless fire which seems to have taken the place of love. Although the section ends in confusion and despair, a hint of meaning appears in the

form of an incomplete prayer uttered at a moment of intense suffering:

> Burning, burning, burning, burning
> O Lord Thou pluckest me out
> O Lord Thou pluckest
> burning. (41)

The following section, "Death by Water," offers a significant contrast to "The Fire Sermon." We have already suggested above how water, the life-giving element, here becomes something to be feared. Water here, however, may have another, more hopeful meaning in that it could provide the necessary release from the "burning" of waste land life:

> Phlebas the Phoenician, a fortnight dead,
> Forgot the cry of gulls, and the deep sea swell
> And the profit and loss. (42)

This death may be the necessary prologue to resurrection.

In "What the Thunder Said," the last section of the poem, we find the protagonist walking on

> The road winding above among the mountains
> Which are mountains of rock without water (43)

apparently searching for the Grail, which could restore fertility and meaning to both the waste land and himself. On the road he encounters possible meaning disguised in the form of a person in a hood, but, like the disciples

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41. Eliot, "The Fire Sermon."
42. Eliot, "Death by Water."
43. Eliot, "What the Thunder Said."

who did not recognize the disguised Christ on the road to Emmaus, the protagonist sees nothing in this source of meaning but a mystery. He comes upon the Perilous Chapel, a traditional stopping place for the seekers of the Grail, but it is empty and only inhabited by the wind:

> ...the grass is singing
> Over the tumbled graves, about the chapel
> There is the empty chapel, only the wind's home.
> It has no windows, and the door swings,
> Dry bones can harm no one. (44)

And then suddenly from a cock on a rooftree comes positive evidence of meaning:

> Only a cock stood on the rooftree
> Co co rico co co rico
> In a flash oflightning. Then a damp gust
> Bringing rain. (45)

The thunder then speaks from the Upanishads, the Hindu scriptures: Datta, give; Dayadhvam, sympathize; Damyata, control. But these words, instead of conveying their great wisdom, only serve to emphasize in the protagonist's mind the failure of the waste land. "What have we given," he asks. The answer: nothing ever, except in

> The awful daring of a moment's surrender. (46)

Nor have we ever come out of our own egos to experience the real meaning of sympathy:

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44. Eliot, "What the Thunder Said."
45. Ibid.
46. Ibid.

Dayadhv@m: I have heard the key
Turn in the door once and turn once only
We think of the key, each in his prison
Thinking of the key, each confirms a prison. (47)

The only control man has exerted has been on a woman's body:

The sea was calm, your heart would have responded
Gaily, when invited, beating obedient
To controlling hands. (48)

At the end of the poem the protagonist is sitting on the shore, fishing, with the arid land behind him. The signs of meaning which have manifested themselves in the poem have not brought fertility or meaning to either him or the waste land. The meaning is apparently there, but the protagonist is not yet ready for it. Perhaps there is hope, however, for he wonders

Shall I at least set my lands in order? (49)

But

London Bridge is falling down falling down falling DOWN. (50)

~~down.~~ (50) Three lines of hope appear in a tongue which he cannot understand. Meaning is everywhere intimated, but he cannot pull these fragments together. He can only save them helplessly:

These fragments I have shored against my ruins. (51)

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47. Eliot, "What the Thunder Said."
48. Ibid.
49. Ibid.
50. Ibid.
51. Ibid.

The poem ends with, as Eliot points out in his Notes, a formal ending to a Upanishad, which means "The Peace which passeth understanding." The ending is formal, ironic, and not very hopeful.

Let us continue to follow the search by considering a poem written right after The Waste Land, Journey of the Magi. The quester, here one of the Magi travelling to Bethlehem, sets out in a winter waste land:

> 'A cold coming we had of it,
> Just the worst time of the year
> For a journey, and such a long journey:
> The ways deep and the weather sharp,
> The very dead of winter.'

This already indicates some degree of progress from the "Winter kept us warm" attitude of The Waste Land. The quest progresses through the waste land despite snow, sore-footed camels, refractory camel men, hostile towns, and voices singing in his ears.

> ....saying
> That this was all folly.

As he nears the place of Christ's birth, vegetation and water appear to suggest fertility and meaning:

> Then at dawn we came down to a temperate valley,
> Wet, below the snow line, smelling of vegetation;
> With a running stream and a water-mill beating the
> Darkness.....

At last he finds Christ's birthplace, the object of his search, the source of ultimate meaning. But the discovery is an anti-climax, only a let down and a source of bewilderment. The place:

...it was (you might say) satisfactory.

The meaning of his discovery is not clear to him:

> ....were we led all that way for
> Birth or Death?

He realizes that the Birth of Christ implies the death of his old way of life:

> ....this Birth was
> Hard and bitter agony for us, like Death, our death.
> We returned to our places, these Kingdoms,
> But no longer at ease here, in the old dispensation,
> With an alien people clutching their gods.

But he cannot go beyond this. He has died to an old way of life but has not been born into a new, meaningful one. The final line of the poem,

> I should be glad of another death,

is hopeless and resigned and leads us very nicely into Eliot's next poem, Ash-Wednesday.

At the beginning of Ash-Wednesday, the protagonist cannot turn back to the world:

> Because I do not hope to know again
> The infirm glory of the positive hour

And he cannot turn to the world of the spirit:

> Because I know I shall not know
> The one veritable transitory power

He is aware of the existence of meaning, but he cannot reach it:

> Because I cannot drink
> There, where trees flower, and springs flow,
> for there is nothing again

The protagonist's negation of the world and the spirit instead of leading to a state of death in life, however, leads to his symbolic death and rebirth. He dies to himself symbolically by being consumed by three white leopards under a juniper tree, a symbol of rebirth. By losing his ego consciousness he becomes aware for the first time of something outside of and far larger than himself, which can give meaning to his life. Dissembled and forgotten the bones are, by the Grace of the Virgin, prepared for a vision:

> As I am forgotten
> And would be forgotten, so I would forget
> Thus devoted, concentrated in purpose.

A kind of vision follows in which all opposites, all the fragments of a once meaningless life, are synthesized into the subsuming pattern of "The Single Rose":

> Lady of silences
> Calm and distressed
> Torn and most whole
> Rose of memory
> Rose of forgetfulness
> Worried reposeful
> The single Rose
> Is now the Garden
> Where all loves end.

The protagonist, awakened by this powerful intimation of ultimate meaning, continues his quest to seek for a lasting and ultimately significant

pattern such as the one symbolized by the single Rose. His quest is symbolized by a gradual and difficult climbing of stairs. Already on the second stair he looks down and sees his former self

> Struggling with the devil of the stairs who wears
> The deceitful face of hope and of despair.

At the second turning of the second stair he can no longer see his former self. He is alone on the torturous dark steps, which are

> Damp, jagged, like an old man's mouth drivelling, beyond repair
> Or the toothed gullet of an aged shark.

At the first turning of the third stair through "a slotted window bellied like the fig's fruit" he catches sight of the appealing sensuous world he is leaving behind:

> And beyond the hawthorn blossom and a pasture scene
> The broadbacked figure drest in blue and green
> Enchanted the maytime with an antique flute.
> Blown hair is sweet, brown hair over the mouth blown.
> Lilac and brown hair...

He defeats the temptation with a "strength beyond hope and despair" and climbs the third stair. In the next section the protagonist has a vision of the Lady similar to Dante's Beatrice,

> Who then made strong the fountains and made fresh the springs

The protagonist's attitude of the first section that the world, that which is measured in terms of space

and time, has no meaning beyond its temporal manifestation,

> Because I know that time is always time
> And place is always and only place
> And what is actual is actual only for one time
> And only for one place,

is, in the presence of his vision, replaced by the conviction that there is an eternal though unperceived meaning in the world of time and space, which can be redeemed:

> Redeem
> The time. Redeem
> The unread vision in the higher dream....

The vision gives to the quester further evidence of meaning, but the vision does not last; It is obvious now that in Eliot there is no neat, gradual, and regular ascent to meaning. Indeed, so far there has just been a rising to and a falling from something which could impart this meaning. The section we have just discussed ends on an ominous note:

> And after this our exile

The two concluding sections of the poem represent for the quester a steady decline in the degree of meaning suggested to him in his previous visions.

The Word, the Logos, which could renew the sense of meaning, is "the Word unheard." The perplexed quester asks

> Where shall the word be found, where will the word
> Resound?

He cannot find it:

> Not here, there is not enough silence
> Not on the sea or on the islands, not
> On the mainland, in the desert or the rain land....

Apparently meaning cannot be found by the efforts of man alone:

> Will the veiled sister pray for
> Those who walk in darkness....

The progress of the quester is arrested again in the last section:

> Although I do not hope to turn again

For a moment his desire for the earth returns, and his heart rejoices in the lilac and the sea voices. The protagonist realizes that he is existing in a position somewhere between meaning and meaninglessness:

> This is the time of tension between dying and birth.

And he can do nothing at this point but pray to the Holy Mother for peace and continued aid while he sits among perhaps meaningless rocks.

Thus it is apparent that even the protagonist's faith in the ultimate reality of God does not necessarily give to his own life meaning and significance.

Now that we have considered the direction which the search takes in the poetry of T. S. Eliot, let us

pause to consider the direction of another search -- that of James Joyce's Stephen Dedalus.

We have already suggested how the life of Stephen Dedalus began in A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man with the unconscious assimilation of the fragments conveyed by his five brand-new senses. We have seen how the first pattern of family life gradually lost its value as new elements entered into his life. We saw how the pattern at school gradually lost its meaning as he realized it was not as just and whole as it had once appeared. Already for the young Dedalus the fragments of life are arranging and rearranging themselves like the glass pieces in a turning kaleidescope.

Stephen cannot accept life as easily and unquestioningly as his friends, many of whom have already found a satisfactory pattern in life. We have already mentioned how at one time he must find out if there is order and justice in the religious-educational system. He could have accepted the injustice that he had received at the hands of Father Dolan as the other fellows probably would have done by not going to see the rector:

> The fellows had told him to go but they would not go themselves. (52)

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52. Joyce, A Portrait, p. 300.

But if he did what the other fellows would have done, he would never find out:

> If he went on with thefellows he could never go up to the rector...(53)

Stephen decides, almost symbolically it seems, to leave the other fellows and enter the dark corridor that led to the castle where he would find the rector, who could indicate whether there was order and justice in the pattern:

> He had entered the low dark narrow corridor that led to the castle. And as he crossed the threshold of the door of the corridor he saw, without turning his head to look, that all the fellows were looking after him as they went filing by. (54)

Because Stephen cannot accept the patterns which are apparently satisfactory to the other fellows, Stephen feels himself apart from others:

> He felt his body small and weak amid the throng of players and his eyes were weak and watery. Rody Kickham was not like that...(55)

> The noise of children at play annoyed him and their silly voices made him feel, even more keenly than he had felt at Clongowes, that he was different from others. (56)

At one point the conception of death enters Stephen's mind suggesting the mysterious and seductive atmosphere of The Waste Land's "Winter kept us warm":

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53. Joyce, A Portrait, p. 300.
54. Ibid., pp. 300-301.
55. Ibid., p. 284.
56. Ibid., p.

> How beautiful the words were where they said Bury me in the old churchyard! A tremor passed over his body. How sad and how beautiful! He wanted to cry quietly but not for himself: for the words, so beautiful and sad, like music. The bell! The bell! Farewell! O farewell! (57)

A peaceful, beautiful ending like that could release the seeker from the pain and torment of the search for meaning.

But Stephen is neither sterile nor paralyzed and will seek for meaning in contemporary life. We suspect already that he will seek some universal pattern into which the elements of his life can arrange themselves when he scribbles in his notebook at Clongowes:

> Stephen Dedalus
> Class of Elements
> Clongowes Wood College
> Sallins
> County Kildare
> Ireland
> Europe
> The World
> The Universe (58)

And by going to the rector in the castle he proves it.

In the second part of A Portrait Stephen is exposed to the apparent squalor and futility of the life in Dublin that is presented so well in Dubliners. In the morning Stephen would run in the park under the supervision of Mike Flynn, a Dubliner who now has a "flabby stubble-

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57. Joyce, A Portrait, p. 255.
58. Ibid., p. 265.

covered face," who sometimes would "gaze vaguely into the blue distance," aware of lost youth and futile waste. Stephen senses the state of his trainer and knows that he cannot exist someday in the same manner neither living nor dead:

> ...the same foreknowledge which had sickened his heart and made his legs sag suddenly as he raced round the park, the same intuition which had made him glance with mistrust at his trainer's flabby stubblecovered face....dissipated any vision of the future. (59)

Stephen gradually becomes upset and cast down by the "dull phenomenon ofDublin." The ignorance of his classmates as they discuss poetry, the dull dogmatism of his master who accuses him of heresy in an essay he has written, the poverty and irregularity of his home life all become forces "reshaping the world about him into a vision ofpoverty and insincerity." (60) During a trip to Cork with his now bankrupt father Stephen becomes more and more aware of a life which is barren of meaning. He listens without sympathy as his father talks about Cork and scenes of his youth.... "a tale broken by signs or draughts from his pocket flask." Whether in Cork or Dublin "the soul of the gallant venal city which his elders hadtold him of had shrunk with time to a faint mortal odour rising from the earth." (61)

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59. Joyce, A Portrait, p. 310
60. Ibid., p. 313.
61. Ibid., p. 446.

Stephen can no longer accept the unsatisfactory pattern found in the meaning of his nationality.

And he can not longer accept the family pattern as a meaningful synthesis for the fragments of life about him. His family is falling apart and the older Stephen is not able to live in his fairly well-ordered childhood:

> For some time he had felt the slight changes in his house; and these changes in what he had deemed unchangeable were so many slight shocks to his boyish conception of the world. (62)

For a while Stephen tries to create meaning by re-establishing the old family pattern by bringing everyone together with presents and recreation, which he makes possible with money he has won in an essay contest. He even overhauls his room, draws up a form of commonwealth for the household, opens up a loan bank for the family, and writes out resolutions. But these artificial means can not create a meaningful family pattern. His efforts in the direction of meaning are futile:

> How foolish his aim had been! He had tried to build a breakwater of order and elegance against the sordid tide of life without him and to dam up, by rules of conduct and active interests and new filial relations, the powerful recurrence of the tide within him. Useless. From without as from within the water had flowed over his barriers: their tides began once more to jostle fiercely above the crumbled mole. (63)

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62. Joyce, A Portrait, p. 310.

63. Ibid., p. 349.

His father, who never ceased telling him to "be a gentleman above all things" and "be a good catholic above all things" becomes a hollow sounding voice in his ears. Gradually Stephen ceases to listen to his parents and turns to the world of the mind and imagination to seek some kind of meaning from the apparent chaos:

> He gave them ear only for a time but he was happy only when he was far from them, beyond their call, alone or in the company of phantasmal comrades. (64)

In his life of the mind the only significance the city he walks through has for him are the literary associations called up by the various landmarks:

> ....as he passed the slablands of Fairview he would think of the cloistral silverveined prose of Newman;...as he walked along the North Strand Road...he would recall the dark humour of Guido Cavalcanti and smile.. as he went by Baird's stone cutting works in Talbot Place the spirit of Ibsen...., (65)

It seemed that his way of life put him "beyond the limits of reality," for he could scarcely respond to any stimuli from the real world. He read excitedly The Count of Monte Cristo and imagined meeting Mercedes, the heroine of the romance, by whom he would be transfigured in a "moment of supreme tenderness." (66) Here he would find meaning, and "weakness and timidity and inexperience would fall from him at that moment." (66)

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64. Joyce, A Portrait, p. 332.
65. Ibid., p. 436.
66. Ibid., p. 311.

Stephen is stirred by a feeling of unrest and wanders through the city down to the quays and the river "as if he really sought someone that eluded him."(67) He wants to find in the real world Mercedes, who can give his life substance and meaning: "He wanted to meet in the real world the unsubstantial image which his soul so constantly beheld."(68)

Gradually the images from the real world become more and more distorted in Stephen's mind:

> By day and by night he moved among distorted images of the outer world. A figure that had seemed to him by day demure and innocent came towards him by night through the winding darkness of sleep, her face transfigured by a lecherous cunning, her eyes bright with brutish joy. (69)

The fires of lust within him combined with the squalor of the fragmented life which he perceives around him transforms the ethereal goal of Mercedes into the desire to lust with "some baffled prowling beast," with "another of his own kind." Stephen lusts in the black, back streets of Dublin in an abortive, soul-destroying effort to embrace at least some fragment of the meaning which Mercedes could have given him. Again and again the fires of lust burn themselves out and chaos is replaced by "cold darkness." It seemed that "his soul lusted after its own destruction." (70)

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67. Joyce, A Portrait, p. 313.
68. Ibid., p. 311.
69. Ibid., p. 349.
70. Ibid., p. 355.

A new pattern appears to save Stephen from destruction. There is a religious retreat in which the horrors of hell are described in the most horrible and vivid manner. Stephen, acutely aware of his sin and his remotely possible redemption through the church and the Grace of God, turns through rededication, confession, and repentance back to the religious pattern. He feels that through this pattern he will be able to rearrange his life into order and meaning. He indulges in the mortification of his five senses in order to turn his attention away from the physical world. We recall how once the newly-born Dedalus used his five senses in a different manner by trying to assimilate experience. Now he keeps downcast eyes, withholds speech, deliberately siffs unpleasant odors, fasts, and does not respond to itching or pain in order to restrict his scope of experience to the religious pattern. Once again life begins to assume form and meaning:

> Gradually, as his soul was enriched with spiritual knowledge, he saw the whole world forming one vast symmetrical expression of God's power and love. (71)

Nevertheless, it still bothered him to see that after all of his "intricate piety" he was still prey to petty

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71. Joyce, A Portrait, p. 407.

human imperfections. Trivial incidents such as the sound of his mother sneezing make him most irritable. Soon he finds that his mortification and turning away from the world becomes a source of pent-up anger and frustration. The entire religious pattern becomes for him a cold and formal duty. He hears about the passion of love from the pulpit, but he can never feel this passion. The old prayerbook "with fading characters and sere foxpapered leaves" from which he reads his ritual comes to represent to him "a faded world of fervent love and virginal responses."(72) The formal pattern makes it impossible for him to "merge his life in the common tide of other lives."(73) It seems that the religious pattern is not entirely satisfactory.

Stephen had often imagined himself as an integral part of an ordered world as a priest solemn and splendid as he administered the Holy Sacraments, but when the director of the college talks to him about the possibility of entering into the Holy Order now, it is clear to Stephen that he cannot go. The life was ordered, but it was grave and passionless:

"The chill and order of the life repelled him." (74)

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72. Joyce, A Portrait, p. 409.
73. Ibid.
74. Ibid., p. 420.

He felt regret and pity "as though he were slowly passing out of an accustomed world and were hearing its language for the last time."(75) We recall a similar feeling of regret when he realized that he was passing away from the order and meaning of the family pattern.

It seems that "his destiny was to be elusive of social or religious orders."(76) He would set forth by himself and seek meaning among the snares of the world:

> He was destined to learn his own wisdom apart from others or to learn the wisdom of others himself wandering among the snares of the world.(77)

Stephen turns seaward and walks along the shore disregarding his classmates, who cry to him to join them in the water. "A voice from beyond the world was calling."(78) In a moment so intense and timeless "that all ages were as one to him," he has a vision of a girl, the Mercedes, for whom he had been seeking, wading in the ocean. He seems to see at this moment a winged form flying, climbing slowly into the air. It is the hawklike form of the man whose name he bears, who forged into lasting form the formless earth: "the symbol of the artist forging anew in his workshop out of the sluggish matter of the earth a new soaring impalpable

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75. Joyce, A Portrait, p. 414.
76. Ibid., p. 421.
77. Ibid., p.
78. Ibid., p. 427.

imperishable being."[79] At this moment Stephen realizes that he will find meaning not in "the dull gross voice of the world of duties and despair not in the inhuman voice that had called him to the pale service of the altar"[80] but in the life of art. He will be

> ....a priest of eternal imagination, transmuting the daily bread of experience into the radiant body of everliving life. (81)

Art, as Stephen defines it, is the process of understanding the nature of things and then the attempt "to press out from the gross earth...an image of the beauty we have come to understand."[82] Art then for Stephen will be the means by which he will try to transform the disorder of life into a meaningful, unchanging pattern. This pattern must possess integritas: "you apprehend it as a whole;" consonantia: "You apprehend it as complex, multiple, divisible, separable, made up of its parts, the result of its parts and their sum, harmonious;" and claritas: "You see that it is that thing which it is and no other thing."[83]

Stephen feels that he must fly by the "nets" of nationality, family, and religion, which have been flung at his soul, in order to pursue meaning through art.

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79. Joyce, A Portrait, p. 429
80. Ibid., p. 430.
81. Ibid., p. 488.
82. Ibid., p. 472.
83. Ibid., pp. 478-479.

Flying generally involves isolation, especially if it means flying beyond the environment which has surrounded one for so many years. It seems that isolation is often the fate of the seeker. It is certainly the fate of Dedalus. Stephen has always been somewhat apart from the others. We recall when

> The noise of children at play annoyed him and their silly voices made him feel, even more keenly than he had felt at Clongowes, that he was different from others.

And after his failure to reestablish the family pattern:

> He saw clearly, too, his own futile isolation. He had not gone one step nearer the lives he had sought to approach... (84)

And part of the collapse of the religious pattern was due to his failure "to merge his life in the common tide of other lives...." (85) Shelly's lines on the moon, which run through Stephen's mind, seen to express his condition:

> Art thou pale for weariness
> Of climbing heaven and gazing on the earth,
> Wandering companionless?....

Stephen almost encourages isolation by his oftentimes inhuman attitude. For instance, during a conversation, when the dean of the college calls the

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84. Joyce, A Portrait, p. 349.

85. Ibid., p. 409.

funnel which is used to pour oil into a lamp a "funnel", Stephen says curtly and pedantically:

> ....That? said Stephen. Is that called a funnel! Is it not a tundish? (86)

He is really too cute when during a class he frantically asks for paper so he can write down some observations:

> ---Give me some paper for God's sake.
> ---Are you as bad as that? Asked Moynihan with a broad grin. (87)

He is quite intolerable when he throws out questions during a conversation:

> Is a chair finely made tragic or comic?
> Is the portrait of Mona Lisa good if I desire to see it?
> Is the bust of Sir Philip Crampton lyrical, epical or dramatic? If not, why not? (88)

Questions such as these, which he thrust upon his unresponsive classmates "so that it had rapt him from the companionship of youth was only a garner of slender sentences from Aristotle's Poetics and Psychology and.. (89) Dedalus is an uncompromising intellectual, because of his principles he will not even give his suffering mother the comfort of going through the religious ritual. "Non serviam," he cries out proudly.

Almost everyone and everything he sees seems to be

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86. Joyce, A Portrait, p. 450.
87. Ibid., p. 454.
88. Ibid., p. 480.
89. Ibid., p. 437.

for him an expression of futility. For example, he uses the word "skull" in descriptions more often than "head". Consider his description of his friend Lynch during one of Stephen's one-sided intellectual discussions:

> The long slender flattened skull beneath the long pointed cap brought before Stephen's mind the image of a hooded reptile. (90)

Consider his description of his classmates swimming in the ocean:

> The mere sight of that medley of wet nakedness chilled him to the bone.
>
> How characterless they looked.... (91)

It seems symbolic that they are swimming while he walks along the beach.

At this point we might well ask if Stephen, rather than the others, is the one who is out of step. Perhaps Davin, who calls Stephen "a born sneerer," and McCann, who calls him "an antisocial being, wrapped up in yourself," are not so far from the truth. Later on Davin accuses Stephen of the deadly sin of pride:

> --In you're heart you're an Irishman, but your pride is too powerful. (92)

Cranly asks Stephen:

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90. Joyce, A Portrait, p. 471.
91. Ibid., p. 428.
92. Ibid., p. 467.

> I ask you if you ever felt love towards anyone or anything.

The answer:

> ---I tried to love God, he said at length. It seems now I failed. (93)

Stephen is conscious of his isolation from his fellow man and from life, yet as a quester he will accept and then affirm this perhaps inevitable state of the quester and the artist:

> He was alone. He was unheeded, happy, and near to the wild heart of life. (94)

Later on he says to Cranly:

> I do not fear to be alone or to be spurned for another or to leave whatever I have to leave. (95)

Cranly warns him:

> ---Alone, quite alone...Not only to be separate from all others but to have not even one friend.
>
> ----I will take the risk.

Stephen looked at Cranly and asked: "Of whom are you speaking?" (96) Cranly did not answer. Cranly had spoken of himself. Thus Joyce is suggesting that not only is the artist-quester alone but so is the apparently well-integrated man.

Dedalus will turn the frustration caused by loneliness into an apparently great advantage. It will enable him to

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93. Joyce, A Portrait, p. 511.
94. Ibid., p. 431.
95. Ibid., p. 518.
96. Ibid., p. 519.

soar beyond his "nets" more easily to attempt to define and find a meaningful pattern through art. He will leave Ireland and go into exile where "his spirit could express itself in unfettered freedom."(97)

This then is the direction which the search of Stephen Dedalus takes. Now that we have considered the direction of the search for both Eliot's and Joyce's quester, let us discuss the meaning into which the direction of the search gradually leads them. Let us turn first to Eliot's protagonist.

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We left the quester in The Waste Land painfully aware of meaninglessness and wondering whether he should set his lands in order. The quester approached meaning in Journey of the Magi by finding Christ, but instead of rebirth into a world given meaning by the religious pattern the quester experienced disillusionment and weariness. The traditional Christian symbols became more meaningful and real in Ash-Wednesday and almost brought to the quester the meaning for which he sought. But at the end of the poem

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97. Joyce, A Portrait, p. 517.

he is sitting among the rocks vaguely hoping for some future salvation and asking only for peace.

Four Quarters again explores the possibilities of meaning in life. Once again the search is within the realm of the traditional Christian symbols, but here the search goes further than ever before in finding meaning in life. Let us consider in some detail the meaning which the search gradually leads to in Four Quarters.

Life on earth or history, the objects and events which can be measured in time and space, is seen by the protagonist as an endless becoming. Everything in time and space is an eternal succession of beginnings and ends, birth and death, a steady rise and fall:

> In succession
> Houses rise and fall, crumble, are extended
> Are removed, destroyed, restored, or in their place
> Is an open field, or a factory, or a by-pass.
> Old stone to new building, old timber to new fires,
> Old fires to ashes, and ashes to the earth
> Which is already flesh, fur and faeces,
> Bone of man and beast, cornstalk and leaf. (98)

Endless, like the path of a circle, life on earth demonstrates no linear progress toward some ultimate meaning or goal. Where, asks the protagonist, is the "Long hoped for calm, the autumnal serenity/ And the

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98. Eliot, "East Coker."

wisdom of age?"(99) which the humanists predicted life on earth would evolve into.

And in man's search for meaning it is almost fruitless to try to develop a pattern into which life's fragments can be synthesized into meaning. The pattern constructed on the knowledge and experience of the past and the present is at most limited in value, because the pattern must change constantly with the flux of time. Events in time flow by and, to further complicate the issue, repeat themselves in a process of cyclical reoccurrence. To use an analogy, the pattern which gives meaning to the flow of two river of life cannot be significant and lasting because of the continual change or flow in the river. And then, complicating the issue, the water or events, which flowed past one, will flow past sometime again because of nature's cycle:

> There is, it seems to us,
> At best, only a limited value
> In the knowledge derived from experience.
> The knowledge imposes a pattern, and falsifies,
> For the pattern is new in every moment
> And every moment is a new and shocking
> Valuation of all we have been. (100)

This idea, of course, stands in contrast to young Stephen's feeling that a meaningful pattern might be approached through art.

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99. Eliot, "East Coker."

100. Ibid.

If life on earth is not evolving to any real meaning, and if no pattern approaching meaning can be developed by man, is life just a meaningless, endless flux, from the rivers to the sea and from the sea back to the rivers? "Where is there an end of it?" the protagonist asks. "End" as it is used here suggests purpose or meaning as well as conclusion. For life on earth apparently

> There is no end, but addition: the trailing
> Consequence of further days and hours...(101)

For individual man

> There is the final addition, the failing
> Pride or resentment at failing powers,
> The unattached devotion which might pass for devotionless,
> In a drifting boat with a slow leakage...(102)

Nevertheless, it is impossible to think of a "future that is not liable, / Like the past, to have no destination."(103) We have to think of the sailors on the sea of life as having a purpose, even if this purpose is only immediate and temporal:

> We have to think of them as forever bailing,
> Setting and hauling, while the North East lowers
> Over shallow banks unchanging and erosionless
> Or drawing their money, drying sails at dockage..(104)

We cannot think of them as

> ..... making a trip that will be unpayable
> For a haul that will not bear examination.(105)

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101. Eliot, "The Dry Salvages."
102. Ibid.
103. Ibid.
104. Ibid.
105. Ibid.

To the protagonist it seems that

> There is no end of it, the voiceless wailing,
> No end to the withering of withered flowers,
> To the movement of pain that is painless and motionless,
> To the drift of the sea and the drifting wreckage,
> The bone's prayer to Death its God. (106)

But at this point a ray of hope suggests itself to the protagonist:

> Only the hardly, barely prayable
> Prayer of the one Annunciation. (107)

The Annunciation is the prayer of the Virgin to God when the angel appeared and told her that she would give birth to Christ: "Be it unto me according to thy word." Thus perhaps an individual can find meaning by placing his will in the hand of God. It was with this glimmer of hope that we left the protagonist at the end of Ash-Wednesday.

At the beginning of Four Quarters the protagonist experiences in a moment of intense vision a dry pool in the rose garden:

> Dry the pool, dry concrete, brown edged,
> And thepool was filled with water out of sunlight,
> And the lotos rose, quietly, quietly,
> The surface glittered out of heart of light,
> Then a cloud passed, and the pool was empty. (108)

"But to what purpose" the protagonist does not know. Later it seems clear to the protagonist that such a fit of distraction is an intimation of something eternal manifesting

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106. Eliot, "The Dry Salvages."
107. Ibid.
108. Eliot, "Burnt Norton."

itself in the realm of the temporal: "The point of intersection of the timeless / with time:"

> The moment in and out of time,
> The distraction fit, lost in a shaft of sunlight,
> The wild thyme unseen, or the winter lightning
> Or the waterfall, or music heard so deeply
> That it is not heard at all, but you are the music
> While the music lasts.
>
> These are only hints and guesses,
> Hints followed by guesses... (109)

Thus the significance of his abstraction fit, the moment in the rose garden, is a hint of meaning. And

> The hint half guessed, the gift half understood
> is Incarnation. (110)

In the Incarnation of Christ the timeless reality of the Absolute manifested itself in the realm of time. The abstraction fit then, which suggests the eternal in time, provides for the protagonist positive evidence of meaning.

The Concept of life on earth, time and space, as a cyclical flux conbined with the eternal, the absolute not bounded by time and space, is symbolized by the protagonist and by Eliot as a turning wheel at whose mathematically pure center is a "still spot." Seen from life or history the still spot, the absolute, is eternally present though transcendent. Seen from the still spot every point on the wheel, every moment in history, is present and equidistant. The wheel is

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109. Eliot, "The Dry Salvages."
110. Ibid.

forever turning, the still spot forever still.

Life on earth, or history, is, as we have already suggested an endless flux in a constant condition of becoming, which exists by the tension of opposites, of death and birth, beginning and end, light and dark, joy and sorrow. The absolute exists in an eternal state of being. The absolute reconciles all opposites, which characterize becoming, into an all-subsuming unity:

> At the still point of the turning world.
> Neither flesh nor fleshless;
> Neither from nor towards; at the still point,
> there the dance is,
> But neither arrest nor movement. And do not call
> it fixity,
> Here past and future are gathered. Neither
> movement from nor towards,
> Neither ascent nor decline. Except for the point,
> the still point
> There would be no dance, and there is only the
> dance. (111)

The experience of the timeless in time, suggested by the abstraction fit and expressed mostpowerfully in the Incarnation, gives meaning to otherwise meaningless life on earth. The intersection of the timeless with time leads to

> ....both a new world
> And the old made explicit, understood. (112)

At this point incomplete and meaningless fragments of experience are made complete and meaningful:

> In the completion of its partial ecstasy
> The resolution of its partial horror. (113)

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111. Eliot, "Burnt Norton,"
112. Ibid.
113. Ibid.

Yet because time and change are part of man's nature, he cannot experience meaning and wholeness for more than instants:

> Yet the enchainment of past and future
> Woven in the weakness of the changing body,
> Protects mankind from heaven and damnation
> Which flesh cannot endure. (114)

Thus the bird that led the protagonist into the rose garden:

> Go, go, go, said the bird: human kind
> Cannot bear very much reality. (115)

Life on earth, then, is largely meaningless:

> Ridiculous the waste sad time
> Stretching before and after. (116)
>
> Time past and time future
> Allow but a little consciousness
> To be conscious is not to be in time...(117)

Nevertheless, it is life on earth, life in time and space, that makes what meaning there is possible. Meaning must be found <u>through</u> life:

> But only in time can the moment in the rose-garden...
> Be remembered: involved with past and future.
> Only through time time is conquered. (118)

The Word revealed by Incarnation gives man the pattern by which he can live in the most meaningful way possible for one in space and time. The Word makes possible for man meaningful harmony with life on earth and the absolute. However, as the first epigraph of the

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114. Eliot, "Burnt Norton.
115. <u>Ibid</u>.
116. <u>Ibid</u>.
117. <u>Ibid</u>.
118. <u>Ibid</u>.

poem states, "although the Word is common to all, most men live as if they had each a private wisdom of his own." Most men lead a completely meaningless life, because their own ego, instead of the absolute, becomes the center about which their time-chained lives revolve. Without the synthesizing pattern revealed by Incarnation existence becomes faded and fragmentary:

> Neither plenitude nor vacancy. Only a flicker
> Over the strained time-ridden faces
> Distracted from distraction by distraction
> Filled with fancies and empty of meaning
> Tumid apathy with no concentration
> Men and bits of paper, whirled by the cold wind
> That blows beforeand after time,
> Wind in and out of unwholesome lungs
> Time before and time after. (119)

Those lives on earth not in harmony with the pattern lack the somewhat meaningful order of the sailors who are forever "setting and hauling" or the order of the villagers as they dance in harmony with life's pattern:

> Round and round the fire
> Leaping through the flames, or joined in circles,
> Rustically solemn or in rustic laughter
> Lifting heavy feet in clumsy shoes,
> Earth feet, loam feet, lifted in country mirth
> Mirth of those long since under earth
> Nourishing the corn. Keeping time,
> Keeping the rhythm in their dancing
> As in their living in the living seasons
> The time of the seasons and the constellations
> The time of milking and the time of harvest
> The time of the coupling of man and woman
> And that of beasts. Feet rising and falling.
> Eating and drinking. Dung and death. (120)

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119. Eliot, "Burnt Norton."
120. Eliot, "East Coker."

The attainment of meaningful harmony, it seems, would come about by an increase of one's awareness of the pattern of life's dance with the absolute, which is revealed by the Word, combined with a corresponding decrease in ego consciousness.

In terms of Christian symbols, man can attain this harmony through Christ, "The wounded surgeon," and the church, "the dying nurse," and with the Grace of the Virgin, who will "Pray for all those who are in ships."(121) Through the Christian symbols man becomes aware of the fragmentary and diseased nature of his ego as it stands alone and of the purgation which is necessary before he can become significantly aware of something far larger, which is outside of his time and ego-chained being.

Meaningful action then involves gradual loss of ego:

> In order to possess what you do not possess
> You must go by the way of dispossession.
> In order to arrive at what you are not
> You must go through the way in which you are not.
> And what you do not know is the only thing you know
> And what you own is what you do not own
> And where you are is where you are not. (122)

Since "Time past and time future/Allow but a little consciousness," meaningful action involves "freedom/ From past and future also." (123) Detachment from the past, which exists in the ego's memory, and the future,

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121. Eliot, "The Dry Salvages."
122. Eliot, "East Coker."
123. Eliot, "The Dry Salvages."

Which exists in the ego's mind, leads to a consciousness of the omnipresent absolute, which exists outside of the ego and outside of time and space. Significant movement then would be detachment from ego, time and space, and movement into another intensity closer to the meaning and stillness of the center:

> Old men ought to be explorers
> Here and there does not matter
> We must be still and still moving
> Into another intensity
> For a further union, a deeper communion
> Through the dark cold and the empty desolation..(124)
>
> ...While the world moves
> In appetency, on its metalled ways
> Of time past and time future. (125)

The experience of intense communion, however, is reserved for a saint. For mostof us the intense consciousness of meaning is limited to moments like that in the rose garden:

> But to apprehend
> The point of intersection of the timeless
> With time, is an occupation for the saint--
> No occupation either, but something given
> And taken, in a lifetime's death in love,
> Ardour and selflessness and self-surrender.
> For mostof us, there is only the unattended
> Moment, the moment in and out of time,
> The distraction fit, lost in a shaft of sunlight...(126)

We, "Who are only undefeated/Because we have gone on trying," (127) at least can know, through the Incarnation, that we are a small part of the eternal pattern of the

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124. Eliot, "East Coker."
125. Eliot, "Burnt Norton."
126. Eliot, "The Dry Salvages."
127. Ibid.

cosmic dance about the absolute.

> We, content at the last
> If our temporal reversion nourish...
> The life of significant soil. (128)

This then is the position at which T. S. Eliot's protagonist arrives in his search for meaning in contemporary life. Now let us return to Stephen Dedalus, Joyce's protagonist, and consider the position into which the search for meaning leads him.

We recall that Stephen, at the end of A Portrait of the Artist as aYoung Man, has chosen the way of isolation and exile. He had decided to exile himself from the apparently unsatisfactory patterns of family, religion, and nationality to try to seek and find and define a meaningful pattern through art.

At the beginning of Ulysses, Joyce's next work, Stephen is back in Dublin, called back after a year on the continent by the death of his mother. He is still a frustrated, gloomy, self-centered intellectual-artist and is living in an abandoned tower with a boisterous, don't-give-a-damn Mulligan and Haines, a rather innocuous Englishman searching for Irish culture and tradition. Although Stephen pays the rent, Mulligan holds the key and is in virtual control, while Stephen seems nothing

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128. Eliot, "The Dry Salvage."

more than an intruder.

Stephen's search, which has led him beyond the nets that he felt had restrained his soul from flight, has not yet given him the meaning or awareness he needs to be an artist or even a human being. Stephen is aware of the failure of his search:

> Fabulous artificer, the hawklike man. You flew, Whereto? Newhaven Dieppe, steerage passenger. Paris and back. Lapwing ("lead and fall"). Icarus. Pater, ait. Seabedabled, fallen, weltering. Lapwing you are. Lapwing he. (129)

Stephen is troubled by the constantly reoccurring memory of his mother's death and his inhuman, egotistical refusal to pray at her bedside. Although he is aware of his egotism, he still remains proud and distant from life. He stands in sharp contrast to happy, well-adjusted Mulligan, who, always teasing Stephen about his inhumanity, says to Stephen, "There is something sinister in you..." (130) Mulligan calls Stephen "Kinch, the knifeblade," for all of Stephen's detached, analytical probing of life.

Joyce, like Eliot, makes use of vegetation symbols to dramatize the condition of physical and spiritual sterility. Thus it is significant that Stephen hates water, the life-giving element, and has not taken a bath in almost a year. He stands on the shore and watches

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129. Joyce, Ulysses, p. 208.
130. Ibid., p. 7.
131. Ibid.

Mulligan swim in the ocean as he had watched his classmates swim at the end of A Portrait. The bay in which Mulligan swims reminds Stephen only of death:

> Across the threadbare cuffedge he saw the sea hailed as a great sweet mother by the wellfed voice beside him. The ring of bay and skyline held a dull green mass of liquid. A bowl of white china had stood beside her deathbed holding the green sluggish bile which she had torn up from her rotting liver by fits of loud groaning vomiting. (131)

A man who has drowned in the bay and is due to "bob up" suggests death and possible resurrection in the indirect manner of Eliot's Phoenician sailor. It is likewise significant that Stephen, who is now teaching in Mr. Deasy's private school, that day discusses the drowned Lycidas:

> Weep no more, woeful shepherd, weep no more
> For Lycidas, your sorrow, is not dead,
> Sunk though he be beneath the watery floor...

Several minutes later Stephen tells Mr. Deasy that he will aid him in his campaign against hoof and mouth disease, the disease which afflicts cattle, the traditional symbol of fertility. Mulligan later dubs Stephen "the bullockbefriending bard."

Stephen, like Eliot's protagonist, is concerned with the problem of history. Perhaps here he will find a clue that will aid him in his search. Already

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131. Joyce, Ulysses, p. 2.

in A Portrait Stephen conceived of history, life on earth, as a kind of meaningless cyclical flux:

> Its alternation of sad human ineffectiveness with vast inhuman cycles of activity chilled him....(132)

History is the endless succession of events woven from wind by the wind:

> Time has branded them and fettered they are lodged in the room of the infinite possibilities they have ousted...Weave weaver of the wind.(133)

Joyce's conception of history would be close to the endless flux without the "still spot" in Four Quartets.

Stephen contemplates the possibility of meaning in history or life on earth as he walks along the seashore. The shells lying scattered about make him think of events which have once manifested themselves in time and are now nothing more than empty records in a cracked history book. He considers the "ineluctable modality of the visible and audible." (134) ——the inevitable movement of events in time and space—and tries to apprehend an unchanging reality behind the endless movement which leaves in its wake only hollow shells of memory. He fails, however, to sense any fixed pattern, any absolute behind this protean flux of things "clutched at, gone, not here." (135)

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132. Joyce, A Portrait, p. 346.
133. Joyce, Ulysses, p. 26.
134. Ibid., p. 38.
135. Ibid., p. 48.

Mr. Deasy feels that

> All history moves towards one great goal, the Manifestation of God. (136)

But to Stephen it seems that there is no ultimate meaning or significance in this endlessly recurring cycle. The only "absolute" is the flux of life:

> Stephen jerked his thumb towards the window, saying:
> --That is God.
> Hooray! Ay! Whrrwhee! (137)

There is no further meaning than man's brief existence, which leaves behind only empty, hollow shells.

Nevertheless, Stephen will continue to seek meaning in himself and for himself apart from the meaninglessness of history. "History," Stephen states proudly, "is a nightmare from which I am trying to awake." (138)

Mr. Deasy knows that Stephen will not remain long at his school, for he realizes that Stephen is "a learner," not a teacher. Egocentric Stephen is aware of this too as he asks himself: "And here what will you learn more?"(139) And Mr. Deasy, in the way of parting advice to unlistening, restless Stephen, adds: "To learn one must be humble. But life is the great teacher." (140)

At the beginning of Ulysses a theme is introduced

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136. Joyce, Ulysses, p. 35.
137. Ibid.
138. Ibid.
139. Ibid., p. 36.
140. Ibid.

which is highly significant in symbolizing a new direction in Stephen's search. Mulligan calls Stephen "Japhet in search of a father."[141] And Haines responds vaguely:

> ---I read a theological interpretation of it somewhere, he said bemused. The Father and the Son idea. The Son striving to be atoned with the Father. (142)

Stephen later in the day discusses one of his theories with several Dublin critics. He makes the distinction between real paternity and the paternity which is "legal fiction." Real paternity, he asserts, is a "mystical estate, an apostolic succession,"[143] in which the soul, or the essence of the father has begot the soul of the son. In the sense of real paternity, God is Christ's father, and Shakespeare is Hamlet's father. The paternity that is "legal fiction" is paternity caused by physical reproduction. A father whose fertilization produces a son is not necessarily the real father of his essence. Thus Hamlet Shakespeare is the son of Shakespeare's body, but Hamlet is the real son of Shakespeare's soul or essence.

> As God and the Son are one:
>
> He who Himself begot, middler the Holy Ghost, and Himself sent Himself, Agenbuyer, between Himself and others..sitteth on the right hand of His Own Self..(144)

Shakespeare, the ghost, and Hamlet are one:

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141. Joyce, Ulysses, p. 19.
142. Ibid., p. 20.
143. Ibid., p. 204.
144. Ibid., p. 195

> He is the ghost and the prince. He is all in all. (145)

If the spiritual father and son are in essence one, Stephen implies, the search and discovery of one's spiritual father could reveal to the son his own real essence. Thus:

> If Socrates leave his house today he will find the sage seated on his doorsteps. If Judas go forth tonight it is to Judas his steps will tend.
>
> We walk through ourselves, meeting robbers, ghosts, giants, old men, young men, wives, widows, brothers-in-love. But always meeting ourselves. (146)

Stephen's discussion then sets up in symbolic form the direction which his search will take. By searching for the symbolical spiritual father the protagonist will seek his own essence and meaning.

The whole structure of Ulysses, indeed, parallels the mythical search of Telemachus for his father Odysseus. For Joyce, who believed that history repeated itself "with a difference," it was not entirely unreasonable to transpose the ancient myth which had found expression in Homer's Odyssey into a search that takes place in modern Dublin.

For the major part of Ulysses we follow by means of Joyce's stream-of-consciousness technique the apparently trivial actions and the labyrinthian workings of the

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145. Joyce, Ulysses, p. 210.
146. Ibid., p.

mind of one Leopold Bloom during a typical day in Dublin. Bloom is at once an exile and a typical citizen. Bloom is a Jew and never really feels a part of the life around him, but we must remember that even a typical citizen like Cranly in A Portrait was a kind of exile. Bloom as citizen combines the traits of every man within himself. He is ill-informed, plebian, frustrated, a victim of all of man's common failings. He is often pathetic and ridiculous, yet at the same time he is sympathetic, courageous, and kind. Bloom is very real and very human, and his ultimate vision into which "allsconcurrent and consecutive ambitions now coalesced" is to be a proud homeowner in a selective section of suburbia. That Bloom spends a good deal of the day looking for crossed keys to be used in an advertisement for the House of Keys is symbolic of his lack of fulfillment, but, as William York Tindall points out, if Bloom were even nearly perfect, he would not be everyman.(147)

As Stephen speculates on the consubstantiality of father and son, Bloom thinks about his deceased son Rudy and longs for another son. Although Bloom and Stephen do not meet during the day, at one instant in particular their paths almost converge. Bloom enters

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147. William York Tindall, James Joyce, p. 35.

the library where Stephen is discussing his ideas on the father-son relationship in order to look up something on keys, but Stephen, too much absorbed in his theories, and too conscious of the impression he is making, does not notice Bloom.

That evening, soon after Mrs. Bufroy has given birth to a child, Bloom spots Stephen, who got drunk with a group of boon companions, making his way into a highly questionable part of town. His paternal instinct bids him to follow Stephen. Eventually they end up at Bella Cohen's whorehouse where Bloom takes the naive, drunken Stephen into charge.

This episode is a disordered, blaring, multi-colored glaring nightmare in which the subconscious of both Stephen and Bloom is projected into the setting of the brothel. What takes place is a violent release of emotions, a catharsis in which the fragments of life--primarily the fragments encountered during the day--flash by grotesque, transformed, and apparently unrelated. This ultimate state of chaos, it seems to me, could precede complete disintegration and madness or, on the other hand, prepare the way for a heretofore unfound peace and harmony in which chaos would be replaced by a synthesizing pattern. This case is fortunately the latter

Stephen uses his ashplant stick, the symbol of life,[148] which he has been dragging around all day, to smash the chandelier in Bella's livingroom:

> He lifts his ashplant high with both hands and smashes the chandelier. Time's livid final flame leaps and, in the following darkness, ruin of all space, shattered glass and toppling masonry. (149)

Thus he destroys the old light, which revealed only fragments, in preparation for something more illuminating. Although he proceeds to abandon his stick, it is rescued by Bloom and later returned.

Stephen then gets into a fight and is knocked down, but Bloom again comes to his rescue. As Bloom stands guard over Stephen, peace emerges from the terrifying chaos. In a moment of supreme tenderness and calm Bloom has a vision of his lost son:

> Silent, thoughtful, alert, he stands on guard, his fingers at his lips in the attitude of secret master. Against the dark wall a figure appears slowly, a fairy boy of eleven, a changeling, kidnapped, dressed in an Eton suit with glass shoes and a little bronze helmet, holding a book in his hand. He reads from right to left inaudibly, smiling, kissing the page.
>
> Bloom: (Wonderstruck, calls inaudibly.) Rudy! (150)

Here at the end of the day Bloom finds his spiritual son. And Stephen, when he regains his senses, will gradually come to realize that he has found his

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148. Tindall, A Reader's Guide to James Joyce, pp. 208-209.
149. Joyce, Ulysses, pp. 567-568.
150. Ibid., p. 593.

spiritual father.

It is very difficult, for Stephen and probably some of us too, to understand how a fine, original mind such as Stephen could find a spiritual father, one with whom he is in essence the same, in one as common and imperfect as Leopold Bloom. Indeed, Stephen has always conceived of himself as a separate, superior ego that must soar beyond people like Bloom. Up to this point he has disregarded remarks such as Davin's in A Portrait:

> In you're heart you're an Irishman, but your pride is too powerful. (151)

In acknowledging Bloom, as we shall shortly demonstrate, Stephen is for the first time accepting his own humanity. In discovering Bloom he is discovering that he is in essence a man, human and imperfect, and not a hawklike figure soaring above and away from life. His atonement, his at-one-ment, with the father symbolizes Stephen's discovery that he is a part of the huge cyclical flux of mankind. As a part of something far larger than himself perhaps he will find meaning. Perhaps life requires no further demonstration of meaning than the acceptance of the spirit that existence is meaning and justification in itself.

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151. Joyce, A Portrait, p. 467.

But let us back up for a moment and consider the nature of this gradual atonement. Stephen accepts Bloom's help and companionship, and they go together to a cabman's shelter for coffee and something to eat. At times they talk at cross purposes. For instance, on the nature of the soul,

> -(Stephen:) They tell me on the best authority it is a simple substance and therefore incorruptible. It would be immortal, I understand, but for the possibility of its annihilation by its First Cause, Who, from all I can hear, is quite capable of adding that to the number of His other practical jokes, corruptio per se and corruptio per accidens being excluded by court etiquette.
>
> -(Bloom:) Simple? I shouldn't think that is the proper word. Of course, I grant you, to concede a point, you do knock across a simple soul once in a blue moon. But what I am anxious to arrive at is it is one thing for instance to invent those rays Rontgen did, or the telescope like Edison, though I believe it was before his time, Galileo was the man I mean. (152)

they cannot communicate. Bloom, hardly an intellectual, is well out of his depth. Nevertheless, "Though they didn't see eye to eye in everything, a certain analogy there somehow was, as if both their minds were travelling, so to speak, in the one train of thought." (153) Even though they cannot discuss aesthetics and metaphysics with one another, they are sitting together and getting along tolorablely well as human beings.

Paternal Bloom asks Stephen to come home with

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152. Joyce, Ulysses, p. 618.
153. Ibid., p. 640.

him, and the two go off together arm in arm, talking about "music, literature, Ireland, Dublin, Paris, friendship, woman, prostitution, diet, the influence of gaslight or the light of arc and glowlamps on the growth of adjoining paraheliotropic trees, exposed corporation emergency dustbuckets, the Roman catholic church, ecclesiastical celibacy, the Irish nation, jesuit education, careers, the study of medicine, the past day, the maleficent influence of the presabbath, Stephen's collapse."(154) At one point they even sing "to be married by Father Maher."

This is the first time that we have really seen Stephen in actual communion with everyman or, as far as that goes, with any man. One might be tempted to say that Stephen establishes communion with Bloom because he has been drinking, but it seems to me that Stephen has been intoxicated for many years and is now gradually being sobered up by Bloom. For the first time Stephen is becoming aware of his fundamental nature.

Upon their arrival at Bloom's home Bloom lights a candle and then the gas range in order to prepare some cocoa and to suggest perhaps, on the symbolic level, "Light to the gentiles."(155) They sit down together

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154. Joyce, Ulysses, p. 650.
155. Ibid., p. 660.

at the kitchen table and get along very well talking, drinking cocoa and eating a bun. William York Tindall sees the act of drinking and eating as a kind of symbolic communion in which Stephen's atonement is solemnized.(156) Thus Stephen becomes "Blephen Stoom"(157) as he becomes aware of his humanity. Later as they stand together in the back yard, they see a sign:

> "A star precipitated with great apparent velocity across the firmament from Vega in the Lyre above the zenith beyond the stargroup of the Tress of Berenice towards the zodiacal sign of Leo.(158)

As Tindall points out, the star's motion symbolizes the movement of Stephen's career. Vega means falling; Lyra implies the self-centered; Berenice is a mother killed by her son; Leo is Leopold Bloom.(159) This Stephen soared out alone beyond family, religion and nationality first to fall and then to recognize his essential humanity in his discovery of his spiritual father.

The final chapter of Ulysses, the rich, pulsating, violently affirmative monologue of Molly Bloom, who is referred to as "Gaea-Tellus," the Great Earth Mother, expresses the spirit of the life force, the state of being of existence which reconciles all opposites, which requires no justification or meaning beyond its

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156. Tindall, James Joyce, p. 29.
157. Joyce, Ulysses, p. 666.
158. Ibid., p. 685.
159. Tindall, James Joyce, p. 30.

existence, the existence of life. Joyce suggests the spirit of the monologue in a letter:

> It begins and ends with the female word Yes. It turns like the huge earthball slowly surely and evenly round and round spinning. Its four cardinal points being the female breasts, arse, womb and... expressed by the words because, bottom..woman,.yes.

The fifty-page monologue, which begins on "yes" and ends on"yes" and has "yes" as an ever reoccurring refrain makes the concept of a search for meaning beyond life seem unconceptable. Life is life, so "Like it or lump it, " (161) as Molly says. Thus:

> I love flowers I'd love to have the whole place swimming in roses God of heaven theres nothing like nature the wild mountains then the sea and the waves rushing then the beautiful country with fields of oats and wheat and all kinds of things and all the fine cattle going about that would do your heart good to see rivers and lakes and flowers all sorts of shapes and smells and colours springing up even out of the ditches primroses and violets nature...(162)

Stephen, in the final illumination from his search in Ulysses, sees the light in Molly Bloom's window. He leaves the Bloom residence perhaps soon to become a real artist aware of his essential nature as a part of the flux of humanity and life that has meaning and significance simply because it is.

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160. Joyce, Letters, 170, as quoted by Tindall.
161. Joyce, Ulysses, p. 730.
162. Ibid., pp. 766-767.

Thus we have the search for meaning as developed by the protagonists of T. S. Eliot and James Joyce. The searches, originating from a disconcerting perception of a world of seeming unrelated fragments, led away from the world into the realm of a world-destroying religion and a tower of the intellect respectively. Gradually meaning was revealed where there had apparently been no meaning. One searcher finds significance in the flux of life through the existence of a pattern centered about an absolute:

> Keeping time
> Keeping the rhythm in their dancing
> As in their living in the living seasons
> The time of the seasons and the constellations
> The time of milking and the time of harvest
> The time of the coupling of man and woman
> And that of beast. Feet rising and falling,
> Eating and drinking. Dung and death. (163)

And the other finds meaning, or rather suspects meaning, in humanity and in the flux of life simply because life is.

> O that awful deepdown torrent O and the sea the sea crimson sometimes like fire and the glorious sunsets and the figtrees in the Alameda gardens yes... (164)

At any rate, since both searchers are aware that they can "like it or lump it," they will construct their lives on what they have found.

Thus I have attempted to develop a central theme that appears in the works of T. S.Eliot and James Joyce.

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163. Eliot, "East Coker."

164. Joyce, Ulysses, p. 768.

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