

The Significance of Catechism in “Ithaca” in the Light of Joyce’s Aesthetic Theory

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I. Introduction

In *Ulysses*, James Joyce intended to portray the collective psyche of the Irish people, i.e. “to betray the soul of that hemiplegia or paralysis which many consider a city” (*Letters* 55). The “Ithaca” episode is the penultimate chapter of the book, but it was meant to be the closure of the plot movement, as Joyce wrote Harriet Shaw Weaver on October 7th 1921 (*SL* 243). It is in “Ithaca” that Joyce intended to tell readers about the struggle of characters who try break free from the nightmare of their past history. However, instead of a plot movement, the whole chapter is composed of 309 questions and answers.

In a letter to Frank Budgen, Joyce said the method behind “Ithaca” was a mathematical catechism.

I am writing “Ithaca” in the form of a mathematical catechism. All events are resolved into their cosmic physical, psychical, etc, equivalents, eg, Bloom

jumping down the area, drawing water from the tap, the micturition in the garden...., so that not only will the reader know everything and know it in the baldest coldest way but Bloom and Stephen thereby become heavenly bodies, wanderers like the stars at which they gaze. (Budgen 257)

The above passage demonstrates that Joyce intended to show the mythic dimension of his characters through objective details, and the dichotomy between myth/fact is not far from Joyce's own aesthetic theory. Details which are executed with mathematical precision seem to meet the necessary condition to achieve epiphany, details being the sensory experiences through which epiphany is realized. The inquiring mind seeking the binary relationships between seemingly unrelated facts is that of an artist who tries to seek the relationships in parts, *consonantia*, which will lead to *claritas*. The scientific attitude behind the catechistical questions is that of an objective artist who tries to have an aesthetic detachment or objectivity.

However, catechism in the chapter is used excessively, making the chapter seem to be a burlesque of catechism. This aspect brought forth unfavorable responses from critics who did not like the intricacies of the style in the latter part of *Ulysses*. Edmund Wilson describes the "Ithaca" chapter as "artistically absolutely indefensible" (174). Noting the obsessive detail, Frederic Jameson says that the chapter is "the most boring chapter in *Ulysses*" (185). However, we cannot dismiss the "Ithaca" chapter so easily. Joyce once told Frank Budgen that "Ithaca" was his "favorite episode," "the ugly duckling of the book" (Budgen 258).

Besides artistic features, another dilemma arises as to the nature of Bloom's equanimity at the end of the chapter. After a long journey Bloom has an 'equanimity,' a sort of 'static mind,' and pre-and-post satisfaction, 'enchantment of heart' or an 'epiphany.' It is difficult to accept Bloom's 'equanimity' and his 'epiphany' as the real conclusion to the question raised in Bloom's character. If we do so, it is almost the same as believing the nymphomaniac Molly's final "Yes" as being that of Joyce himself. However, it is also difficult to assume that Joyce used an aesthetic theory in "Ithaca" for sheer mock epic effect and to criticize Bloom's

false 'epiphany.' Faced with Bloom's case at the end of the "Ithaca" episode, we find ourselves repeating the same extreme either/or interpretations typified by Richard Ellmann and Hugh Kenner, who showed respectively too much sympathy and too much irony toward the characters in the novel (White 3-4). These dilemmas ask us to examine more fully the significance of catechism in "Ithaca."

This paper proposes that the method of mathematico-catechism is a modern-day technique for epiphany, and that Joyce could achieve his artistic goal of depicting the paralyzed soul of a modern city objectively through his skillful manipulation of catechism in "Ithaca." The paper is structured in the following way. First, it will show that Joyce's aesthetic theory is based on Christian catechism. Second, it will examine how catechistical technique is used in "Ithaca." The explication of the use of catechism in the chapter involves the clarification of the figure of the catechist. The paper shows that the technique is used comico-seriously so that the reader can have a balanced view of characters, which will contribute to portraying the 'what-ness' of the soul of a modern man.

II. Joyce's Aesthetic Theory as Applied Aquinas

Harry Staley states that Joyce acquired Aquinian philosophy through a catechism (138). Moreover, the catechism prepared Joyce for his own more formal independent study of Scholasticism. William T. Noon stresses the fact that Joyce's early exposure to Scholasticism through catechism provided him with the basis for this further development of his own aesthetic theory (2). Joyce learned two things from Catechism and Scholasticism: the idea of what constitutes beauty and an artist's goal in art. First, the purpose of a catechism is to teach the divine providence, the underlying law of the world, an explanation of nature, of all existence, in terms of divine providence (Staley 139). The story of *Portrait* is focused on Stephen's self discovery of his own destiny as an artist. We can obtain a glimpse of Joyce's aesthetic theory through Stephen Dedalus in *Portrait*, who is Joyce's literary

persona. Stephen says that the purpose of art is to discover the underlying law, the scholastic “quidditas.”

When you have apprehended that basket as one thing and then have analyzed it according to its form and apprehended it as a thing you make the only synthesis which is logically and aesthetically permissible. You see that it is that thing which it is and no other thing. The radiance of which he speaks is the scholastic quidditas, the whatness of thing. (*PA* 213)

Basically, Aquinas, and thereby Stephen (Joyce), interpret beauty differently from the traditional view. Stephen in *Portrait* sees the beautiful as a cognitive activity, an act of knowledge and an act of achieving a teleology of things. He quotes from Aquinas for his definition of beauty —*pulcra sunt quoe visa placent*— “those things are beautiful the apprehension of which pleases” (*PA* 186). Thus an image is said to be beautiful if it perfectly represents the object, however ugly the object itself may be. In Joyce’s view, nothing is improper to art in so far as its treatment exhibits certain general characters. Whatever is intelligible is beautiful since a thing is beautiful in so far as it is capable of being the object of intellectual contemplation (Hope 189).

Therefore, an artist should achieve this goal. “Art is the human disposition of sensible or intellectual matter for an aesthetic end” (*PA* 207). Because the goal of art is an aesthetic end, it should avoid evoking animalistic desire, i.e. kinesis, but instead produce stasis: “The feelings excited by improper art are kinetic, desire or loathing. Desire urges us to possess, to go to something: loathing urges us to abandon, to go from something. These are kinetic emotions. The arts which excite them, pornographical or didactic, are therefore improper arts. The aesthetic emotion is therefore static. The mind is arrested and raised above desire and loathing” (*PA* 205).

Stephen in *Portrait* describes three necessary stages in achieving epiphany: *integritas*, *consonantia*, and *claritas*. The first stage of human apprehension is the distinguishing and organizing of sense impressions by a sensitive soul, the

apprehension of the object as a "sensible thing," "self-bound and self-contained," as Stephen puts it, "upon the immeasurable background of space or time which is not it." The second stage is a mind's action upon this sensible aspect of the object, and its abstraction from it of its intelligible structure: a stage that Stephen describes as the perception of *consonantia*. The whole act of knowledge concludes when the mind takes possession of the intelligible structure, apprehends the nature of the object and realizes it. Finally, if the mind apprehends the nature of things, it experiences aesthetic pleasure. "The instant wherein that supreme quality of beauty, the clear radiance of the esthetic image, is apprehended... a spiritual stage very like to that cardiac condition which Luigi Galvani ... called the enchantment of the heart" (*PA* 212-13).

In *Portrait*, Stephen, concerned about the clear definition of *claritas*, rejects pure symbolism or idealism. He stresses the importance of particulars, images from which the artist can draw the abstract idea, the underlying law: "to try slowly and humbly and constantly to express, to press out again, from the gross earth or what it brings forth, from sound and shape and colour which are the prison gate of our soul, an image of the beauty we have come to understand—that is art" (*PA* 207). Thus, as Patrick White puts it, the relationship between the objective reality and intellect in Joyce's aesthetics is the Hegelian movement of thesis and antithesis: "The artistic process is not analytical. It does not operate upon the intelligible, upon that which can be rendered into 'ideas.' The artistic process operates upon the sensible, upon that which can be rendered into images" (75).

However, Stephen in *Portrait* is rendered somewhat ironically when he expounds his esthetic theory. The irony comes from his inadequate interpretation of Aquinas. He uses Aquinas as far as it serves his own purpose: "I need them (Aristotle and Aquinas) only for my own use and guidance until I have done something for myself by their light. If the lamp smokes or smells, I shall try to trim it. If it does not give light enough, I shall sell it and buy another" (*PA* 187). What Stephen does not fully understand is the importance of life in art. He dissociates life from art and tends to be formalistic and subjective. According to

Noon, this aspect puts Stephen in the position exactly “antithetical to the ‘Aquination’ notion of this world as a sacrament which symbolizes the omnipresence of the divine artist who made it” (67).

In *Portrait*, Joyce, the author, tells a story in symbolic structure and dramatizes, through the ironic narrative, the subjectivism of Stephen which comes from his dissociation of art from life. Stephen is shown to be alienated from his immediate situation: “What do you mean, Lynch asked surlily, by prating about beauty and the imagination in this miserable God forsaken island” (*PA* 215)? The identification of Stephen with Icarus at the end of the novel implies the kind of danger to which Pyrrhic victory of Stephen is susceptible as the result of dissociation of art from life. In *Ulysses*, the trapped and wingless Stephen begins to realize that truth can be achieved only through sensory experiences, through the signatures and signs we can read by our senses. In “Proteus,” Stephen admits “the ineluctable modality of the visible” (*U* 3.1). Moreover, Stephen forces himself to realize that objective reality is the only avenue he has to knowledge: “There all the time without you; and ever shall be, world without end” (*U* 3.27-28).

Through the literary personae of the two novels, we can see what James Joyce as an artist aspire to present. He attempts to render the realm of unalterable laws, the *quidditas* of society itself, by selecting and disentangling, from the ‘mesh of defining circumstance,’ the essence, the *quidditas* of the world and reproducing that quality in a work of art.

III. Mathematical Catechism in “Ithaca” and the Soul of a Modern Man

When we read “Ithaca,” it seems that the chapter is very serious in asking catechistical questions. It is as if the narrator asks questions in order to find divine providence through those questions. Also he seems to follow faithfully the precepts of Joyce’s esthetic theory. Each question is focused on a certain phenomenon such

as Bloom's climbing the wall or drinking of Cocoa, etc. Each question is formed as if to show one object as 'self-bound and self contained,' *integritas*, which is the first stage in Joyce's esthetic theory in achieving epiphany. Also there are questions asking about relationships between characters, objects and events. The narrator seems to ask questions to find a relationship, an intelligible structure. Or, if we use a term in Joyce's aesthetic theory, it is as if they are designed to find *consonantia*, which will lead him to *quidditas*.

However, we are puzzled to see the apparent conflict between the inquisitive mind behind catechistical questions and the levelling mass of information which gives us a sense of displacement. That is, when we think of catechism as a method evolving ultimately from the fundamental curiosity of an inquisitive man in the universe, the purpose of catechism in the chapter seems to be defeated. As a matter fact, in "Ithaca," it seems that Joyce uses catechism for parodic effect. Between one question and the next, there is no logical link, nor do questions seem to go anywhere. It seems that the narrator is following the free association of a mind.

Also the narrator (catechist) merely strings details together without establishing any sense of priority among them, and the most unlikely analogies are made throughout the chapter. The binarism of the narrator (catechist) allows anything to be classified, and everything can potentially be compared to everything else: Milly Bloom is compared to a cat, and the door of exodus for Stephen and Bloom becomes the door of ingress for a cat. The comparison is also conducted among trivial incidents such as the different opinions of Stephen and Bloom about "the influence of gaslight or electric light on the growth of adjoining paraheliotropic trees" (*U* 17.44-45). The 'lateral imagination' of the narrator does not differentiate between tragic and comic happenings of no importance, and speaks in "the same toneless, unhuman voice" (Budgen 257). When the narrator asks a question about the relationship between the ages of Stephen and Bloom, the answer merely shows an extravagant expenditure of energy doing numerical calculations. Observing the mind of the narrative, Kenner calls this "the voice of the machine," or "the monster brain," and says that it "loses nothing, penetrates nothing, and has a category of

everything” (Kenner 165-167). He sees the analytic enterprise of the chapter as a kind of parody of metaphysical intuition, or of allied esthetic mode of knowledge.

Who then is the catechist? Kenner says he is the ‘epiphanization of industrial man,’ i.e. Bloom (168). Kenner is partly right and partly wrong. He is partly right in that Joyce is parodying the ‘limited mode of knowledge.’ Next the question arises as to whose, and the most plausible candidate is Bloom. Including Kenner himself, critics think Bloom’s mind is responsible for what is being transmitted, and a chorus of critical voices can be heard echoing the concept (Thornton 111). However, Kenner is wrong because, as Thornton says, the voice is omniscient (110). That is, the narrator is not confined to any single character’s perspective or knowledge, and he is cognizant of events and characters beyond this episode.

What Kenner finds to be parodic elements in the chapter lie not in the attempt itself, but in a modern man’s inability to find a pattern, which aspect is typified especially by Bloom. As mentioned earlier, the “Ithaca” episode is the penultimate chapter, but in reality it is the end of *Ulysses*. Thus by the “Ithaca” chapter, we have achieved the comprehensive view of the world. We find that the lives of Dubliners are far from the perfect state. For example, in “Hades,” we have seen that each man in the carriage going to Paddy Dignam’s funeral is isolated from each other by private troubles. Also each family is broken. Cunningham has a drunken wife. Stephen’s father, Simon Dedalus, is alienated from his children and has a drinking problem. As for Bloom himself, everyone knows that he is a cuckold. In the cemetery, each person is absorbed in his own thoughts. They no longer have religious belief but merely follow the burial ceremony superficially.

The problems of Stephen and Bloom are also presented as that of alienation in the country where they were born. Their alienation from other people is the symbol of the lack of abiding spiritual belief. Stephen’s feeling of fatherlessness is the symbol of the absence of a fixed and abiding tradition by which he can find the rationale of his existence. His tormented soul is an index to the general spiritual emptiness of the world. The spiritual vacuum where Bloom lives is presented as his being a Jew in Ireland. He is isolated and alienated from other people. His

incomplete life is repeated in his home: His son died and his father committed suicide. He is cuckolded by his wife. He has also lost his Judaic tradition and does not have any other religious belief. Bloom and Stephen are shown to be the keyless couple throughout the day.

In this world of disintegration, Stephen and Bloom try to solve their problems. They have tried to understand their past experiences and get meaning out of them, but both of them have been inadequate to do so because they cannot get over their limitations. This idea is presented through the word 'parallex.' Bloom is puzzled not being able to know it and forgets about it. Also, Stephen thinks about the word. They do not have the paralletic vision by which they can comprehend their experiences. Their opinions diverge upon a phenomenon such as the cloud which both of them saw in the morning. Bloom interprets the cloud scientifically whereas Stephen does artistically. Bloom is too scientific whereas Stephen is too artistic.

To put it another way, one is centripetal, the other centrifugal. Stephen cannot have an objective view of the world because he is so immersed in himself. He is shown constantly to be tormented by his remorse of having not prayed at his mother's death bed. His consciousness is like a magnet which absorbs every detail of the day onto his tormented soul. Bloom is first introduced as a person who relishes the inner organ of an animal, and with a reason: he represents 'life' that Stephen lacks. But Bloom is too much immersed in physical reality. Even when he is troubled by his own problem of the day, i.e. Molly's assignation with Bolyan, he tries to escape from the issue by seeking the fortune potato in his pocket or doing numerical calculations.

We, the readers, who have a wider perspective, can see that Bloom and Stephen are complementary to each other. Or, to borrow terms from Joyce's aesthetic theory, Bloom and Stephen represent respectively objective reality and the soul of an artist. It is in their understanding of each other that they can achieve freedom from their limited situation. However, throughout *Ulysses*, both of them fail to solve their problems. They are shown to 'almost' reach it, but they never succeed in it. Before we reach "Ithaca," we have come across the repetition of these characteristics of

Bloom and Stephen. The repetition of the traits of the characters works as a rhythm or leitmotif among all seemingly disordered details. The rhythm gives a pattern to the work, which is *consonantia* in Joyce's aesthetic theory.

From this perspective, it becomes clearer about the catechist, the figure with 'limited mode of knowledge.' We find that the "Ithaca" episode repeats what has been established as the pattern of the book. That is, the story of "Ithaca" is about the effort of both characters to understand themselves and their experiences. The episode deals with whether Bloom and Stephen can find the *quidditas* of their existence, and thereby freedom from their bondage. Thus, in "Ithaca," we find a thread of plot movement under the surface of disordered details. There are questions Bloom and Stephen ask themselves about the history of their personal experiences and the meaning of them. They also ask questions in order to understand the significance of the history of their society as well as their own.

Major comparisons in "Ithaca" pertain to the relationship of Stephen and Bloom as they try to find the 'pattern' of their experiences. The various points of contact are outlined according to the principles of identity and difference. The way in which Stephen and Bloom are similar and dissimilar is catalogued: their opinions, their ages, their temperaments, their ancestors' languages, their drinking speed, and the trajectory of their urination. They are substituted linguistically for one another: "Substituting Stephen for Bloom Stoom would have passed successively... Substituting Bloom for Stephen Blephen would have passed successively..." (*U* 17.549-50).

As they find similarities and dissimilarities, both of them are dimly aware of the differences between them. "What were Stephen's and Bloom's quasi-simultaneous volitional quasi-sensations of concealed identities? Visually, Stephens's: The traditional figure of hypostasis, depicted by Johannes Damascenus... Auditively, Bloom's: The traditional accent of the ecstasy of catastrophe" (*U* 17.781-786). They understand the difference between citizen and artist. "What two temperaments did they individually represent?/ The scientific. The artistic" (*U* 17.559-560). Also Bloom admires water—"never changing—everchanging water,"

(*U* 17.233-34) the symbol of life itself—while Stephen fears it.

However, they do not have the deep insight by which they can see the significance of their experiences. Bloom merely concludes that coincidence and chance rule the human existence after ruminating on the significance of the 'throwaway' tip. Also their mutual understanding is not as complete as ours. At most, it is mere "quasi-simultaneous volitional quasi-sensations of concealed identities" (*U* 17.781-782) For example, Stephen does not see that Bloom's fate represents that of general humanity. He is not considerate enough not to sing an Anti-Semitic song, 'Little Harry Hugh,' in front of Bloom. Also even though they are aware of the differences between themselves, scientist and artist, they do not realize that they are complementary to each other. Their promise to contract a permanent relationship between themselves is an uncertain issue. Stephen leaves Bloom alone 'under the interstellar space,' and each separates from each other into his own world. Therefore, what Kenner finds to be parodic quality in "Ithaca" does not lie in the attempt to find the meaning, but in the failure of the modern man to achieve '*quidditas*' of their existence.

Moreover, Joyce very often extracts sympathy from readers by showing the depth of Bloom's humanity, his suffering, his loneliness and his humble nature. In "Cyclops," Bloom is rendered heroic fighting against the one-eyed perspective in the country. He bravely confronts racism: "Love...I mean the opposite of hatred" (*U* 12.1485) Because of these sympathetic feelings toward characters, critics note the paradox. Kelly says that the tone wavers between sympathy and parody, and that the narrator's voice seems to be detached and cold, and yet it admits the possibility of sympathy (4). Budgen notes that the emotional drama of the characters is obscured, and yet we find that the chapter is touching in a way. More exactly, the voice of intellectualizing and coldness, which seems to parody Bloom according to Kenner, paradoxically becomes the very means of transmitting his loneliness and humanity.

Joyce sympathizes with his characters because he is aware that even though one needs to awake from 'a nightmare of history,' it is not easy to do so. As Goldberg

puts it, it is because of the irrevocable lapse of time which brought the irreparable decay: "The difference between the two worlds of the parallel is not the simple gap between noble Ideal and sordid Reality; it is the gap of time, which brings recurrence and change, fruition as well as decay" (151). So human beings are victims as well as conscious actors. In "Ithaca," both Bloom and Stephen are presented as victims of their history. The fact that Stephen inadvertently sings an Anti-Semitic song to Bloom means that he has not yet awakened from the 'nightmare of history.' Neither Bloom can draw a meaning out of Stephen's song. He is merely relieved to find that his own window is not broken and then becomes temporarily dejected to think about his own daughter, but then begins to be distracted by other thoughts.

Because of the similarities between Bloom and Stephen from the reader's perspectives, i.e. a predestined victim, Joyce presents Bloom's mind as that of humanity in general in "Ithaca." Very often the narrative follows the movement of Bloom's mind. He makes the narrator of the chapter adopt the characteristics of Bloom's mind. For example, the overzealous performance of the narrator who provides excessive details, avoiding more important issues, is similar to the characteristics of Bloom who continuously escapes from the important issue, i.e. Molly's adultery, among trivial matters. Also the seemingly plotless movement in "Ithaca" resembles Bloom's free association.

Joyce shows the mind of Bloom in "Ithaca," but tries to objectify it. He does not allow readers to pass a direct judgement on Bloom. By adopting a cold and indifferent mask, he changes the direct discourse of interior monologue to the indirect discourse of a scientific reporter. Moreover, Joyce makes us achieve stasis and contemplate and realize the what-ness of the mind of a modern man through his comico-serious use of catechism. Joyce shows the shortcomings of Bloom's mind through his ironic use of catechism, and the parody effected by this ironic use of esthetic theory extends to Bloom's obtuse mind. However, paradoxically, this ironic application of the esthetic theory shows vividly the pathetic condition of Bloom. He is shown to be a lonely and helpless victim whose effort to solve his

problem is destined to fail. Because of the dual purpose of aesthetic theory, the plot of "Ithaca" moves simultaneously toward parody and pathos. One succeeds the other, producing sudden contrast, or more often, both function simultaneously, growing out of and intensifying each other. Through these simultaneous reponses, we are able to have a static view and see the what-ness of a modern man typified by Bloom.

Coexistence of comedy and sympathy is apparent from the beginning of the chapter. On the way home, Bloom has been thinking about the inevitable loneliness of human beings. "He reflected that the progressive extension of the field of individual development and experience was regressively accompanied by a restriction of the converse domain of interindividual relations" (*U* 17.63-65). When he attempts to enter the house, he finds that he is keyless even though he has been reminding himself of the key all day. However, the narrative does not deal with how Bloom feels to find that he is keyless. Instead, the narrative goes on to explore in detail how Bloom prepares to climb the wall, where he has once measured his weight, whether he is injured or not and, if not, why he is not in scientific detail and objectivity:

Did he fall?

By his body's known weight of eleven stone and four pounds in avoirdupois measure, as certified by the graduated machine for periodical selfweighing [. . .] he reduced to quiescent candescence and lit finally a portable candle. (*U* 17.90-112)

The laboriousness of this kind of description brings forth the effect of a burlesque. The writing becomes an obvious performance, an exhibition of excess. The particular parodic quality derives from a sense of extravagance of detail. The juxtaposition of Bloom's important issue of the day, i.e. his keylessness, and the insignificant details of Bloom's actions resembles Bloom's way of thinking, his escapism through empirical reality. Because of the similarities between Bloom's mind and that of the narrative, the parody extends to Bloom himself. Parody,

however, is not long sustained because what we are beholding through these details is Bloom's pathetic condition of keylessness. That is to say, the long catalogue, which seems to distract our attention from the serious issue, prolongs the time span of our attention to the scene. By minute and objective description, the reader can realize the pathetic condition of Bloom's keylessness. It is through these particular details of Bloom's activity that the what-ness of Bloom's situation is revealed. It is not in spite of but because of these details that we can see Bloom's pathetic condition of keylessness.

The long catalogue on water also juxtaposes comedy and the serious. Once both Stephen and Bloom are inside Bloom's kitchen, the narrator asks catechistical questions about what Stephen sees on the opposite wall—miscellaneous sorts of laundry—and what Bloom sees on the range—a black kettle. After Bloom turns the faucet to let it flow, the narrator asks a very short question. “Did it flow?” (*U* 17.163) Then the narrator asks what Bloom sees in the water. This is a question asking the ‘what-ness’ of water. Bloom tries to find, through the phenomena, the images of water. To this question, the narrative provides a long catalogue of many phenomena of water. The passage is contained in one paragraph, but the paragraph runs more than one page. These series of trivial questions and exaggerated answers serve readily as objects of parody when we think of the purpose of catechism in Christianity, i.e. “an explanation of nature, of all existence, in terms of divine purpose” (Staley 151).

However, parody effected by the long catalogue is balanced by the serious question about the quintessential nature of the minds of Bloom and Stephen. Water in *Ulysses* has been associated with life itself, and the water motif is continued in “Ithaca” to tell the difference between the two: Stephen is described as hydrophobe whereas Bloom is hydrophile. The fact that Stephen is hydrophobe indicates that he still cannot engage himself fully in life and predicts his failure to understand Bloom in the future. On the contrary, Bloom, who loves water, is shown to be eulogizing the various aspects of water. He continues to explain the various phenomena of water because he cannot grasp the meaning and the essence of water.

The long catalogue on water, which Bloom cannot stop until he finds the meaning of water, shows his inability to grasp the meaning of water, and hence, the meaning of life itself.

Another example can be drawn from the scene when Bloom thinks of the possibility of achieving a permanent relationship with Stephen. Bloom realizes the difficulty in "the realization of these mutually self-executing propositions." He becomes pessimistic because of the "irreparability of the past" (*U* 17.975) and "imprevidibility of the future" (*U* 17.980). However, these serious questions become somewhat comical because of the incidents from which Bloom draws such conclusions. Once a circus clown declared Bloom as 'the clown papa' and the self-marked coin spent for grocery never returned. The comedy is blended with a tragic feeling evoked by the following questions.

Was the clown Bloom's son?

No.

Had Bloom's coin returned?

Never. (*U* 17.985-88)

The starkness of the statement, telling us of the frustration of Bloom's desire, elicits our understanding of the depth of Bloom's loneliness and his desperate need of a son. The serious tone is kept until the next question about human existence in general such as "inequality, avarice, and international animosity" (*U* 17.990-91). The narrative goes on to describe the important issue of the day, i.e. the exodus of Stephen and Bloom from the house of bondage. However, the exodus scene is described comically. The comic element is deepened by the juxtaposition of the exodus of the two characters with the entrance of a wandering cat.

The continuity or parallel between the "Ithaca" style and Bloom's mind becomes clearest once Stephen has left Bloom alone. When Bloom enters his room after seeing after Stephen, he hits his head against the furniture, which has been shifted by Molly in her preparation for the meeting with Boylan. However, the narrator avoids discussing the significance of this change or Bloom's feeling toward

it. Instead, he describes the change of the position of the furniture, the paraphernalia in the room. The movement of the mind here repeats what has been the characteristic of the “Ithaca” chapter. Or it is as if the narrative is a direct transcription of Bloom’s stream of consciousness. Again we see the parodic quality in the extravagance of details, but at the same time the details to which the narrator turns to deviate from more important issues show vividly Bloom’s pathetic condition. A piece of music on the piano tells us about Boylan’s recent visit. The matrimonial gifts such as a dead clock, an owl, and a dwarf tree render Bloom’s present condition very pathetic compared to his happier past.

Throughout “Ithaca,” the narrative seems to delay dealing with Bloom’s emotion until the end of the chapter. We do not see how Bloom solves his problem until the end. More exactly, it is Bloom who seems to defer facing up to Molly’s adultery, escaping into details of paraphernalia of the objective reality. But through these details, we see Bloom’s unchanging personality, his unflinching love for Milly and Molly, and his pathetic condition as a man who lives in a disintegrated age. For example, the detailed description of the bookcase shows Bloom’s pessimistic tendency. Bloom emphasizes defeats and minimizes victories of the protagonist in *The Life of Napoleon*. The titles of the books in the bookcase show Bloom’s scientific tendency. Through the expanded description of Bloom’s dream of Flowerville, we see his groundless optimism, which will evaporate very easily. The contents of the drawers show Bloom’s constant love for his daughter, his father and Molly. Also several items in the drawers remind ourselves of the lack of any abiding religious beliefs in Bloom as well as his deeply pessimistic view of the world. Through these details of objective reality, we can have glimpses of Bloom’s conflicting tendencies, his loneliness, his humanity, and his feeling of insecurity and we can sympathize with him.

The comet is a presiding symbol of “Ithaca,” and the language of astronomy is used as a way of presenting the objective and indifferent attitude toward objects. But it is used ambivalently. This is shown in the scene describing Bloom, who try to find the meaning of human experience by finding the correlation between

human beings and the stars.

Which various features of the constellations were in turn considered?

The various colours significant of various degrees of vitality... their degrees of vitality... their brilliancy; their magnitudes... the monthly recurrence known as the new moon with the old moon in her arms: the posited influence of celestial on human bodies... of a star of similar origin but of lesser brilliancy which had appeared in and disappeared from the constellation of the Corona Septentrionalis about the period of the birth of Leopold Bloom and of other stars of similar origin which had appeared in and disappeared from the constellation of Andromeda about the period of the birth of Stephen Dedalus, and in and from the constellation of Auriga some years after the birth and death of Rudolph Bloom, junior, and in and from other constellations some years before or after the birth or death of other persons: the attendant phenomena of eclipses, solar and lunar, from immersion to emersion, abatement of wind, transit of shadow.
 . . (U 17.1104-32)

We find a marked transition within the passage. The narrator (Bloom) begins by implying a significant correlation between astral and human events but gradually undercuts that significance because he does not provide the precise correlation between a star and human fate. It deprives uniqueness from Bloom's and Stephen's fate by implying that the correlation of stars with human fate is not exactly relevant. The gesture of Bloom, who tries to solve the meaning of human existence through astronomical signs, is further parodied by wider application of astronomical signs to natural phenomena and animals. Also the loose syntax of the sentence which seems to merely numerate arbitrary phenomena undercuts Bloom's gesture of finding a meaning. Therefore, Bloom's failure in the impending task, i.e. 'what to do with our wives,' is implied by the language of astronomy. "How did he elucidate the mystery of an invisible attractive person, his wife Marion (Molly) Bloom, denoted by a visible splendid sign, a lamp" (U 17.1178-79)?

However, astronomy is not used only for a mock effect. As Bloom's consciousness moves back and forth between past and future, and between microcosm and macrocosm, our focus of attention moves between microcosm and

macrocosm as well. Thus as our close attention to Bloom is shifted to the space where Bloom is situated, we begin to behold Bloom from interstellar space. Compared to the long span of years of the stars, human life seems to be so insignificant and transitory: “of the parallax or parallactic drift of so-called fixed stars” (*U* 17.1052-53). “in comparison with which the years, three score and ten, of allotted human life formed a parenthesis of brevity” (*U* 17.1054-56). Under the “cold of interstellar space” and “apathy of the stars” Bloom seems so lonely and helpless: “thousands of degrees of below freezing point or the absolute zero of Fahrenheit” (*U* 17.1245-48). From the spacial perspective, he is a mere speck in the vast world. The pathetic picture of Bloom contemplating upon the vast and mysterious universe impedes a sheer critical judgement of him.

At the end of the chapter, geometry and modern science as a mode of objective thinking help us to see Bloom’s condition sympathetically and to mitigate our critical attitude toward Bloom when he achieves the wrong *quidditas* of his relationship with Molly. First, Joyce shows comically how Bloom arrives at the wrong conclusion after his effort to see the meaning of Molly’s adultery. Bloom tries to see the what-ness of Molly’s recent love affairs as a recurrent phenomenon, so he numerates the series of Molly’s suitors following one after another. He tries to have an objective view as to Boylan, Molly’s current lover, so he tries to detach himself from any emotional involvement by dissecting Boylan into many aspects such as “a bounder, a billsticker, a bester and a boaster” (*U* 17.2145-46).

Bloom achieves a static relationship toward the love affair of Molly with Boylan, destroying kinetic responses such as ‘envy’ and ‘jealousy.’ He could achieve stasis—‘equanimity’—because he thinks that Molly’s adultery is most natural: “As natural as any and every natural act of a nature expressed or understood executed in natured nature by natural creatures in accordance with his, her and their natured natures, of dissimilar similarity” (*U* 17.2178-80). The jumbled syntax of the above sentence repeating ‘nature’ resembles Bloom’s sleepy mind and parodies his unclear conception of nature from which he draws the meaning of Molly’s adultery. What Bloom sees in nature is only chance events, aberrations

from the normal, such as “cataclysms and seismic upheavals” (*U* 17.1003-4). Also Bloom’s ‘enchantment of heart,’ his satisfaction after the conclusion, is a parody of the true satisfaction of an artist who has achieved the *quidditas*: Bloom finds happiness in Molly’s body and becomes humble again. After his long day of struggle, Bloom has not changed a bit.

However, Bloom is not merely ridiculed. When he falls asleep being satisfied, with the introduction of geometry and science, we are asked to see him in a wider perspective.

In what state of rest or motion?

At rest relatively to themselves and to each other. In motion being each and both carried westward, forward and reward respectively, by the proper perpetual motion of the earth through ever-changing tracts of never changing space. (*U* 17.2306-10)

Bloom himself thinks that he is resting on his bed. But, actually, he is not because he is living in the universe which keeps moving. What Joyce provides us with scientific language is the parallactic vision of Bloom’s world where only Einstein’s Relativism works. In the world where no abiding center exists, human beings’ effort to find meaning becomes futile. From this perspective, a human being is destined to fail in his effort, and becomes a victim as well as a conscious actor. The helplessness of a human being is presented as “the childman weary, the manchild in the womb”(U 17.2317-18).

Through the paradox of fact/myth mentioned earlier, readers can have a static view of Bloom, and see him as a representative man whose mind embraces all paradoxical elements of humanity and society. He becomes Noman and Everyman at the same time. He is Noman because he is so short of the Ideal, and at the same time, he is Everyman because he is a representative man. Bloom finally becomes a transitory star wandering and appearing everywhere among the fixed stars.

IV. Conclusion

Examining the technique of catechism in “Ithaca” in the light of Joyce’s own aesthetic theory enables us to see that Joyce’s intention in writing *Ulysses* is not fulfilled until “Ithaca.” It is in “Ithaca” that the final resolution of the action of the day is concluded. “Ithaca” repeats the day’s preoccupation, i.e. the possibility of freedom from bondage. Through the paradoxical use of catechism, Joyce shows the failure of the characters in achieving freedom. He shows how Bloom blunders into the wrong *quidditas*. But at the same time, the comical technique of catechism itself renders Bloom’s condition sympathetically. The simultaneous workings of parody and sympathy in the reader’s mind make it possible for us to maintain our static view of Bloom, and see him as one of fallible human beings who live in a corrupt world. Through the conflict and suspension of opposite emotions, we can establish a balanced view of him and achieve stasis. With stasis, we can see and contemplate, and realize the what-ness of a modern man, a victim predestined by his time and space.

We can also see that Joyce succeeded in the tests that he set for artists in his aesthetic theory such as classical temper, stasis, objective reality, etc. Most of all, Joyce’s complex manipulation of catechism and aesthetic theory was a part of his effort to find vital symbols by which he could represent his experiences, and he successfully made his own spiritual manifestation available for the apprehension of reader’s mind. Joyce could successfully render the image of the world he lived in, and as White says, he could make ‘its essence leap as it were from the mind of the artist to the mind of beholder’ (75).

“Ithaca” chapter is not ‘artistically absolutely indefensible’ nor ‘the most boring chapter.’ The very seemingly boring style becomes an effective means of portraying touching moments in characters. Thus analyzing the catechistical technique in “Ithaca” clears some serious misunderstandings by critics who think that Joyce’s intricate styles sacrifice reality. Rather, as Kelly says, we cannot disentangle matters of plot and psychology from the particulars of the verbal surface(3), and the

“Ithaca” chapter shows that very clearly. No wonder Joyce described the chapter as his ‘favorite episode,’ ‘the ugly duckling of the book.’ “Ithaca” is more than that. It is the consummation of Joyce’s own aesthetic theory.

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Abstract

The Significance of Catechism in “Ithaca” in the Light of
Joyce’s Aesthetic Theory

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Joyce’s intricate styles in the latter half of *Ulysses* sometimes brought forth misunderstandings by critics with the result that they thought Joyce was merely playing with technique for its own sake. This paper takes the “Ithaca” chapter, which is written in the form of a mathematical catechism, and attempts to argue against this perspective. In the “Ithaca” chapter, which is the penultimate chapter of *Ulysses*, but meant to be the closure to the plot movement, Joyce intended to tell readers about the struggle of characters who tried to break free from the bondage or nightmare of the past history. Joyce shows that it is a very heroic gesture but a very difficult task, so characters are not to blame because human beings are destined to fail. The technique of catechism is meant to show this to readers, and the chapter “Ithaca” requires this technique.

In order to show the above point, this paper takes the following steps. First, it argues that the technique of mathematical catechism in “Ithaca” derives from Catholic catechism and that it is closely related to Joyce’s own aesthetic theory, according to which the ultimate goal of art is to show the *quidditas* of society. Second, it will explicate in detail how Joyce executes the precepts of his own aesthetic theory in the “Ithaca” chapter, and show that Joyce succeeded in showing the *quidditas* of society by juxtaposing opposite emotions of comedy and sympathy. Joyce used the technique of mathematical catechism comically in “Ithaca” in order to show the struggle and the shortcomings of a modern man in achieving the goal. However, at the same time, the very comical use of catechism heightens the characters’ humanity, and leads readers to sympathize with their fallen condition.

Through the conflict and suspension of opposite emotions, we the readers can establish a balanced view of the characters and achieve *stasis*. With *stasis*, we can see and contemplate and realize the what-ness of a modern man, a victim predestined by his time and space.

■ Key words: “Ithaca,” style, aesthetic theory, catechism, comico-serious, *quidditas*

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