

**Questioning The Legacy: Stephen Dedalus an Audacious Nonconformist in  
*A Portrait of The Artist As A Young Man***

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**Abstract:**

Reckoning with majority does not substantiate the objective of life; however, what substantiates is an exertion of emancipation from being counted among the ranks of insane. Therefore, by reasonably escaping from the mainstream, the audacious humans can recognize the shackles and the superfluous limitations that control their creative capacity and constructive thinking. Consequently, focusing on that underlying certainty, that beckons the nonconformist attitude, it proves evidence to the force that bestows legitimacy towards the exactness of life. Through a close reading of James Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1916), this research paper spotlights on how Stephen Dedalus relinquishes the obligatory submission, desired by the existing institutions, emerging out of his overwhelming anguished self-consciousness. Moreover, it accentuates on how he detects the gleam of light that allows him to reject the unconstructive legacy of the dead institutions, rooted with socially constructed impositions, to embark upon the mysteries of life.

**Keywords:** Conformity, Institutions, James Joyce, Mystery, Self-Reliance, Stephen Dedalus

**Introduction:**

Nonconformists must develop self-confidence to differentiate themselves from the mainstream to avoid giving false testimony favouring the opinion of the masses. Nonconformity at its beginning is a challenging task, however, proves a prized virtue in shaping them as an epitome of intellect. Stephen Dedalus, the Joycean hero "groping painfully toward some understanding of himself" (Waith 256) undergoes a metamorphic journey by denying the established opinion to represent the "superhuman courage to face the world alone" (Waith 256). Such attitude transpires when Stephen answers Cranly's question "What then is your point of view?" "I will tell you what I will do and what I would not do. I will not serve that, in which I no longer believe, whether it call itself my home, my fatherland, or my church" (Joyce 219). Therefore, manifesting such conviction, it develops an audacity to overcome the obstacles constructed in the name of goodness. He, however, taking himself, his art and moreover his rebellion too seriously therefore, expressing in the lyrical quality "Welcome, O life! I go to encounter for the millionth time the reality of experience and to forge in the smithy of my soul the uncreated conscience of my race" (Joyce 253).

"Apologise" and "Never peach on a fellow", the paradoxical legacy entrenched by his parents guides him to an unanticipated destination foregrounding elements like brutality, discrimination, and double standards eventually results in isolation and then yearning for his home. The homesickness overwhelms Stephen emotionally concluding to compensate the anxiety through Christmas holidays. Nevertheless, the home exemplifying harmonious haven, corrupted, demonstrates its flawed nature.