Joyce on Epiphany

Here are some quotes from Joyce’s early draft of *Portrait of the Artist as a Yong Man*, which was then titled *Stephen Hero*. In this work Joyce’s character defines what constitutes an epiphany. If you use these quotes, simply reference this handout.

By an epiphany he meant a sudden spiritual manifestation, whether in the vulgarity of speech or of gesture or in a memorable phase of the mind itself. He believed that it was for the man of letters to record these epiphanies with extreme care, seeing that they themselves are the most delicate and evanescent of moments. (Joyce *Stephen Hero*)

First we recognize that the object is one integral thing, then we recognize that it is an organized composite structure, a thing in fact: finally, when the relationship of the parts is exquisite, when the parts are adjusted to the special point, we recognize that it is that thing which it is. Its soul, its whatness, leaps to us from the vestment of its appearance. The soul of the commonest object, the structure of which is so adjusted, seems to us radiant. The object achieves its epiphany. (Joyce *Stephen Hero* 58)

It is, then, a sudden realization of thing in all its full and unique significance, "an explosion out of darkness ... a kind of mystical experience when a part of the veil shrouding the mystery of the world was suddenly drawn aside so that the true nature of things seemed revealed."