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EXISTENTIAL PHILOSOPHY.

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NAUSEA: AN EXPRESSION OF SARTRE'S
EXISTENTIAL PHILOSOPHY

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NAUSEA: AN EXPRESSION OF SARTRE'S
EXISTENTIAL PHILOSOPHY

By Ashok Kumar Malhotra

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Division of the University
of Hawaii in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

ABSTRACT

By analysing the literary devices and existential themes, this dis­
sertation establishes the literary and philosophical significance of
Sartre’s Nausea.

In Chapter I, the literary and philosophical assessments of Nausea
are surveyed. They fall into four groups: Nausea is regarded as a
philosophical novel; second, it is seen as a psychological and autobi­
ographical work; third, it is acclaimed as a work of literature; lastly,
it is dismissed as a loosely organized and second rate work of art. These
opposing views establish that Nausea is both an important literary and
philosophical work that demands both literary and philosophical study
and criticism if the novel is to be viewed validly and comprehensively.

Chapter II considers the literary devices of metaphor, humor and
irony in Nausea. Through these devices, Sartre conveys to the reader his
message that existence in general and man in particular are superfluous,
absurd, contingent, and viscous. Also, three reasons are presented for
the choice of diary form for Nausea: first, Roquentin's struggle with
his inner crises forces him to write his reflections in a personal diary;
second, Sartre chooses this form to present Roquentin's life realistically
to the reader; finally, Sartre wants to provide the reader with the ex-
perience of immediacy which only this form can.

In Chapter III, the philosophical contents of the novel are made
explicit. All the existential themes touched upon in the novel are brought
under four general headings: existence, nausea, freedom and justifica-
tion of existence. Against the positions of Jeanson and Murdoch, it is
also argued that the aesthetic solution is a genuine one in the novel for
two reasons: first, the whole impact of the novel lies in the solution
of creating a work of fiction; second, Sartre adopts this solution for
himself by choosing his career as a writer in his later life.

The concluding Chapter analyzes the question of Nausea as an expression
of Sartre's existential philosophy. In this connection, the views of
Albérès, Barnes and Murdoch, who regard Nausea as an expression of Sartre's
existential philosophy are examined. Their claims are inadequate for
three reasons: first, they fail to distinguish between the emotional in-
terpretation of existence as presented in Nausea from the philosophical
description of being as presented in Being and Nothingness; second, they
ignore the fact that the themes in Nausea are different in content from
the corresponding themes in Being and Nothingness and are similar only
in name; last, they overlook the fact that some problems that are essen-
tial to existential philosophy are completely absent from Nausea.

Thus, Nausea is not an expression of Sartre's existential philosophy,
but it establishes a postulate (presence of existence) which Sartre
takes for granted in his philosophy. Therefore, Nausea complements
Sartre's philosophy and is a first step to the comprehension of it.
CHAPTER I

CONTROVERSY ABOUT NAUSEA

Nausea, Sartre's first novel is his most controversial book. It has attracted more than a dozen reviewers and dozens of commentators and critics. One of the reasons for this attention is its unique style—a style which follows a direction quite different from those of contemporary novelists in French literature. It has captured the attention of philosophers because it is called by one of the critics a "novel of ideas." The general reader finds a familiarity with its ideas because "it brightly reflects the times and is timely in mood." Evidently, the critics find its novelty bewitching because: "it is imitable and leaves a great deal for other writers to say. Its newness is captivating and it can be argued about endlessly."  

Philosophers, critics, and readers find something significant in this book, though the significance is defined quite differently by each of the three groups. The philosophers find in it a message which throws light on the problem of existence and man's contingency. The critics and novelists are intrigued by the newness of its form and style because it "inspires a school of writing." On first reading it, a psychologist might find a

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2 Munson, op. cit., p. 8.
3 Ibid., p. 8.
4 Ibid., p. 8.
case study, whereas the general reader is shaken by the horrible joy it brings: "the paradox of the central vision in Nausea is so forced and barefaced that most readers will not be able to accept it as anything but a perversion of the truth, a degenerated twisting of the classic experience of Western man."5

Naturally, one wonders what sort of book Nausea is. After all, it has intrigued the critics and novelists, has conveyed a penetrating message to the philosophers, and has brought a shocking joy to the general reader. A single answer which can satisfy philosophers as well as critics is simply not possible. Philosophically, the most fruitful procedure to adopt in approaching this book is as follows: first, to put forth in a clear fashion the conflicting views and contrary statements which are advanced by the various critics and philosophers concerning the nature of Nausea; second, to assess Nausea as a work of art with its unique form and to discuss the literary devices employed to convey its author's message; third, to explore and discuss in detail the existential themes contained in Nausea; and, finally, to explicate the philosophical significance of the work in the molding of Sartre's entire existential philosophy. The analysis of the novel according to the above plan will do justice to the literary and philosophical contents of the book and thus establish its importance in the evolution of Sartre's thought.

In this chapter, the main concern will be with the critics and philosophers who have passed different judgments upon the significance of Nausea. Not only are their judgments different but, in some cases, they are opposed and even contradictory. These judgments fall into four

5 Time Magazine, LII (May 2, 1949), 102-104.
classes. Some of the critics and philosophers regard *Nausea* as a philosophical novel. Others feel that the philosophical concern is marginal and that *Nausea* is really a psychological and autobiographical work.

Judging it as a work of art, some literary critics think of *Nausea* as a milestone in twentieth-century fiction. Finally, others dismiss *Nausea* as a loose and second-rate work of art. Since the views of more than a dozen critics and interpreters will be presented in this chapter, it is important to treat them separately under these four categories. First, then, the view of those interpreters will be presented who regard *Nausea* as a philosophical novel.

A. *Nausea: A Philosophical Novel*

All the critics and philosophers who fall into this group assert that *Nausea* is a philosophical novel. Their reason for so regarding it is that they consider *Nausea* an expression of Sartre's existential philosophy.

The phrase "an expression of existential philosophy" is interpreted in three different ways by the critics. First, René Marill Albére takes the position that *Nausea* illustrates in a literary form the essence of Sartre's philosophy; second, Miss Hazel Barnes supports the view that *Nausea* contains the basic existential themes which are developed systematically in *Being and Nothingness*; and finally, Miss Iris Murdoch and Anthony Manser hold that *Nausea* is an experiment in a new way of doing philosophy insofar as it contains all of Sartre's main interests except the political ones.

All of these interpreters assert that *Nausea* is an expression of Sartre's existential philosophy even though they interpret the term "expression" in various ways.

In this section, the clarification of the statements made by the above interpreters will be undertaken. This task is not limited, however,
to mere exposition or rewording of the statements of the critics; an analysis of their statements will be made in order to find out what is said and what is left unsaid by them. Criticism will be offered whenever it is needed. This approach does not limit itself to any single point of view but instead makes fully clear what is implicit as well as explicit in these different assessments.

The first point of view to be clarified is that of Albérès who believes that all the fictional works of Sartre are illustrations of his philosophy. According to his position, every work of Sartre is written on two levels, one literary and the other philosophical. A first reading of Sartre's fictional works gives one a meaning which is literary, though there is also an esoteric meaning. This esoteric meaning is the theory of which the literary meaning is an illustration. In order to set forth the esoteric meaning, one has to make use of Sartre's philosophical works as a guide. The use of such a procedure is supported by Albérès who states:

Sartre is an esoteric writer, for his novels and his characters have a general meaning as well as a hidden meaning. For those not versed in philosophy his characters acquire a certain meaning at first reading; but to get at the meaning which Sartre confers on them, it is necessary to decipher them with the help of his philosophical works.6

Albérès believes that Nausea is a fictional work and, therefore, necessarily illustrates Sartre's philosophy. To get at the philosophical ideas illustrated through Nausea, Albérès insists that one is required to comprehend Sartre's major philosophical work (Being and Nothingness).

Albérès gives one the impression that, prior to the writing of Nausea, Sartre had already developed his philosophy clearly and explicitly. In

his interpretation, two points are worth noticing. First, Albéres seems to place *Nausea* on the same level with others of Sartre's fictional works because he thinks that it (*Nausea*) is written to illustrate some of the philosophical ideas just as these others frequently do. Second, Albéres regards (*Nausea*) as different from other works in that it illustrates some philosophical ideas which form the essence of Sartre's philosophy. However, there seem to be some major shortcomings in Albéres' position.

For surely it is wrong to assert (as Albéres does) that Sartre was clear about his philosophy before he wrote *Nausea*. If Sartre had developed his complete philosophy clearly and explicitly prior to the writing of *Nausea*, there would seem to be no reason for him to have written a novel in a diary form to illustrate the essence of his thought. Some critics might argue that Sartre was clear about his philosophy before writing *Nausea* and that he wrote the novel to exploit another medium. So it might appear, but, actually, he did not. It will be demonstrated in the final chapter that Sartre was not using the medium of the novel to express his philosophy but instead was dealing with certain problems in *Nausea* which could not be tackled adequately through any other medium except the one he used.

There are several reasons for maintaining that before he wrote *Nausea* Sartre was not clear about his philosophical position, either in total or even in regard to many major themes. In fact, the writing of *Nausea* forms a special and important phase in the evolution of Sartre's philosophy. It fulfilled some special need in the development of his thought. In the introduction to his *Critique de la Raison Dialectique*, Sartre points out that *Being and Nothingness* (which is the full and complete exposition of his existential philosophy) is the product of an enterprise which was started in 1930. During the following decade, Sartre seems to have been trying to
come to grips with his philosophy (which he presented in *Being and Nothingness* in 1943). In 1936, Sartre, concerned with the problem of consciousness, presented his criticism of Husserl's concept of it in his own *Transcendence of the Ego*. In this work, he challenged and rejected Husserl's concept of the transcendental ego, as well as his emphasis upon the primacy of the Cartesian *cogito*, and, furthermore, he established the pre-reflective *cogito* as the primary consciousness.

After writing *The Transcendence of the Ego*, Sartre turned his phenomenological concern to the analysis of the presence of existence. The peculiar thing about existence he found is that it is subjective and cannot be adequately conceptualized. Heidegger, with his philosophical ingenuity and categories, was unsuccessful in his attempt to unveil existence. Sartre, who was well-versed in Heidegger's philosophy, seems to have understood the problem one faces when attempting to conceptualize existence. From Heidegger's failure, Sartre must have learned that no work of pure philosophy through conceptual analysis and logical argumentation can reveal existence in its nakedness. Therefore, Sartre wrote a novel in which the main character (Roquentin) intuitively established existence by experiencing it. Sartre accomplished this task in *Nausea* by utilizing the diary form. Roquentin, the hero of the novel, grasps the meaning of existence intuitively. It can be pointed out that his nausea still is not a philosophy but is essentially an intuitive and sensitive reduplication of his own experience of raw existence. But this personal intuition of existence determines to a large extent the philosophical system which explicates it. With the writing of *The Transcendence of the Ego* and *Nausea*, Sartre came to possess the two basic presuppositions of his philosophy: the pre-reflective *cogito* as primary consciousness and the
contingency of existence. In Being and Nothingness, Sartre took these two presuppositions more or less for granted and worked out his entire philosophy systematically from them. Therefore, by the time he completed The Transcendence of the Ego, Nausea, and Being and Nothingness, he had complete possession of the essential features of his existential philosophy.

The preceding discussion refutes Albérè's claim that Nausea, like other fictional works of Sartre, is an illustration of his philosophical ideas. Second, it refutes Albérè's other claim that Nausea expresses the essence of Sartre's thought. Finally, Albérè is inaccurate in thinking that, as in other works, the grasping of the philosophical ideas in Nausea requires an understanding of Sartre's later philosophical works. He, like many other critics, is reading too much of Sartre's later philosophy into Nausea. This is an incorrect approach because it undermines the worth of the novel, which is unique in terms of its style and content. After reading Nausea, one senses the experience of existence as Roquentin sensed it, and he need not turn to Being and Nothingness to grasp the thoughts expressed in the novel. Rather, he should turn to the philosophical work to find out the type of philosophy Sartre has worked out from his negative experience. Thus, it is proper to say that the understanding and appreciation of Sartre's philosophy in Being and Nothingness requires the grasping of the significance of Nausea.

The next view to be presented is that of Barnes. She has something different to say about Nausea, though some of her statements resemble very closely those of Albérè. When she states that "Nausea, is richest in philosophical content . . . the only full exposition of its
meaning would be the total volume of *Being and Nothingness*, it seems that she is concerned with pointing out that *Nausea* has a philosophical content the meaning of which can only be grasped if one reads into it the philosophical system of *Being and Nothingness*. Further, it appears that Barnes' position is different from that of Alberes in that she maintains that *Nausea* is a novel which is filled with illustrations of existential motifs, whereas Alberes suggests that *Nausea* expresses the essence of Sartre’s thought. Barnes singles out for discussion two main existential themes: absurdity of existence and nausea. She suggests that Sartre describes these themes in nearly the same words in both *Nausea* and *Being and Nothingness*. She appears to be saying that *Nausea* is a philosophical novel in which Sartre is analyzing some of the philosophical problems which become prominent in *Being and Nothingness*. In opposition to Barnes' conclusion, this thesis maintains that Sartre is not so much analyzing any philosophical problems in *Nausea* as he is establishing intuitively the presence of existence. Sartre's descriptions of the absurdity of existence and the revelatory power of nausea are not philosophical descriptions or normative statements but are rather emotionally charged artistically formed interpretations of reality. Thus, *Nausea* does not present or illustrate as much as it determines to a large extent the type of philosophy Sartre works out from it.

The third view to be presented is that of Anthony Manser and Iris Murdoch. Manser holds that *Nausea* is a philosophical novel in which Sartre is presenting a new way of doing philosophy. He thinks that Sartre's way

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7 Hazel Barnes, *Introduction to Jean-Paul Sartre’s, Being and Nothingness* (New York, 1965), p. xvi.
of doing philosophy is comparable to the way Wittgenstein and Ryle do philosophy. Manser thinks that Wittgenstein's philosophy is not concerned with arguments or proofs but rather with examples which point only, and he suggests that "in La Nausée, Sartre seems to have done precisely this, to have dispensed with the proofs and left us the examples." He commends Sartre's way of doing philosophy in Nausea despite the fact that he finds that Sartre's attempt has not been entirely successful. To decide whether Manser's position is correct or not is not within the province of this thesis; what must be noted is that the impact of Manser's position makes the study of Nausea much more interesting and significant philosophically.

Murdoch's view is just as interesting and significant. She maintains that Nausea is a philosophical novel which contains "all his [Sartre's] main interests except the political ones." She asserts that Nausea is written on many philosophical levels and in particular is concerned with the problems of metaphysics, epistemology, ethics and aesthetics. This position makes one view Nausea as a novel which contains a glossary of philosophical terms discussed in some detail and to which Sartre refers time and again in order not to lose his philosophical track. Murdoch seems to be so completely hypnotized by the unusual style of Nausea and the type of descriptions in it that she is led to believe that the novel is more a philosophical treatise in the style of Descartes' Meditations. Since Descartes' Meditations is a complete exposition of his philosophy, Murdoch's interpretation implies that Nausea is also a complete exposition

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of Sartre's philosophy.

There are some shortcomings in Murdoch's position. Her interpretation is incorrect because she reads too much of Sartre's later philosophy into *Nausea*. She neglects to recognize that *Nausea* forms only a first stage in the evolution of Sartre's thought and that it is a major step in establishing a basic presupposition with the help of which Sartre works out his existential philosophy systematically in *Being and Nothingness*. To read into *Nausea* what Sartre says explicitly and clearly in *Being and Nothingness* is to undermine the value and worth of the content and the style of the former. It is maintained in this thesis that *Nausea* is a philosophical novel in its own right, and, thus, it should be studied in that spirit. The most significant approach to *Nausea* involves the recognition of it as a work of art in which Sartre is using certain literary devices to convey his message. Any study of the novel which neglects the discussion of the literary devices is one-sided because it ignores the literary significance of the work—a mistake which will not be made in this thesis.

B. *Nausea*: Not a Philosophical Novel

There are, however, other critics who are not convinced that *Nausea* is a philosophical novel. They feel that the philosophical concern is marginal and that *Nausea* is really a psychological work which is essentially autobiographical. The profound critic Henry Peyre thinks that it is inappropriate to regard *Nausea* as a philosophical work. He writes: "*La Nausée* ... is not a philosophical novel nor roman à thèse; but it is replete with the philosophical implications of what Sartre had been thinking since 1931 or so." 10  

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forth his experiences of the 1930's in a fictional form. He approaches *Nausea* from a literary point of view, and, though there is much merit in his analysis, there are deficiencies that are serious. He is correct in stating that *Nausea* is a novel in which Sartre has presented his lived experiences with the ingenuity of an imaginative writer. The serious weakness in Peyre's analysis is his failure to recognize that *Nausea* is a special type of novel which establishes one of the basic presuppositions of Sartre's existential philosophy—i.e., existence is experienced to be absurd. Since Peyre's analysis does not take into consideration the philosophical import of the novel, it seems to be one-sided. This point is brought forth clearly by Gabriel Marcel in his paper, *Existence and Human Freedom*.

In this paper, Marcel is concerned with the discussion of the development of Sartre's philosophy from *Nausea* to *Being and Nothingness*. He suggests that if one wants to understand Sartre's philosophy, one "must begin by seeing what is valid in Sartre's premises."¹¹ In order to appreciate Sartre's philosophy of man, one has to look for the premises in *Nausea*. Marcel finds that Sartre has presented in a precise and forceful way the initial experience of existence, and "an account of it must form the preamble to any analysis of Sartre's anthropology..."¹² Marcel takes for granted the truth of Sartre's experience of existence and goes on to discuss the value of this experience to Sartre's later philosophy.

Marcel will agree with Peyre that *Nausea* is not merely a fictional work

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but that it also contains Sartre's genuinely lived experience. He states that "there can be no doubt that the identity of the hero, Antoine Roquentin, is that of the author himself."¹³ Moreover, for Marcel, Nausea is a novel in which Sartre's originality is at its best: "its profound originality lies in the fact that it shows us the genesis of an experience which was at first simply lived, then fully recognized, and which finally assumed in some sense the authority of truth itself for its subject."¹⁴ This truth is that existence is absurd—a truth revealed and described in Nausea, and one which forms the initial premise of Sartre's existential philosophy.

Marcel suggests that Sartre has intuitively established the premise of his philosophy in Nausea. The fact that Sartre's experience of existence in Nausea is negative explains why his whole existential philosophy is a negative philosophy. Marcel emphasizes that the truth which has revealed itself to Sartre in Nausea has had an overwhelming effect on the development of his entire subsequent philosophy. It is interesting to note that Marcel nowhere takes the position of Murdoch that all of Sartre's philosophy is present in Nausea in an embryonic form. Instead, he emphasizes that Nausea is an important stage in the development of Sartre's thought. This emphasis is an important fact to remember for the comprehension of Sartre's later philosophy.

In the preceding sections, the views of those critics who consider Nausea to be or not to be a philosophical novel have been discussed. The

¹³ Ibid., p. 49.
¹⁴ Ibid., p. 49.
next two sections will be concerned with the views of those critics who regard Nausea as a work of art or who deny it the status of a first rate piece of literature.

C. Nausea: An Artistic Milestone in Twentieth Century Literature

There has been considerable dialogue concerning Nausea as a work of art. The critics and the commentators have many diverse things to say about it. Peyre and Munson have the highest praise for Nausea as a novel. Munson, who reviewed Nausea in The Saturday Review, judges it the sort of novel "which inspires a school of writing." He thinks it to be important that Nausea is written in diary form. This novelty of Sartre's method is bewitching and inspires both readers and writers. The greatest praise comes from Peyre, who points out that "the novel . . . is a milestone in twentieth-century fiction. Its impact on the creators of "the new novel" was powerful. Critics and students have heaped up commentaries on its meaning and on its style. It has the fresh impetuousness of a youthful work, the joy of adolescent revolt against the sham values of one's environment; it audaciously mingles philosophy and fantasy, poetry and comedy." Peyre's appreciation reaches its peak when he declares that the novel is an ironic work whose parts are skillfully harmonized to give one the feeling of a symphony, some of whose parts are unforgettable.

Munson acclaims the dexterity which Sartre shows in writing the novel. He states that "to write a novel in diary form that will have the narrative appeals of immediate interest ('what's going to happen next?') and of

15 Vide Munson, op. cit., p. 8.
outcome interest ("how will it all turn out?") is a considerable feat of skill," and that Sartre has proved that he possesses this skill. This statement is confirmed by the reviewer in *Time* who declares that "in spots the book has an ingenuity and sharpness of detail worthy of first rate talent," as well as other critics who regard *Nausea* as Sartre's best written novel. In this respect, Charles Rolo's remarks are worth mentioning here. While appreciating the talent and the descriptions given by Sartre in *Nausea*, Rolo points out that:

Within the limits of his subject, Sartre has not neglected the creative task. His ideas are brought to life with great intensity in the texture of Roquentin's experience, and there is a good deal of small incident which is gruesomely amusing. *Nausea* seems to me the best-written and most interesting of Sartre's novels.  

Thus, it has been pointed out that *Nausea* is a book with a unique style which indicates a new way of writing novels. According to these critics, Sartre seems to have been successful in his new experiment. In What is *Literature* Sartre points out that the contemporary novel should be written in such a way as to give the reader a present-tense feeling of immediacy, and he seems to have attempted this in *Nausea*. That he is both successful and effective in this attempt in *Nausea* will be discussed in detail in the second chapter of the thesis.

There are, however, other critics, some of whom are outstanding novelists, who take sharp exception to the views of the above-mentioned critics. Their views will throw light on those aspects of *Nausea* which the critics

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17 Munson, op. cit., p. 8.
18 *Time*, op. cit., p. 102.
in the group already considered have either not noticed or knowingly avoided.

D. *Nausea: A Loose Type of Writing*

Vladimir Nabokov and Milton Rugoff are well known critics. They not only deny that *Nausea* is a first-rate novel but are even ready to declare that it is a loosely written book. Rugoff points out that *Nausea* in diary form was an experiment which has not been very successful or effective. He maintains that *Nausea* "is . . . a series of entries in a journal, disjointed, diffuse, no doubt like our daily lives in its lack of accent and its mingling of trivia and crises, but not therefore an effective or even readable narrative." Rugoff points out that *Nausea* was put forth to reflect the mood of time but it has not been successful.

Nabokov has also a very negative opinion about *Nausea*. He maintains that *Nausea* was Sartre's first try to inflict his idle and arbitrary philosophic fancy on Roquentin, the hero of the novel, and that "a lot of talent is needed to have the trick work." From his point of view, Sartre is unsuccessful. Unlike Peyre, Nabokov thinks that the central discovery in *Nausea* is arbitrarily concocted and that this discovery might have been of a different nature without affecting the rest of the book. Nabokov declares that: "one has no special quarrel with Roquentin when he decides that the world exists. But the task to make the world exist as a work of art was beyond Sartre's powers." So in Nabokov's eyes *Nausea*

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falls short of a genuine work of art in many respects. His negative criticism reaches its zenith when he declares that Nausea "belongs to that tense-looking but really very loose type of writing, which has been popularized by many second-raters." This assessment leaves one in doubt as to whether Sartre or Nabokov is a second-rater. This question will be resolved later.

At this point, the views of two other critics deserve to be mentioned. These critics not only differ on the philosophical and literary status of Nausea, but they even differ in their immediate reactions to it. Julia Strachey points out that Nausea is a very hard book to read, and she often wonders why Sartre makes it so difficult for the reader. She bluntly maintains that Nausea is really a nauseating novel which only a strong man will dare to read and get through without repercussions.

On the other hand, when A. J. Liebling read Nausea, he had a completely different experience and wrote: "Nausea is the most enjoyable book Sartre has ever written. Nausea is, despite its title, an essentially romantic book." In conclusion, these opposing views and conflicting statements serve to establish at least one point: namely, that Nausea is an important book both philosophically and from the point of view of literature. Further, this brief survey of differing assessments, both literary and philosophical, provides the basis for the structure of this dissertation. Chapter II will provide a critical examination of Nausea as a work of art with

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23 Nabokov, op. cit., p. 3.

special reference to the literary devices used in the novel. A justification for the choice of the diary form for Nausea will also be given.

Chapter III will be concerned with an elaboration and an examination of the various existential themes in Nausea, in order to explicate the philosophical contents of the book. The concluding chapter will provide a comparison of these existential themes with the key philosophical problems in Being and Nothingness. Moreover, an attempt will be made to answer the central question of the thesis: Is Nausea an expression of Sartre's existential philosophy?
CHAPTER II
NAUSEA AS A WORK OF ART

As a work of art, Nausea has been adjudged either an artistic milestone in twentieth century literature or a second rate novel by most critics. It seems that some of them have ignored completely the discussion of the literary devices which are used to convey the message of the author in the novel, whereas other critics who do touch upon these literary devices, are not concerned with a comprehensive account of them. It is maintained here that any literary approach to Nausea which does not consider the literary devices must be incomplete and one-sided. This chapter will, therefore, explore and discuss various literary devices (i.e., metaphor, humor and irony) in order to make explicit their contribution to the conveying of Sartre's message in the novel. The discussion will be presented in three parts. Part One will be concerned with a short summary of Nausea. Part Two will present a discussion of the three main literary devices, and Part Three will provide a justification for the choice of the diary form for the novel.

Part I
Summary

Nausea is Sartre's first and perhaps his greatest novel. It appeared in 1938 with an editorial note stating that Nausea was printed from "notebooks ... found among the papers of Antoine Roquentin."¹ The novel is, in fact, more like a metaphysical diary kept by Antoine Roquentin in

which he has jotted down his philosophical reflections. Roquentin, an uprooted intellectual, has had an adventurous life and is now bored with it. He settles in Bouville, a French seaport, to begin his work on the biography of M. de Rollebon, an eighteenth century libertine and intriguer.

Roquentin is mainly concerned with understanding himself and the nature of things. To accomplish this end, he avoids all social involvements because he regards them as traps which might hinder his search. Roquentin is a reflective thinker whose goal is to describe his every experience. He wants to clarify these experiences so that he can attain the desired understanding. He states, "I do not need to make phrases. I write to bring certain circumstances to light. Beware of literature. I must follow the pen, without looking for words."²

His purpose is not to write for the sake of writing but to clarify certain experiences and events which happen to him. He writes down in his diary all those experiences which might reveal to him the meaning of existence. He finds that crude existence hides itself behind the veil of meanings which people have assigned to things. In order to experience or to understand the meaning of existence, he must remove the veil of meanings. Roquentin experiences different situations and each of them brings him closer to the experiences of naked existence.

Roquentin, a solitary figure, leads a comparatively idle life. The reader finds him a recluse infested with boredom. His boredom becomes pathetic when he says, "I am alone, most of the people have gone back home, they are reading the evening paper, listening to the radio. Sunday has left them with a taste of ashes and their thoughts are already turning

² Ibid., p. 79.
towards Monday. But for me there is neither Monday nor Sunday: there are
days which pass in disorder... He appears to have chosen boredom
and idleness as a means to the revelation of existence—a choice not with-
out morbidity. In order to be free, Roquentin has decided to remain un-
committed, and he appears to the reader as an image of empty freedom cul-
minating in nausea.

A creature whom Sartre calls the Self-Taught Man intrudes upon the
lonely world of Roquentin. This man is an office clerk who suffers from
the obsession that he can improve his mind and thus solve his life's prob-
lems by reading books. Toward this end, he assigns himself the task of
going through all the books in the library in alphabetical order. The
Self-Taught Man considers himself a humanist because he feels that he
loves all mankind. In actuality, his humanism is empty because he, like
Roquentin, has avoided all social relationships. Both men are equally
lonely.

The portrait of the Self-Taught Man is drawn very skillfully by Sartre.
In his autobiography, Sartre admits that he tends to create dialectically
opposed characters in his novels and plays. In this way he believes that
he can objectify his own good and bad characteristics. From this one might
surmise that Sartre fills the Self-Taught Man with all the characteristics
and ideas which he wants to reject in himself. The naive and uncritical
attitude toward life which Sartre has once had himself is brought to light
through the ramblings of the Self-Taught Man. As the early Sartre had
done, the Self-Taught Man regards books as objects of devotion which keep
him away from the realization of his own loneliness. Through the Self-

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3 Sartre, op. cit., p. 76.
Taught Man, Sartre shows that bookish knowledge is a useless guide to
social behavior. This is clear from the incident in the public library,
in which the Self-Taught Man is turned out because he is found to be a
pederast making advances to a young visitor. Roquentin is portrayed as the
dialectic opposite of the Self-Taught Man. He is a critical thinker who
must reflect on everything before he assimilates it. He hates the ludi-
crous culture which the Self-Taught Man represents and detests everything
to which the latter is devoted.

Another character with whom the reader comes in contact in the novel
is Anny. She is an actress and a former mistress of Roquentin. Anny is
depicted as philosophically more sophisticated than Roquentin. She thinks
that the only way to justify existence is to realize "perfect moments" or
"moments of exultation." Anny feels that if life is a series of insignif-
icant moments, it might be justified if there are some "perfect moments,"
because they can give life a meaning and a form. In the last pages of his
diary, Roquentin describes his meeting with Anny. He finds that Anny has
changed and does not believe in "perfect moments" any more.

Throughout the diary, the reader sees Roquentin struggling with an
idea similar to Anny's "perfect moments," desiring to make his life an
"adventure." Roquentin grumbles and says to himself, "I wanted the moments
of my life to follow and order themselves like those of a life remembered." He
too thinks that an adventure can give sense and meaning to life. In the
end, he realizes that there are no adventures in real life because adven-
tures are only in books. An event becomes an adventure when it is narrated,
but while one lives, nothing happens.

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4 Sartre, op. cit., p. 58.
The Self-Taught Man and Anny are the only significant characters with whom Roquentin comes in contact. The first entry in Roquentin's diary describes the sickening sensation which he experiences while throwing a stone into the sea. This sickening sensation develops gradually, and the reader becomes aware of it from the descriptions given by Roquentin in his diary. Initially, Roquentin becomes aware of this feeling when he tries to throw a stone into the sea, but his feeling develops as he wanders through streets, cafés, museums, and public parks. Roquentin feels that he is moving towards his goal, step by step. During this time, he has already abandoned the project of writing the biography of M. de Rollebon because he feels that the work is not worth the trouble. The life of M. de Rollebon bores him as much as everything else around him. How can he justify the existence of a dead man when he cannot justify his own existence?

One day, Roquentin eats lunch with the Self-Taught Man. During their discussion, Roquentin feels that the time for the revelation of the secret of nausea is approaching. He rushes from the café, and the final climax then occurs in the public park under a chestnut tree: crude existence reveals itself to Roquentin. He understands the meaning of existence; it is superfluous, contingent, absurd, and viscous. He finds no reason for it to be or not to be. Roquentin feels that he, too, is superfluous, contingent, and absurd: now he understands the goal to which his nausea has led him. Step by step, his nausea has brought him closer to the experience of raw existence. In the time of enlightenment, he proclaims, "I have understood, I have seen."  

[^5]: Ibid., p. 170.
After having this encounter with crude existence, Roquentin finds that all his hopes of finding meaning and justification for life evaporate. He goes to meet Anny for the last time to find some comfort, but she has nothing to give him. Time has changed her, and she realizes that there are no "perfect moments" in life. Finding no comfort from Anny, Roquentin realizes that he is absolutely free, and has no responsibility or attachment to anyone. He decides to leave Bouville to settle in Paris. However, there is one thing that makes him forget his sickening feeling, a song sung by a Negro singer. He feels that only two persons are saved from the sin of existence: the one who writes the melody and the other who sings it. He finds that the melody has a hard necessity; it "stays the same, young and firm, like a pitiless witness."6 Roquentin asks himself if these two persons can justify their existence completely. He answers, "Not completely, of course, but as much as any man can."7 Roquentin feels that he might be able to justify his own existence by writing a book, a novel. He proclaims, "... a time would come when the book would be written, when it would be behind me, and I think that a little of its clarity might fall over my past. Then, perhaps, because of it, I could remember my life without repugnance."8 So ends Roquentin's diary.

6 Ibid., p. 235.
7 Ibid., p. 237.
8 Ibid., p. 238.
Part II

The Three Main Literary Devices Used

In the diary, Roquentin says that he feels a change in the way he sees objects. This feeling comes over him as he throws a pebble into the sea. He experiences the same feeling in connection with other objects. He finds that his relationship to objects is no longer one of appropriation. He is not free anymore to hold them the way he likes. Thus, he sets before himself the task of exploring the condition of his change. In the latter part of the diary, the condition is revealed to be crude existence. Roquentin's search leads him step by step to this goal. The pebble, the café, the beer glass, the scene on Main Street after Sunday Mass, the hand of the Self-Taught Man, the portraits at the Art Museum, and the lunch with the Self-Taught Man are the different stages which lead toward the experience of existence—the diabolically sacred. These incidents are not chosen arbitrarily. Sartre finds that the "thingness" of crude existence is masked by the conventional meanings which people have assigned to objects. To discover this "thingness" of existence, he must remove the social structure of meanings. Sartre uses the literary devices of metaphor, humor and irony to accomplish this task in the novel.

A. The Use of Metaphor

Metaphor is a major device used by Sartre. Roquentin seems to see objects differently, i.e., he finds that his relationship to objects is not one of use and appropriation. He is amazed at the behavior of objects and declares, "Objects should not touch because they are not alive. You use them, put them back in place, you live among them: they are useful, nothing more. But they touch me, it is unbearable. I am afraid of being
in contact with them as though they were living beasts." The device of metaphor is used by Sartre to illuminate the way in which Roquentin sees objects and human beings. Sartre finds a special power in metaphors to reveal the "thingness" of things and human actions. Before one discusses the use of metaphor, however, one must first define the term. Oxenhandler's definition, which states that, "The metaphor is a statement in which two different terms are joined by an 'equals' sign," is applicable for this discussion.

In the novel Sartre tries to equate one mode of existence with another. To make explicit the working of the equation, it is important to discuss metaphor in detail. First, one can classify metaphors into three main groups. This classification is based on the priority of persons or objects or animals. This priority consists in the emphasis on the description of persons or objects or animals in terms of the other two modes of existence. In descriptions of human beings or human features, if the second term of the equation is drawn either from the animal mode or from the human mode, the statement is termed a metaphor of the human mode. Similarly, if the second term of the equation is drawn from the animal mode or from the human mode or from the object mode to describe an object, the statement is termed a metaphor of the objective mode. And, finally, if the second term of the equation is drawn either from the human mode or from the object mode or from the animal mode to describe an animal, the statement is designated a metaphor of the animal mode. It is convenient

9 Sartre, op. cit., p. 19.
to use H, O, and A for the metaphors of human, object and animal modes.

By combining the above letters, one can form nine equations, thus describing nine sub-modes of metaphors. They are HO, HA, HH, OH, OA, OO, AH, AO, and AA. Of these nine sub-modes of metaphors, Sartre used the first five in *Nausea*. Nowhere in the novel does one find a description of objects in terms of objects or of animals in terms of either human beings or objects or animals. One does, however, find in *Nausea*, descriptions of human beings and human features in terms of animals or objects or other human features. Furthermore, there are numerous instances in which Sartre describes objects, houses, and things in terms of human characteristics or in terms of the animal mode.

*Nausea* is filled with examples of the above five types of metaphor, which Sartre uses to equate one mode of existence with another. Two different methods are employed: first, one mode of existence is wholly equated with another; second, one mode of existence is partially equated with another mode of existence. A question can then be asked: What does Sartre accomplish by equating one mode of existence with another mode of existence? The answer will become clear in the discussion which follows.

Sartre's main interest is to experience existence as it is. The conventional terms and concepts which human beings are socially trained to use for existence alienate one from the authentic experience of it. The use of rigid terminology and conceptual structure provides one with security derived from the assumption that the behavior of things is predictable. Sartre wants to "cure" human beings from this false sense of security by revealing that there are no clear-cut distinctions among things. This task he accomplishes through the use of metaphor, making human beings look like animals or objects. Through one phase of metaphor,
Sartre makes one realize that the concepts or terms which one uses for describing human features can be reduced to the concepts or terms which one uses to describe animals or objects. Through the second phase, Sartre tries to reduce the concepts and terms which one uses for describing objects into the concepts and terms used for the description of human beings. By this double-sided use, Sartre tries to give one the idea of the fluidity of concepts, i.e., one sort of concepts concerning one type of existence can flow into the concepts concerning another mode of existence. Thus he makes plain the arbitrary nature of concepts, meanings and terms. This forces the mind of the reader to move constantly from one mode to the other in the novel, thus becoming aware of this arbitrariness.

It is important now to present the examples of the different sub-modes of metaphor which Sartre uses in the novel. The following are the examples.

1. Objective Mode (O)

In the objective mode, the second term is drawn either from the human mode or from the animal mode to describe the object. These are the examples from *Nausea*.

(a) O-A (objects described in animal terms)

1. "They [objects] touch me, it is unbearable. I am afraid of being in contact with them as though they were living beasts."\(^\text{11}\)

2. ". . . I turn round and the objects turn with me, pale and green as oysters."\(^\text{12}\)

3. "This enormous belly turned upward, bleeding, inflated, bloated with

\(^{11}\) Sartre, *Nausea*, p. 19.

\(^{12}\) Ibid., p. 168.
all its dead paws, this belly floating in this car, in this grey sky, is not a seat. It could just as well be a dead donkey tossed about in the water, floating with the current, belly in the air in a great grey river, a river of floods; and I could be sitting on the donkey's belly, my feet dangling in the clear water."  

(b) O-H (objects described in human terms)

1. "... a house offers me its black heart through open windows. . . ."  
2. "The trees floated . . . . They did not want to exist, only they could not help themselves. So they quietly minded their own business; . . . Tired and old, they kept on existing, against the grain, simply because they were too weak to die, . . . ."  
3. "Then the garden smiled at me. I leaned against the gate and watched for a long time. The smile of the trees, of the laurel, meant something; . . . ."  
4. "Things—you might have called them thoughts . . . which forgot what they wanted to think and which stayed like that, hanging about with an odd little sense which was beyond them."  
5. "And birds will fly around these birch trees and pick at them with their beaks and make them bleed. Sperm will flow slowly, gently, from these wounds, sperm mixed with blood, warm and glassy with little

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13 Ibid., p. 169.
14 Sartre, op. cit., p. 168.
15 Ibid., p. 179.
16 Ibid., p. 181.
17 Ibid., p. 181.
6. "The suspenders can hardly be seen against the blue shirt, they are all obliterated, buried in the blue, but it is false humility; ... they annoy me by their sheep-like stubbornness."  

II. Human Mode (H)

In the human mode, the second term is drawn either from the objective mode or from the animal mode or from the human mode to describe a human. Following are the examples from *Nausea*:

(a) H-A (Human Mode described in animal terms)

1. "With them there is also a young man with a face like a dog."  

2. "I see my hand spread out on the table. It lives—it is me. It opens, the fingers open and point. ... It shows me its fat belly. It looks like an animal turned upside down. The fingers are the paws. I amuse myself by moving them very rapidly, like the claws of a crab which has fallen on its back."  

3. "I feel my hand. I am these two beasts struggling at the end of my arms. My hand scratches one of its paws with the nail of the other paw; ... ."  

4. "The woman's mouth looks like a chicken's backside."  

5. "Poet! If I grabbed one of them by the back of the coat, if I told

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18 Ibid., p. 213.
19 Sartre, *op. cit.*, p. 31.
20 Ibid., p. 32.
21 Ibid., p. 134.
22 Ibid., p. 134.
23 Ibid., p. 166.
him: 'Come, help me', he'd think, 'What's this crab doing here?' 24

6. "He goes to the mirror, opens his mouth; and his tongue is an enormous, live centipede, rubbing its legs together and scraping his palate." 25

7. "Then there was his hand like a fat white worm in my own hand." 26

(b) H-O (Human Mode described in object terms)

1. "Thoughts are the dullest things. Duller than flesh." 27

2. "You're a milestone, she says, 'a milestone beside a road.'" 28

3. "You're like that platinum wire they keep in Paris or somewhere in the neighborhood . . . it measures the exact ten-millionth part of a quarter of a meridian." 29

4. "Her nose was planted on her face like a knife in an apple." 30

5. "Consciousness exists as a tree, as a blade of grass. It slumbers, it grows bored. Small fugitive presences populate it like birds in the branches." 31

6. "The gray thing appears in the mirror. I go over and look at it, I can no longer get away. . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . .

A silvery white down covers the great slopes of the cheeks, two hairs

24 Ibid., p. 167.
25 Ibid., pp. 212-213.
26 Sartre, op. cit., p. 11.
27 Ibid., p. 135.
28 Ibid., p. 184.
29 Ibid., pp. 184-185.
30 Ibid., p. 216.
31 Ibid., p. 227.
protrude from the nostrils: it is a geological embossed map."^{32}

7. "I am all alone, but I march like a regiment descending on a city."^{33}

(c) H-H (An aspect of Human Mode described in terms of another Human Mode)

1. "... it was a hand, the small white hand which slid along the table a little while ago. Now it was resting on its back, relaxed, soft and sensual, it had the indolent nudity of a woman sunning herself after bathing."^{34}

2. "A brown hairy object [the hand of the Self-Taught Man] approached it [child's arms], hesitant. It was a thick finger, yellowed by tobacco; inside this hand it had all the grossness of a male sex organ."^{35}

The above examples of metaphor should not be confused with mere descriptions or evocations because neither descriptions nor evocations can explain the ambiguity described above. Sartre seems to have selected these metaphors very carefully in order to convey the dialectic character of reality.

In sum, Sartre establishes two main existential notions through the use of carefully defined metaphors. First, he establishes the way in which the world exists. Second, he establishes the way the self, the thought, or the consciousness exists. He demonstrates that the world and human beings are nothing but nauseating existence. In the examples cited above,

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^{33} Ibid., p. 77.
^{34} Ibid., p. 221.
^{35} Ibid., p. 221.
the metaphors are explicit. The use of the explicit metaphor helps Sartre to reconcile contradictions which he finds in his philosophy. By showing the interchangability of terms describing the mind with terms describing the world, Sartre is able to bridge the gap between the two. In this way, through the use of metaphor, he establishes the unity of mind and world.

Once this unity is established between mind and world, Sartre deliberately chooses or selects certain terms to describe this reality which mind and world share. These terms are "viscous," "slimy," "sticky," "gluey," "gelatinous," "jelly," etc. They are used to describe bare existence. Under the pen of Sartre, these terms acquire a special philosophical and literary significance. Sartre finds that the use of these terms is necessary to communicate the ambiguity and contradictory nature of reality. They may be called implicit metaphors. The single word "viscous" gives one the ambiguous idea of something semi-liquid and semisolid. It can not be put under any of the separate categories. The well-defined categories of solid or liquid do not bind it. "Viscous" is a symbol for the nature of the world in general, but, in particular, it symbolizes the nature of things as well as consciousness. Man likes to control things by labeling them, i.e., by setting up artificial boundaries around them through classification. But man finds that they always escape his language. They flow and slip away from one's descriptions. Similarly, consciousness is slippery. No person can bind consciousness through classification. Consciousness is like dough which lengthens and expands. Therefore, like objects, man is viscous and slippery. Hence, the same terms can describe both man and object. This interchangability is accomplished through the use of the implicit metaphor.
In addition to the use of the explicit and implicit metaphors, Sartre uses the literary devices of humor and irony to accomplish his task in the novel. Humor and irony are well known literary devices used by many dramatists and novelists. Sartre's use of humor will be discussed next.

B. The Use of Humor

In the novel Sartre uses humor to make man's attitudes and actions appear absurd. The humor employed by Sartre has been significantly analyzed by Champigny. Champigny points out that humor consists in "describing human attitudes and activities without any reference to their purpose."36 When human attitudes and activities are described without reference to their purpose, they appear mechanical. The impression this gives is one of ridiculousness or absurdity. According to Champigny, a humorist has to do two things to achieve his results effectively. First, he has to give the impression that he is unlike any other human being. Second, he has to use metaphor to create the impression that human beings closely resemble objects. Sartre shows his great artistic skills by accomplishing this task effectively in Nausea.

He portrays Roquentin in the image of a humorist who lives the required separation from other human beings. As an individual, Roquentin does not belong to anybody because he is portrayed as a wifeless, jobless, homeless vagabond. Moreover, he has no association with any church, party, or organization. Thus Roquentin's social involvements are absolutely minimal. He appears to the reader as an ascetic without any ties to anyone and without any possessions. According to Hegel, the notion of the individual involves the notion of his right to property. If a person does not

possess anything, he is not an individual. In this sense, Roquentin, who does not have any property or possessions, is not a man. Unlike Roquentin, all other people around him possess some property or belong to someone. Thus, they are individuals in the Hegelian sense. Roquentin realizes this alienation and declares, "I feel so far away from them, ... it seems as though I belong to another species."\(^{37}\)

The reader finds Roquentin to be a detached philosopher who is not participating in the game of life but, instead, studies it from a distance. Among the people of Bouville, Roquentin feels an outsider. The reader senses this alienation of Roquentin from his following remark: "Not my afternoon, but theirs, the one a hundred thousand Bouvillois were going to live in common."\(^{38}\) When evening falls, Roquentin finds that all the Bouvillois have gone home filled with thoughts of the adventurous Sunday they have shared in common. Feeling his alienation, he declares, "it was their Sunday, not mine."\(^{39}\) After spending his day watching the people, Roquentin confirms that he is a complete stranger to the world of the Bouvillois. Thus the reader finds him different from other human beings.

The other aspect of humor is concerned with showing that human beings are more like machines or animals. Sartre accomplishes this through the use of metaphor. First, he makes human activities appear mechanical. Sartre's description of the activities of the Bouvillois after Sunday Mass makes them appear machine-like. Every Sunday, the Bouvillois go to church mechanically, to attend the Mass. After the Mass, there is a sort of

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\(^{37}\) Sartre, *Nausea*, p. 211.

\(^{38}\) Sartre, *op. cit.*, p. 71.

animal-like parade where the Bouvillois salute each other mechanically according to rank. Roquentin passes through this crowd and says with amazement, "I stand a whole head above both columns and I see hats, a sea of hats. Most of them are black and hard. From time to time you see one fly off at the end of an arm and you catch the soft glint of a skull; then, after a few instants of heavy flight, it returns." In the afternoon, the Bouvillois are more calm and relaxed. There is little movement and very little hat-raising. Roquentin says, in describing the afternoon, "There was still a little hat-raising here and there, but without the expansiveness, the nervous gaiety of the morning." Still later, the Bouvillois go back to their homes and, like automatons, "drink a cup of family tea together round the dining-room table." Sunday is the only day the Bouvillois possess in common: "Business men and officials walked side by side; they let themselves be elbowed, even jostled out of the way by shabby employees. Aristocrats, elites, and professional groups had melted into the warm crowd." Not only do the Bouvillois behave the same way each Sunday, but their expectations remain the same, too. Roquentin points out, "They had only one day in which to smooth out their wrinkles, their crow's feet, the bitter lines made by a hard week's work."

When Sartre describes the activities of the people of Bouville without reference to their purpose, the reader is aware of his use of humor.

40 Sartre, op. cit., p. 62.
41 Ibid., p. 73.
42 Ibid., p. 74.
43 Sartre, op. cit., pp. 72-73.
44 Ibid., p. 74.
He tries to reveal that the Bouvillois think that Sunday is their common possession. Sunday after Sunday, they act the same way, do the same types of things, and perform the same types of rituals and antics. Morning is spent at the church; afternoon is used for a visit to a cemetery or a visit to one's parents. The evening is utilized at home for listening to the radio and thinking about Monday. These activities are repeated Sunday after Sunday in the manner of a machine doing the same sort of work, day after day.

The second use of disquieting humor makes men look like animals or objects. This is accomplished by the use of explicit metaphor. Examples of this are noted during the discussion of the Human Mode in the section on metaphor. In all these examples, human features are identified with things. Therefore, through the use of metaphor, Sartre "things" the human features to look like gratuitous objects. This becomes more explicit when Sartre identifies body with flesh. The body with its rhythms and beautiful movements, is an instrument of action. When this function of body is denied to it, it becomes merely flesh. Thus body becomes gratuitous and unjustified without any meaning or purpose.

As is seen above, Roquentin/Sartre, through the use of metaphor, is able to accomplish his task of making human actions look absurd and gratuitous. It is clear from the preceding descriptions, then, that humor is a device which deals with the outward appearance of man. In order to attack the inward world of man, Roquentin/Sartre also blends this humor with irony.

C. The Use of Irony

The use of irony complements the task of the humorist. The humorist seems to attack the outward appearance of man, whereas the user of irony
goes much deeper into the inner world. Humor attacks the inner world in so far as it depicts the moral faultiness of man. But the humorist is essentially concerned with the physical features and activities of man without reference to their purpose. Irony, on the other hand, aims at attacking the motives and intentions of man. The user of irony seems to show an immediate understanding of these psychological motives and intentions. Irony reveals this inner world in such a way that the victim seems to defeat himself with his own arguments. But humor and irony are both used to accomplish the same results. Both of them aim at revealing the absurdity of human actions and human motives. Thus, humor and irony are used by Sartre to identify body as well as thoughts with nauseous flesh or gratuitous body.

A brilliant example of irony can be found in the description by Roquentin of the worthies whose portraits are hanging in the Bouville museum. They are the men who made Bouville. They regarded themselves as leaders born with god-given rights. While observing the portraits of these citizens of Bouville, Roquentin says, "none of those painted had died a bachelor, none of them had died childless or intestate, none without the last rites. Their souls at peace that day as on other days, with God and the world, these men had slipped quietly into death, to claim their share of eternal life to which they had a right. For they had a right to everything: to life, to work, to wealth, to command, to respect, and, finally, to immortality."45 These middle-class citizens of Bouville never questioned their rights because they took them as "facts" with which they were born into this world. They lived all their lives behind the mask of these

45 Sartre, Nausea, p. 114.
values which they considered to be "facts." They regarded themselves as
the incarnation of these abstract values. One of the portraits is that of
Jean Parrottin, and Roquentin, while blending humor with irony, gives the
following description of him: "This man was one-ideal. Nothing more was
left in him but bones, dead flesh and Pure Right. A real case of posses-
sion, I thought. Once Right has taken hold of a man exorcism cannot drive
it out; Jean Parrottin had consecrated his whole life to thinking about
his Right: . . . On his death bed, . . . he told his wife . . . 'I do not
thank you, Therese; you have only done your duty.'" 46 Roquentin calls
them salauds or "stinkers." The moral life of salauds was based on the
spirit of seriousness. Through the use of irony, Roquentin demonstrates
the identity of the spirit of seriousness with the spirit of "thingness."
These worthies or "stinkers" lived under the false illusion of rights, and,
in this way, they hid from themselves the superfluity of their existence.
Roquentin declares during his nauseous ecstasy in the park that "here is
Nausea; here there is what those bastards—the ones on the Coteau Vert and
others—try to hide from themselves with their idea of their rights. But
what a poor lie: no one has any rights; they are entirely free, like
other men, they cannot succeed in not feeling superfluous. And in them-
selves, secretly, they are superfluous, that is to say, amorphous, vague,
and sad." 47 These salauds falsely believe in their unshakeable rights be-
cause this illusory belief helped them hide their agonizing freedom and
responsibility from themselves. But Roquentin points out that no one has
any rights including the salauds. Everyone is completely free and equally

46 Ibid., p. 121.
47 Ibid., p. 177.
Thus, through the use of metaphor, humor, and irony, Sartre is able to convey his message that existence in general and man in particular are superfluous, absurd, contingent and viscous.

Part III
The Justification Of The Use Of Diary Form

Why does Sartre choose a diary form for Nausea? The answer to this question can be abstracted from three main sources: Roquentin's struggle with his inner crises; the type of subject matter treated in the novel; and Sartre's intention to experiment on a new method in writing novels. The elaboration and the discussion of these points will, hopefully, provide a justification for his choice of the diary form.

At the very beginning, Roquentin declares that he should keep a diary "to write down events from day to day . . . to see clearly—let none of the nuances or small happenings escape even though they might seem to mean nothing." He finds that some sort of change has occurred in the way he sees objects. He does not know yet whether it is he or the objects that have changed, although his first guess is that it is objects: "I must tell how I see this table, this street, the people, my packet of tobacco, since those are the things which have changed. I must determine the exact extent and nature of this change." Roquentin seems to be more certain about the inner change that he feels even though he is at a loss to define the nature and conditions of this change. He tries to verbalize the

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48 Sartre, op. cit., p. 7.
49 Ibid., p. 7.
change to himself by saying: "something has happened to me, I can't doubt it any more. It came as an illness does, not like an ordinary certainty, not like anything evident. It came cunningly, little by little; I felt a little strange, a little put out, that's all. Once established it never moved, it stayed quiet, and I was able to persuade myself that nothing was the matter with me, that it was a false alarm. And now, it's blossoming."\(^{50}\)

It is quite evident then that Roquentin is going through an inner crisis which is tearing him apart. He seeks an understanding of this crisis and its causes. To achieve such an understanding, he can get help either from other people or from himself. Since Roquentin hates other human beings and detests their company, he regards their help as useless in enlightening him concerning this crisis. The only alternative left for him is to become his own psychoanalyst. The task of a psychoanalyst is to enable his patient to verbalize his subjective conflicts. Through verbalization, the patient can objectify these conflicts. Once this task is accomplished, the psychoanalyst can help the patient either to accept or to resolve his conflicts rationally. When he has done this, the task of the psychoanalyst is over.

But Roquentin's task is much more complex. He is not only the patient who is experiencing inner crisis but he has to act as his own psychoanalyst. The only way he can hope to become enlightened about himself is through verbalizing these crises and through expressing them by some means. The self knowledge which he seeks requires from him a complete and honest description of the changes which are taking place within and around him. The

\(^{50}\) \textit{Ibid.}, p. 11.
The preceding discussion leads to the second reason for Sartre's choice of the diary form for Nausea: the subject matter itself, the revelation of personal experiences, seems to make it incumbent upon Sartre that he use this very personal form. It is maintained in this dissertation that Sartre's major concern in Nausea is with establishing the presence of existence. This is important to Sartre because it becomes one of the basic premises of his existential philosophy. Sartre finds that logical arguments and language analysis are inadequate for revealing the presence of existence. Thus philosophy as a rational and logical inquiry cannot deal with this problem. Sartre must use some other method, then, to tackle the problem in question. He believes that intuition might accomplish this task and with this belief, he goes on to create Roquentin in the image of a mystic who grasps the presence of existence through intuitive experience.

Roquentin goes through different stages which lead him towards this experience. In order to give the reader a direct glimpse into the way Roquentin leads his life, Sartre chooses a special literary medium to present life as it appears to the author. Sartre seems to think that a novel written in a narrative style cannot present life authentically because it describes life as if it were a series of connected events. This makes life seem to be an adventure. Sartre believes that since life is a series of disjointed and diffused happenings filled with trivial and insignificant
things, it cannot be described through the usual narrative style in which novels are written. Thus, a diary form is more appropriate in depicting life authentically because its very structure is disjointed and diffused like our daily lives. Therefore, it seems obvious that Sartre chose the diary form for Nausea to present Roquentin's life realistically to the reader.

Sartre's third reason for using the diary method is to provide the reader with that experience of immediacy which only this form can. Sartre believes that since life is lived in the present, contemporary novels should be written in such a way that, while reading them, the reader participates in the present that is depicted. Many earlier novels seem to focus upon life already experienced. Sartre is scornful of the writers of such earlier works because he believes that "A past was delivered to us which had already been thought through . . . [but] no art could really be ours if it did not restore to the event its brutal freshness, its ambiguity, its unforseeability, . . . ." 51 Sartre thinks that characters in fiction can only be real if they are free, i.e., if they reflect the freedom of the actual human world. For Sartre all invented characters cannot be interesting because "if I suspect that the hero's future actions are determined in advance by heredity, social influence or some other mechanism, my own time ebbs back into me: there remains only myself, reading and persisting, confronted by a static book." 52

Many earlier novelists also believed in determinism. This notion led

them to write novels peopled by puppets. Since the actions of puppets are
unfree, the representation of their experiences can only become boring.
Sartre protests that novelists like Mauriac established an omniscient
point of view concerning their heroes. They thought through the actions
of their characters and presented them as essences rather than as exist­
ing individuals. Sartre wants to present characters as free-existing
individuals very much like human beings in the actual world. Their actions
are not thought through, and they are to be represented in all their ambi­
guity. This is possible only if the author does not take an omniscient
viewpoint. Since life in the present is lived with ambiguity and unpre­
dictability, a novel should be written in such a way that it gives the
reader a present-tense experience. Thus; Sartre seems to have chosen the
diary form for Nausea, to achieve these desired effects on the reader.
CHAPTER III

EXISTENTIAL THEMES IN NAUSEA

In the last chapter, I analyzed Nausea as a work of art and discussed the different literary devices used by Sartre in conveying his message. There is another aspect of Nausea which requires discussion. It seems clear that Nausea contains existential themes whose elaboration and discussion would be helpful in comprehending the full significance of the novel. While some critics and commentators have made attempts to elaborate and discuss these existential themes, none has fully explicated them. Often, their interpretations suffer from one or the other of the following two serious shortcomings. First, some approach these existential themes from the literary point of view only and neglect to analyze them philosophically. Second, there are other critics who analyze these themes philosophically, but discuss them in the light of the later philosophical development of Sartre. This approach leads them astray because they read too much of Sartre's later philosophy into Nausea. Their approach undermines the special significance and uniqueness of the novel. To uphold this uniqueness and significance, my discussion will concern itself with the analysis of the philosophical contents of the novel and will completely ignore references to all of Sartre's later works. Hopefully, this approach will clarify the unique descriptions which Sartre provides for the various existential themes.

The critics are not generally agreed upon the exact number of existential themes in Nausea. Albérdès believes that absurdity of existence, refusal of alibis, nausea, bad faith, and freedom are the main existential
themes. Barnes maintains that there are many existential motifs present in *Nausea* but the themes of the superfluousness of existence and of nausea are of particular significance. Murdoch declares that *Nausea* "... is a sort of palimpsest of metaphysical apercu,"\(^1\) which contains all of Sartre's main interests except the political ones. She catalogues the themes by declaring that *Nausea* concerns itself not only with the theme of the absurdity of existence but also with "freedom and bad faith, the character of the bourgeoisie, the phenomenology of perception, the nature of thought, of memory, of art."\(^2\) Others include the themes of time, of humanism, and of mystic experience as essential parts of *Nausea*. All the critics agree that the theme of the absurdity of existence is central to *Nausea* and that the themes of freedom, of nausea, of adventure, of the nature and function of art are secondary. All the above mentioned themes are interrelated and can be discussed under four broad headings: existence, nausea, freedom, and justification of existence. Hopefully, the discussion which follows will substantiate that the themes of adventure and of the nature and function of art are integrated with the theme of the justification of existence. Therefore, it is necessary to discuss these three themes under the heading: justification of existence. This chapter, then, will be concerned with the discussion of the themes of existence, nausea, freedom, and justification of existence, and will make clear their relationship to each other.

A. Existence

Sartre's main interest in *Nausea* is to depict existence; this depiction

\(^1\) Iris Murdoch, *Sartre: Romantic Rationalist*, p. 4.

is crucially important because it is presupposed by Being and Nothingness. Philosophers in the western world, from Thales to the present time, ask questions about existence. Indeed, all contemporary schools of philosophy express their positive or negative interests in the problem of existence. The existentialists like Sartre admit the genuineness of the problem and realize that existence is a sticky thing which a philosopher cannot get rid of through conceptual analysis. On the other hand, the ordinary language philosophers like J. L. Austin do not consider existence as a problem but admit that the word, "exist," is extremely tricky and baffled even the Greeks. Austin suggests that the trickiness of the word "exist" can be exposed and its meaning made clear if it is translated into words like "to be" or "real." Logical atomists like Bertrand Russell indicate that they are also aware of the problem, and place their main interest in eliminating the term "exist." He points out that existence is nothing but "a property of a propositional function." Thus, according to logical atomists one can eliminate from the philosophical discussion the term "exist" by defining it as a property of a propositional function. Furthermore it can be mentioned that the early Wittgenstein, despite his association with logical atomists was the first to point out that existence is a sticky concept and one which cannot be eliminated that easily.

Logical empiricists like Rudolf Carnap and A. J. Ayer show their genuine interest in the problem. Carnap turns his attention to the copula "is." His main interest lies in dispensing with the copula through the

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construction of protocol sentences. The copula "is" can be eliminated if instead of "This pen is black," one reports a more basic datum: "Here now a black patch." The report of this basic datum is a protocol statement. Thus, Carnap suggests that one can construct a philosophical system with the help of a large class of protocol statements with the apparatus of formal logic, without using the copula "is." Thus, one can dispense with the copula "is" along with the metaphysical nonsense which is associated with it.

In the recent time, such a philosopher of science as Milton Munitz, considers existence as something mysterious; nevertheless, he regards it as an interesting problem of philosophy. For instance, Munitz holds that it is meaningful to ask a question about existence even though one may not get a meaningful answer: thus, he regards the problem of mystery of existence as a genuine problem of philosophy.5

The very fact of the current interest in the problem of existence is a clear indication of the genuineness of the problem. Heidegger finds that the problem of "being-in-the-world" or existence is central to his philosophy. Though concerned with unveiling existence, he uses abstract philosophical concepts and categories. Nevertheless, he is unsuccessful in revealing existence in its immediate emotional character. To Heidegger, existence is revealed as "sorrow." But "sorrow" is still a category, not a suffering. Heidegger forgets Kierkegaard's attack against the positivists, who maintain that "existence is not a concept because it is too empty, thin, and therefore ultimately meaningless."6 Kierkegaard, on the contrary,

holds that "my existence is not a concept because it is too dense, rich, and concrete to be represented adequately in any mental picture." Exis-
tence is so dense that no abstract categories or concepts can reveal it without denaturing it. Sartre, who is not only a trained philosopher but an artist as well, understands that existence is subjective and cannot be grasped through objective and abstract concepts. The meaning of existence, for him, can only be grasped intuitively. Thus, according to Sartre, the language analysts, the logical atomists and the logical empiricists are wrong in thinking that they can eliminate the problem of existence, by the analysis of the term "exist" or the copula "is." Heidegger, too, is mis-
taken in his endeavor to reveal the meaning of existence through the in- 
genious manipulation of concepts. Thus, in Nausea, Sartre adopts a diff-
erent method to uncover the meaning of existence—namely, through the pre-
sentation of the character of Roquentin.

In the novel, Roquentin seems to be concerned with describing the condition of his nausea. Near the end, the condition of nausea is reveal-
ed to be existence. According to Sartre, in our day to day experience, one might think that he knows existence but actually he does not understand its meaning. His conceptual framework does not reveal existence but hides it. Sartre feels that the meanings which people have given to life and to the world mask existence. Thus, he suggests that in order to understand the meaning of existence, one must remove these masks one by one. All dis-
cursive methods must fail. Sartre suggests that the only way existence can be unveiled is through the method of intuition. All descriptions of exist-
tence never touch existence; it is only through an intuitive experience,

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7 Ibid., p. 264.
such as Roquentin's that existence is revealed. This point becomes clear when one considers the following statements of Roquentin:

So I was in the park just now. The roots of the chestnut tree were sunk in the ground just under my bench. I couldn't remember it was a root any more. The words had vanished and with them the significance of things, their methods of use, and the feeble points of reference which men have traced on their surface. ... Then I had this vision. It left me breathless. Never, until these last few days, had I understood the meaning of 'existence'. Usually existence hides itself. It is there, around us, in us, it is us, you can't say two words without mentioning it, but you can never touch it.  

In day to day life, objects or things are looked upon as tools or instruments which serve particular functions. This function or instrumentality hides the fact that they exist, and it is a general belief that existence is an empty form which does not add anything to the nature of things.

Roquentin states:

Even when I looked at things, I was miles from dreaming that they existed; they looked like scenery to me. I picked them up in my hands, they served me as tools, I foresaw their resistance. But that all happened on the surface. If anyone had asked me what existence was, I would have answered, ... that it was nothing, simply an empty form which was added to external things without changing anything in their nature.  

But suddenly Roquentin understands, through his intuitive experience, that existence is not an abstract category, but "the very paste of things .. .", and everything else is kneaded into it. Thus, at the time of illumination, all man-made distinctions disappear and pure existence in its nakedness manifests itself: "... the root, the park gates, the bench, the

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9 Ibid., p. 171.
10 Ibid., p. 171.
grass, all that had vanished: the diversity of things, their individuality, were only an appearance, a veneer. This veneer had melted, leaving soft, monstrous masses, all in disorder—naked, in a frightful, obscene nakedness."\(^{11}\) This nude existence is the naked world revealing itself in its naturalness. The meaning of this crude existence may be described through the use of four words: superfluosity, absurdity, contingency, and viscosity.

Existence is de trop. The term de trop has many shades of meaning which may be conveyed through the following English equivalents: superfluous, in the way, what is in excess, extra, unwanted, gratuitous, abundant, overflowing, etc. None of these terms or phrases exhausts the meaning of the term de trop completely but they do convey the different nuances of meaning which the term embodies. Sartre's use of the term de trop, touches upon all these nuances of meaning. In ordinary language, one would call something superfluous if it exceeds the required amount. This extra amount is superfluous because there is no need for it. Therefore, something is superfluous if it is extra or unwanted or in the way or in excess. It is also possible to call something superfluous if its presence does not serve any function or purpose. Sartre thinks that existence is present in abundance for no purpose or reason. Therefore existence is superfluous.

Roquentin exclaims:

Existence everywhere, infinitely, in excess, for ever and everywhere; . . . . . . . . . . . .
[this enormous presence] mounting up, mounting up as high as the sky, spilling over, filling everything with its gelatinous slither, and I could see depths upon depths of it reaching far beyond the limits of the garden, the houses, and Bouville, as far as the eye could reach, . . . . . .

\(^{11}\) Ibid., pp. 171-172.
[but] there was no reason for this flowing larva to exist.\textsuperscript{12}

Roquentin also realizes that along with the world he himself is superfluous. The following quote makes this clear:

We were a heap of living creatures, irritated, embarrassed at ourselves, we hadn't the slightest reason to be there, none of us, each one, confused, vaguely alarmed, felt in the way in relation to the others. In the way: it was the only relationship I could establish between these trees, these gates, these stones. In vain I tried to count the chestnut trees, to locate them by their relationship to the Velleda, to compare their height with the height of the plane trees: each of them escaped the relationship in which I tried to enclose it, isolated itself, and overflowed.

And I—soft, weak, obscene, digesting, juggling with dismal thoughts—I, too, was in the way.

Even my death would have been in the way. In the way, my corpse, my blood on these stones, between these plants, at the back of the smiling garden. And the decomposed flesh would have been in the way in the earth which would receive my bones, at last, cleaned, stripped, peeled, proper and clean as teeth, if it would have been in the way; I was in the way for eternity.\textsuperscript{13}

This description, then, makes it clear that Being in general and man in particular are de trop; that is, existence is superfluous.

The above discussion leads to the second meaning of existence; i.e., existence is absurd. In ordinary language, one calls something absurd if it is ridiculously unreasonable or unsound or incongruous. An argument is absurd if its conclusion contradicts its premises. A phenomenon is absurd if no possible reason can explain it. Therefore, a thing is absurd if it precludes the possibility of explanation. Roquentin experiences the absurdity of existence because he finds that there is no

\textsuperscript{12} Ibid., pp. 178, 180-181.

\textsuperscript{13} Sartre, op. cit., pp. 172-173.
reason for it to be or not to be. It is just there. There is no inner or outer purpose to give it meaning and direction. His following statement throws some light on this point: "I knew it was the World, the naked World suddenly revealing itself, and I choked with rage at this gross, absurd being. You couldn't even wonder where all that sprang from, or how it was that a world came into existence, rather than nothingness. It didn't make sense. . . . That was what worried me: of course there was no reason for this flowing larva to exist. But it was impossible for it not to exist."14 There is another sense in terms of which the world is absurd. Sartre points out that a certain thing is not absurd if it can be explained, i.e., if it can be explained as a part of the rational plan. For example, a true conclusion is not absurd if it is deduced from true premises because its deduction can be explained. Logical arguments belong to the world of reasons and explanations whereas: "the world of explanations and reasons is not the world of existence. A circle is not absurd, it is clearly explained by the rotation of a straight segment around one of its extremities."15 But, similar to logical arguments, a circle qua circle does not exist. Anything which exists, exists in such a way that it cannot be explained;

This root, . . . existed in such a way that I could not explain it. Knotty, inert, nameless, it fascinated me, filled my eyes, brought me back unceasingly to its own existence. In vain to repeat: 'This is a root'—it didn't work. . . . I saw clearly that you could not pass from its function as a root, as a breathing pump, to that, to this hard and compact skin of a sea lion, to this oily, callous, head-strong look. The function explained nothing: it allowed you to understand

14 Ibid., pp. 180-181.
15 Sartre, op. cit., p. 174.
generally that it was a root, but not that one at all. This root, with its color, shape, its congealed movements, was . . . below all explanation.  

Sartre points out that the only fact we know about existence is that it 'exists' whereas geometrical figures, musical tunes, colors, tastes and smells do not 'exist.' Roquentin declares:

It [the tune] does not exist. It is even an annoyance; if I were to get up and rip this record from the table which holds it, if I were to break it in two, I wouldn't reach it. It is beyond—always beyond something, a voice, a violin note. Through layers and layers of existence, it veils itself, thin and firm, and when you want to seize it, you find only existants, you butt against existants devoid of sense. It is behind them: I don't even hear it. I hear sounds, vibrations in the air which unveil it. It does not exist because it has nothing superfluous: it is all the rest which in relation to it is superfluous. It [the tune] is.  

In this example, one finds that the tune, like geometrical objects, does not 'exist' but instead it 'is.' In this example, Sartre distinguishes between 'exist' and 'is.' Physical objects 'exist;' geometrical figures and tunes, being ideal objects, do not 'exist' but 'are.' All ideal objects are a part of a rational scheme, and, therefore, are explainable. Hence, they are not absurd. Existence, which is not a part of the rational plan, is absurd.

Existence is not only superfluous and absurd but also contingent. In ordinary language, we call something contingent when it is not logically necessary; i.e., it is not deduced from some higher principle. Thus, an event is contingent if its occurrence is possible but not certain or if it occurs either by chance or through some inexplicable cause. In other words,

16 Ibid., p. 174.  
17 Ibid., p. 233.
something is contingent if it is accidental. It is in terms of such contingency that Sartre defines existence. A sense of how simple and clear his descriptions of contingency can be may be seen in Roquentin's statement:

The essential thing is contingency. I mean that one cannot define existence as necessity. To exist is simply to be there; those who exist let themselves be encountered, but you can never deduce anything from them. I believe there are people who have understood this. Only they try to overcome this contingency by inventing a necessary, causal being. But no necessary being can explain existence; contingency is not a delusion, a probability which can be dissipated; it is the absolute, consequently, the perfect free gift.18

This contingency of existence is one of the main conclusions which Roquentin draws from his contemplation of the chestnut tree.

With these facts in mind, it may be possible to sum up the reflections of Roquentin with regard to existence. His description of existence is an emotional interpretation rather than a philosophical one. To him, existence is the condition of his nausea. Sartre suggests that ordinarily people believe that existence is nothing but an empty form added to the structure of things, and that this addition of existence changes nothing in the nature of things. This point of view is essentially Kantian in so far as he insisted that existence is not a predicate. According to Kant, if a particular thing has qualities from X₁ to Xₙ and if one says that it exists, one does not add any new quality to it; therefore, the addition of existence to a thing does not affect its nature. In contrast, Sartre tries to show that the addition of existence to a thing makes all the difference.

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18 Sartre, op. cit., p. 176.
If there is something which does not exist but is a part of our rational plan, it can be explained as well as defined. For example, all geometrical figures, all mathematical objects, all musical tunes and, in short, all abstract ideas can be explained and defined because they are a part of our rational scheme. These abstract ideas are essential because reasons can be given for their being; they are rational or reasonable because they can be explained as a part of the rational scheme or system; they are necessary because they are logically deduced from other parts of the system. Since these abstract ideas or ideal objects are essential, reasonable, and necessary, they are meaningful. Their reasonableness, essentiality, necessity, and meaningfulness are all due to the fact that they do not 'exist' but merely 'are.' On the other hand, if one adds existence to something, then this something descends from the plane of rationality to the plane of irrationality or absurdity. In contrast to the abstract ideas or ideal objects which are essential, reasonable, necessary and meaningful, an existing object is de trop, absurd, contingent, meaningless, and, hence, inexplicable. Sartre says: "When you realize that, it turns your heart upside down and everything begins to float, . . . ." 19

Therefore, when a person becomes aware that something exists, it makes a difference not only in the nature of that thing but also in one's reaction to that thing. The awareness that a thing exists, takes away its weak, dry and abstract character; the object is experienced in its bloated-ness, mouldiness, and obscenity. The thing is experienced as viscous, slimy, gelatinous, and pastelike. Instead of feeling comfortable and secure

19 Sartre, Nausea, p. 176.
in its presence, one reacts to the existing thing with the feelings of nausea, disgust, anxiety, and with a sense of one's own futility.

Besides superfluosity, absurdity, and contingency, Sartre suggests that there is one more point which deserves discussion. He identifies existence with something viscous or slimy. When describing existence Sartre says: "It was there, in the garden, toppled down into the trees, all soft, sticky, soiling everything, all thick, a jelly ... filling everything with its gelatinous slither, ... ."20

Thus, existence is like sticky pulp which holds fast and from which escape is impossible. Sartre describes existence with the term, 'visqueus', which has the following English equivalents: viscous, slimy, sticky, gelatin-like, and jelly-like. He also describes it as soft and slithery. The objects or things or animals which might convey the above feeling-effect are treacle, jelly-fish, honey, jelly, pulp, molten-wax, the formless consistency of mold, or fungus, or teeming cultures in a test tube, of sweat, and of mucous. Obviously, these things share common characteristics. For instance, pulp or treacle has the characteristic of being semi-liquid because each of them offers more resistance than liquids. Each of them is soft, sticky and jelly-like with a slithery quality. Each of them resembles a formless mass or pulp. These substances share the characteristics of both solids and liquids but they cannot be characterized as either solid or liquid. Their ambiguous character is deceptive. One thinks that he can hold them like solids but they start slipping from the hand like liquids. On the other hand, one thinks that he can make them flow like liquids, but, to one's disgust, they stick to one's hands. Their ambiguous

character is confusing. One finds that he cannot capture them by the use of his concepts of solid or liquid because they slip through the concepts. Existence is viscous in the above sense: neither liquid nor solid nor captured by any categories or concepts. No concepts or categories can give one an idea of treacle or larva or jelly unless one touches it or feels it. In the same way, intellectual concepts and categories cannot reveal the nature of existence. It is only through an intuitive experience that one can have the feel of existence. In Nausea, these conclusions close Roquentin’s discussion of the nature of existence.

Using these conclusions as a point of departure, one discovers in his day to day life that existence does not reveal itself. It is only in moods like that of nausea that one gets a hazy glimpse into the world of existence. On the other hand, when one realizes that existence is absurd, one finds oneself completely free. One also finds oneself unjustified and for this reason one looks for ways and means to justify one’s existence. Roquentin gets a glimpse into his existence through his nausea. He finds that he is completely free and looks for his own personal justification in the creation of a work of art. In order to clarify his discoveries, it is now necessary to discuss nausea, freedom, and justification of existence one by one.

B. Nausea

Second in importance only to the theme of existence is the theme of nausea and these two combined provide the nucleous of everything else in the novel. Roquentin’s quest for self-knowledge starts with the sensation of nausea which he feels first when he is about to throw a pebble into the sea. At first, he merely lives this experience of nausea, but as he recognizes the nature of the experience, he comes to see that it has acquired
the authority of truth for him. His original aim in writing the diary is to find out the condition of the various nauseas which he feels. Through the analysis of different things which happen to him, he is able to recognize that the condition of his nausea is existence. Concomitant to the above realization, Roquentin also realizes the true nature of his nausea.

In this section, I will answer the following two questions: what is nausea and why is our reaction to existence a nauseating one? The answers to these two questions hopefully will provide a rough definition of nausea and also will reveal those aspects of existence which are responsible for the feeling of nausea.

Nowhere in the novel does Sartre provide a general definition of nausea, but he hints at its nature in particular instances which give rise to it. While throwing a pebble into the sea, Roquentin feels a "sort of sweetish sickness,"21 to which he gives the name "nausea in the hands."22 In this example, Sartre seems to regard nausea as a sensation or feeling which comes upon one when one experiences that the pebble exists. In addition, he provides other examples of objects which give rise to a similar sensation or feeling of nausea that lead to the conclusion that nausea is the sensation or feeling that objects exist. Not only does the awareness of the existence of objects cause nausea; the awareness that one's body and thoughts exist, gives rise to the same sensation. The following monologue throws some light on the above point:

I exist. It's sweet, so sweet, so slow. And light;
You'd think it floated all by itself. It stirs.
It brushes by me, melts and vanishes. Gently,

22 Ibid., p. 20.
gently. There is bubbling water in my mouth. I swallow. It slides down my throat, it caresses me—and now it comes up again into my mouth. For ever I shall have a little pool of whitish water in my mouth—lying low—grazing my tongue. And this pool is still me. And the tongue. And the throat is me.  

On the basis of the above mentioned examples and the other abundant descriptions present in the novel, one can say that nausea is the feeling of existing i.e., nausea is the feeling that physical objects as well as one's own body exist. Therefore, one might properly conclude that nausea is the feeling that everything exists.

Following this line of reasoning the next question is: what is that in the nature of existence to which nausea is our reaction? As pointed out in the last section, existence is experienced to be superfluous, absurd, contingent, and viscous. Nausea is the experience of superfluousness, of absurdity, of contingency, and of viscousness of existence. It now seems necessary to elaborate this statement.

In one's day to day life, one experiences the sensation or feeling of nausea if something is in excess or overflowing. Sartre describes the world as overflowing existence which is in abundance everywhere. He describes the world as cloying and oversweet, suggesting that it "is full, existence everywhere, dense, heavy and sweet."  

The awareness on one's part that the world is overflowing larva or something pulp-like gives rise to the feeling of nausea. Sartre makes clear that this reaction to excess is a natural one. Not only is the world in excess, but the human body as well as human thoughts are overflowing, and thus cause nausea. Feeling

23 Ibid., p. 134.
24 Sartre, Nausea, p. 139.
nausea, Roquentin describes his awareness of the fact that his existence is in excess: "The thing which was waiting was on the alert, it has pounced on me, it flows through me, I am filled with it. It's nothing; I am the Thing. Existence, liberated, detached, floods over me." Roquentin also describes the overflow of thought which is nauseating. He declares:

Thoughts are the dullest things. Duller than flesh. They stretch out and there's no end to them and they leave a funny taste in the mouth. . . . . . . . .
. . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . .
Thoughts are born at the back of me, like sudden giddiness. I feel them being born behind my head . . . if I yield, they're going to come around in front of me, between my eyes—and I always yield, the thought grows and grows and there it is, immense, filling me completely and renewing my existence.

All physical objects, human bodies, and thoughts are unwanted, are in excess, and are superfluous, and one reacts to this unwantedness by the feeling of nausea.

In addition to the superfluousness of existence, contingency and absurdity of existence are also responsible for the feeling of nausea. Sartre suggests that the world is absurd because there is no reason for things to exist, and there is no predictibility in the universe because it is not governed by any rational pattern. This unpredictibility or insecurity always hovers over the universe. If the laws of the universe are contingent, anything is possible. If anything is possible in this unpredictable universe, then it is possible that the earth may collide with another planet tomorrow or a person's tongue may turn into a live centipede.

26 Ibid., pp. 135-136.
When one becomes aware of this unpredictableness of the universe, Sartre says one's natural reaction is nausea.

In addition, there is another point which needs to be mentioned. The feeling of nausea is also associated with the fluency of a thing. Something is fluent if it "slows down and assumes a kind of soft and spurious solidity."²⁷ Fluency suggests a disgusting sensation. Something which is sticky, slithery, viscous, slimy, etc., offers a horrible image and the feeling it arouses in us is that of nausea. Sartre regards existence in general and man in particular as something viscous on an enormous scale. Therefore, one's awareness of existence gives rise to the feeling of nausea.

The preceding discussion leads one to conclude that the following definition of nausea is justified: namely, nausea is the feeling that everything exists. Existing things are superfluous, absurd, contingent, and viscous and one reacts to them with the feeling of nausea. Therefore, a natural reaction to existence is nausea. When Roquentin realizes that there is no reason for existence in general, and for his own existence in particular, he finds himself completely free. The next topic which deserves discussion is the problem of freedom. The elaboration and the discussion of Roquentin's actions and attitudes will make clear the meaning Sartre assigns to freedom.

C. Freedom

The last two sections have been concerned with the themes of existence and nausea—two themes which are central to the novel. Sartre develops them clearly and explicitly. In contrast to these themes, the theme of

²⁷ Marcel, The Philosophy of Existentialism, p. 50.
freedom does not find a clear and explicit description in the work. But, a thorough study of the novel does reveal the implicit presence of the theme of freedom. Roquentin expresses it through his attitudes and actions. Even, he, does not become clear about the nature of freedom until he envisions existence in its crudeness. It is only after this intuitive grasp of existence that Roquentin realizes that he is completely free. Even after the realization that he is free, however, he understands only the negative aspect of freedom: i.e., he is 'free from' all relationships, attachments, and connections. This theme of freedom is present in Nausea only in embryonic form, but it is important to an understanding of the novel. In the several pages that follow, an attempt will be made to present those instances and episodes in which the theme of freedom finds expression. It will be necessary to then extract the theme in order to give a meaningful description of it.

In Nausea, the idea of freedom is associated with three main episodes. First, it is associated with Roquentin's enlightenment that everything, including himself, is superfluous or a free gift; second, it is connected with the threat imposed by material things to man's consciousness. Finally, the following idea is implicitly present throughout the book: the statement 'man is free' means that he is not or need not be dependent on other human beings. The elaboration and the discussion of these points will make clear the meaning of freedom.

Certainly, one of the major themes of the novel is the revelation of existence, and, as already established, it is revealed to be contingent, superfluous, or a free gift. By this, Sartre implies that there is no Being outside or inside existence to determine it or to give it direction and meaning. Existence is a free gift in the sense that it can be anything.
Since man is an existence, he is therefore superfluous and free. But like existence, he is free for nothing or he is free for no special thing. Then, since existence which is superfluous and free is meaningless, so too is man's existence. Nevertheless, man finds himself surrounded by a net of meanings that are not created by God or any higher being but are created by man himself. Sartre suggests that the origin of these meanings lie in the spontaneous freedom of man; therefore the statement that 'man is free' means that man is the creator of meanings and values, and this idea of freedom leads to the second point: the threat imposed by the materiality of things to man's consciousness.

Man becomes conscious of his spontaneous freedom when it is threatened by the material non-conscious world: "Vegetation has crawled for miles towards the cities. It is waiting. Once the city is dead, the vegetation will cover it, will climb over the stones, grip them, search them, make them burst with its long black pincers; it will blind the holes and let its green paws hang over everything." Here, Sartre uses the term 'vegetation,' literally as well as symbolically. The literal significance of vegetation is quite clear. We know that deserted cities or buildings are soon covered by grass, shrubs, plants, bushes or vegetation. That is, if man stops assigning meaning to certain things, they will soon be captured by the material world. It is out of this knowledge that the symbolic meaning of the term 'vegetation' emerges. The materiality serves as a trap to human freedom. If man neglects for an instant to assign meaning to things, terrifying results may be the outcome. As Roquentin moves more and more into solitude, he neglects the task of assigning meaning to objects

28 Sartre, Nausea, p. 208.
surrounding him. In effect, he lets them be what they are. When he does this, he suddenly finds that the veneer of meanings evaporates and the appearance of things is suddenly altered or changed. So, he becomes aware of his freedom in the sense of an obligation or a task to be fulfilled. This task is that of assigning meanings to things in the world, and out of this realization there emerges the third point.

It seems that Sartre implicitly suggests that the statement that 'man is free' means he is not or need not be dependent on other people for conferring meanings to things or to himself. This point is made clear by deductions which one can draw from the first two points. According to the first, existence is contingent and superfluous. Thus, there are no eternal values conferred on things, no absolutes, and no immutable laws, no a priori right and wrong and no intrinsic meanings. This is so because there is no God to fulfill these tasks. But one does find oneself surrounded by meanings, laws, values, and many other absolutes that are created by other people to enslave or to curb one's freedom. Therefore, for Sartre, to be free means to liberate oneself from the meanings and value-systems of others.

To sum up: in *Nausea* it appears that Sartre suggests three themes about freedom. First, man is essentially free—that is, man's essence is freedom. Second, man becomes aware of this freedom when it is threatened by the material world and in this awareness he realizes that freedom is a task to be fulfilled, and this task consists in conferring meanings on things. Lastly, freedom also consists in liberating oneself from the meaning-systems of other people. Therefore, freedom is man's essence, his task of assigning meanings to things, and also an activity to liberate himself from the meaning-systems of others. This is in summary the description of
freedom as presented in *Nausea*.

With this established, the next task is to make clear the consequences which follow from the awareness that in spite of the fact that man is free, still life is not justified. Thus, it is necessary to be concerned with the search for a justification as presented in *Nausea*, and this discussion will lead to the discussion of adventure, and the function of art.

**D. Justification of Existence**

The theme of justification of existence is a running theme throughout the pages of the novel but its presence is felt strongly only in the last few pages of the book. Most of the critics agree that the theme of the justification of existence is the most obscure, slippery and ironic theme in the novel. But all of them regard it an important theme even though they disagree on one major point. Their disagreement consists in the fact that in the last pages of the novel, Sartre suggests an aesthetic solution to the justification of existence.29 One group of critics suggests that the aesthetic solution is merely sketched in even though Sartre is uninterested in it. On the other hand, the second group of interpreters emphasizes that the very import of the novel lies in its aesthetic solution. This group thinks that the aesthetic solution is not "a convenient manner of getting the hero [Roquentin] out of a sticky predicament,"30 but it is a genuine solution which Sartre adopts for himself in his later career as

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29 After experiencing the absurdity of existence, Roquentin toys with two alternatives with respect to "what to do now." His first choice is to "exist slowly, softly, like these trees, like a puddle of water, like the red bench in the street car." But he discards this alternative because it will not help him to forget his nausea. Thus, Roquentin deliberates on the second alternative which is an aesthetic solution.

a writer. The aim here is to look at this controversy with regard to the aesthetic solution in a wider perspective. To accomplish this task, an attempt will be made to present all those ways which people adopt to justify their existence. These ways to justify existence are presented in *Nausea* and Sartre rejects all of them except one. A discussion of the different ways to justify existence and of Sartre's rejection of them should throw some light on the controversy which shrouds the aesthetic solution.

A thorough study of the novel reveals that Sartre is suggesting that there are two different ways which people have adopted and do adopt to justify the unjustified existence. They may be termed as 'the way of being' and 'the way of doing.' 'The way of being' takes two forms. The first is adopted by the salauds or the 'leaders' of Bouville who believe in the possession of absolute rights, and the second, by Anny who believes in 'perfect moments.' Likewise, 'the way of doing' takes two forms. Sartre presents the first in Roquentin's belief that he may be able to justify his existence if he writes the biography of M. de Rollebon; he presents the second in Roquentin's final decision to write a novel which might justify his existence. Finally, Sartre rejects 'the way of being' as an adequate way of justifying existence, and also rejects the first form of 'the way of doing' on the same grounds. In the last analysis, it seems that Sartre accepts or commends only the second form of 'the way of doing': i.e., he seems to think that existence can be justified to some extent, if not completely, by creating a work of fiction. The aim here is to discuss all four ways of justifying existence.

In the 'way of being' the individual might make himself believe that he is born with a special purpose or for some special end. For this reason, he might believe that he has a right to exist. In some people, this sense
of right becomes so strong that they forget that they are mere existence—
that they are free and superfluous like others. This way of justifying
one's existence is adopted by the 'worthies' of Bouville. They considered
themselves as the leaders who 'made' Bouville. They regarded values as
facts and thought of themselves as incarnations of these values. This be-
lief in their divine rights led them to think that they were 'being' rather
than 'existence.' In the earlier section of this dissertation, it was
pointed out that for Sartre, being 'is' but it does not 'exist,' and any-
thing which 'is,' does not exist because it is justified in the sense that
it has a reason to be or it can be explained. All these 'worthies' believ-
ed themselves to be a part of a rational plan and therefore, justified.
Sartre points out that no one has any God-given rights including the
'worthies' of Bouville. They are free and superfluous like all existence.
This way of justifying existence is a delusion, then, because existence is
not a part of any rational plan. Therefore, Sartre rejects this first form
of 'the way of being' as adequate.

In addition, however, there is another form of 'the way of being' that
Sartre thinks might justify one's existence. In fact, both Roquentin and
Anny desire this way. Early in the novel, Roquentin was looking for jus-
tification in 'the way of being.' He was not interested in the contempla-
tion of art but he wanted to be like a work of art or a part of the ration-
al plan. His desire comes into sharp focus in the passage that follows:
"I, too, wanted to be. That is all I wanted. This is the last word. At
the bottom of all these attempts which seemed without bonds, I find the same
desire again: to drive existence out of me, to rid the passing moments of
their fat, to twist them, dry them, purify myself, harden myself, to give
back at last the sharp, precise sound of a saxophone note."  

Roquentin wanted to live 'adventures' which are like a work of art, and he makes the discovery that there are no adventures which one can live. In short, he comes to think that all adventures are like stories and one cannot live a story. When an individual is going through or is involved in an event, he is not thinking of it. He can think about it only from a distance. One can either live or tell but one cannot do both. When one lives, nothing happens; when one talks about life or events, he connects them and an adventure is created. But these adventures are only in books and not in actual life. An adventure has a hard necessity as well as inevitability, is part of a rational plan, and can be explained. But on the other hand, when one lives, there are no real happenings and no connection among events. In life, there are no logical connections among events, but when one relates these events, one imposes a logical structure on them and they become adventures. Therefore, Roquentin realizes that his desire to live like an adventure is impossible. He can never become like a work of art. Hence, existence cannot be justified by 'the way of being.'

The same desire to be a work of art is expressed through Anny's wish to realize 'perfect moments.' Anny thinks that if life is an unconnected series of insignificant moments, it can take a meaning and significance if there are some 'perfect moments.' This point becomes clear when Roquentin describes Anny's desire: "She always wanted to have 'perfect moments.' If the time was not convenient, she took no more interest in anything, her eyes became lifeless, she dragged along lazily like a great awkward girl."  

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31 Sartre, Nausea, p. 234.
Roquentin tells the reader that to realize these 'perfect moments,' Anny made him behave in a specific manner by forcing him to adopt particular types of attitudes. She believed that by taking these precautionary measures, existence might give rise to 'perfect moments,' and through her acting role she might be able to "incarnate an aesthetic essence in her own flesh." In the final pages of the novel, Anny comes to the realization that 'perfect moments' do not exist. Her reasons for accepting this conclusion resemble Roquentin's reasons for rejection of adventures. By rejecting the idea that one can justify one's existence by becoming a work of art, Sartre rejects 'the way of being' as an adequate way of justifying existence.

Another way which might be chosen to justify one's existence is 'the way of doing.' 'The way of doing' consists in the fact that instead of desiring to become a work of art, one may desire to create a work of art. This way of doing may take two different forms. First, one may desire to justify one's existence by writing the biography of someone who is dead. Second, one may desire to justify one's existence by creating a work of art—by writing a fictional novel. The example of the first form is Roquentin's proposed project of writing the biography of the Marquis de Rollebon, an obscure historical figure. Roquentin believes that if he writes this biography, he might be able to justify his life in his own eyes. After going through the papers of de Rollebon, Roquentin finds that all he has written about the man is nothing but his own creation. Marquis de Rollebon's biography turns out to be Roquentin's own existence recreated:

33 Champigny, The Stages on Sartre's Way, p. 36.
M. de Rollebon was my partner; he needed me in order to exist and I needed him so as not to feel my existence. I furnished the raw material, the material I had to resell, which I didn’t know what to do with: existence, my existence . . . . He stood in front of me, took up my life to lay bare his own to me. I did not notice that I existed any more, I no longer existed in myself, but in him; . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . .
I was only a means of making him live, he was my reason for living, he had delivered me from myself.34

Roquentin realizes that the project of writing the biography of another person consists in creating another existence. So, the biography of de Rollebon is another existence devoid of all meaning and hence, a gratuitous thing. Therefore, by creating another existence one cannot justify one’s own existence. Hence, this first form of ‘the way of doing’ to justify one’s existence, is not an adequate form.

After rejecting these three ways of justifying existence, Sartre goes on to present the fourth way—creating a work of fiction. Roquentin reaches this decision on the basis of his repeated experience with a melody which he happens to hear in a cafe. He finds that the only thing which has helped him to forget his malaise or nausea, is the song ‘Some of these days,’ sung by an American Negress. This song makes him forget his nausea not by appealing to his emotions as a human song about a human situation, but rather in the fact that it transports him from the world of contingent time to the world of absolute time: the music moves him from contingency to necessity. In this case, Roquentin realizes that the contemplation of this world of music which offers a hard necessity, makes him forget the contingent existence. He thinks that the middle-aged Jew who wrote the song and the Negress who sang it are saved from the sin of existence, not

34 Sartre, Nausea, pp. 133-134.
in the sense that they are able to justify their existence in their own
eyes, but in the sense that they are able to justify their existence in the
eyes of others. But, he then asks, are they able to justify their exis-
tence completely, and answers: "Not completely, of course, but as much as
any man can."35

Roquentin thinks that he might be able to justify his existence if not
in his own eyes, at least in the eyes of others, if he tries his luck in
another medium. He says: "It would have to be a book; . . . . But not a
history book: history talks about what has existed—an existant can never
justify the existence of another existant."36 He realizes his error with
regard to writing the biography and he thinks that his book will be another
type of book, most probably a fiction in which; " . . . you would have to
guess, behind the printed words, behind the pages, at something which would
not exist, which would be above existence."37 It would be a story or an
adventure which will never happen in reality and it, "would have to be
beautiful and hard as steel and make people ashamed of their existence."38

He reaches his decision to write a novel and thinks that when people
will read this book they will say: "Antoine Roquentin wrote it, a red-
headed man who hung around cafes,' and they would think about my life as I
think about the negress's: as something precious and almost legendary."39
In this way, he thinks that he will be able to justify his life in the eyes

36 Ibid., p. 237.
37 Ibid., p. 237.
38 Ibid., p. 237.
39 Ibid., p. 238.
of others. He recognizes that this will not justify his life completely, but it will to some extent. By creating a work of art, he will not be able to prevent himself from existing the way he loathes, but at least, he will manage through this book, to assume and transfigure his past existence. With this aesthetic solution the novel ends.

There has been much controversy with regard to this aesthetic solution. Francis Jeanson and Iris Murdoch find that this aesthetic solution is, "nothing more than a convenient manner of getting the hero out of a sticky predicament." Jeanson believes that when Sartre was writing *Nausea*, he had already rejected the aesthetic solution whereas Murdoch thinks that Sartre has merely sketched in the aesthetic solution even though he is uninterested in it. Murdoch points out that Sartre does not really believe in such a solution. The position of this dissertation is similar to James Arnold in so far as it rejects the positions taken by Jeanson and Murdoch. Their position that either Sartre has already rejected or he is uninterested in the aesthetic solution claims two main things. First, it claims "some knowledge of the author’s intention at the time of writing the novel," and second, it claims "a serious flaw in the composition of the novel itself." It should be clear from previous discussion in this dissertation of the different ways to justify one’s existence that Sartre’s whole approach in the novel leads to the aesthetic solution. The failure of both Jeanson and Murdoch to recognize this consists in the fact that they do not accept the novel at its face value, and they refuse to look at *Nausea* as a book in

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40 Arnold, *La Nausée Revisited*, p. 211.
41 Ibid., p. 212.
42 Ibid., p. 212.
its own right. It is quite clear from a thorough reading of the novel that its total impact lies in the aesthetic solution. Arnold is right when he points out that: "In fact, Miss Murdoch and Monsieur Jeanson are probably guilty, not of a misreading of the text, but of bringing to it a perspective which Sartre did not have when he wrote La Nausée." Both Jeanson and Murdoch are reading the later views of Sartre into Nausea and thus have done a disservice to the individuality and uniqueness of the novel. One finds that Sartre makes it clear in his autobiography that in his childhood, he decided to cheat death by creating his own sacrophagus—a purified form of himself. This earlier or original project of Sartre is similar to that of Roquentin who looks for salvation in the creation of a work of art. One also finds that since the experience of crude existence is a personal experience of Sartre, he could escape his feeling of nausea only by choosing his career as a writer in his later life. This is, of course, similar to Roquentin's decision to escape his own malaise through the creation of a novel. On the basis of the above discussion, one must conclude that the aesthetic solution is a genuine solution which Sartre upholds throughout his later career.

This concludes the discussion of the various existential themes in the novel. The next chapter will concern itself with comparing and contrasting these themes with some of the main philosophical problems presented in Being and Nothingness. This discussion will then lead to the question of whether Nausea is actually an expression of Sartre's existential philosophy.

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43 Ibid., p. 212.
CHAPTER IV

NAUSEA: AN EXPRESSION OF SARTRE'S EXISTENTIAL PHILOSOPHY

In the last three chapters, the literary devices, as well as the philosophical content of Nausea, have been treated in detail. The discussion has concerned itself mainly with Nausea and all references to the later works of Sartre were ignored. In this final chapter, an attempt will be made to discuss Nausea in relation to Sartre's major philosophical work, Being and Nothingness. The analysis will center around the question, Is Nausea an expression of Sartre's existential philosophy? The answer to this question will be provided in three parts. First, an attempt will be made to summarize the basic tenets of Sartre's existential philosophy. Second, the major themes of Nausea will be compared and contrasted with the themes in Being and Nothingness. The similarities (if any) and the differences in the treatment of these themes in both works will be specified. And finally, on the basis of the answers provided for part one and part two, an attempt will be made to specify whether Nausea is an expression of Sartre's existential philosophy.

The first point which deserves attention relates to the nature of Sartre's existential philosophy. It should be made very clear from the beginning that Sartre did not apply the label 'existentialist' to himself and the label 'existential' to his thought until 1946. He first displayed these labels in the title and the thoughts expressed in his most narrow and hastily written pamphlet, L'Existentialisme est un humanisme. Simone de Beauvoir admits in her memoirs that the word 'existentialist' was still unknown to her until the beginning of 1943. By this time, she
had already read and reread the manuscript of Being and Nothingness. From this one can infer that this label was also unknown to Sartre. Simone de Beauvoir recalls her embarrassment when, sometime in 1943, Jean Grenier queried: "And you, Madame, are you an existentialist?" Her embarrassment was due to the fact that she did not know the meaning of the label 'existentialist.' She tells us that it was Gabriel Marcel who applied the label 'existentialist' to Sartre and to his works. The French journalists and critics who were waiting for such an opportunity took up this convenient designation for Sartre's works. By 1943, when popular opinion established Sartre as an existentialist per excellence, he was still objecting to this label. It was only in 1946 that Sartre openly called his philosophy "existentialism." After accepting this label, Sartre went on to clarify its meaning in his pamphlet L'Existentialisme est un humanisme.

After one has accepted Sartre as an established existentialist, the next concern is to summarize his views with regard to existentialism. It is not an easy task to provide a definition of existentialism because the term is so loosely used by so many that all attempts at defining it end in failure. Even Sartre himself finds it extremely difficult to come up with an exact definition of it. But Sartre does make an attempt at clarifying the meaning of existentialism in his pamphlet L'Existentialisme est un humanisme. It can be presumed that the above pamphlet presents in a less technical form the gist of Sartre's philosophy which is presented in a more technical and abstract form in Being and Nothingness. An attempt can be made to summarize the major problems of Being and Nothingness, which form the essential doctrine of existentialism.

From the outset, a distinction can be drawn between "authentic" and "inauthentic" types of existentialism. Inauthentic existentialism includes
the "beat" uninformed and vulgar existentialism as understood by the layman. For a layman, existentialism is something scandalous and naturalistic. Any artist or poet or columnist who is a little "offbeat" is termed an existentialist. A non-conformist who lacks a sense of responsibility is dubbed an existentialist. Sartre gives an example of a lady who, whenever she let slip a vulgar expression, excused herself by declaring, "I guess I'm becoming an existentialist."¹ This layman's view of existentialism is inauthentic because it deviates from the philosophical meaning.

In contrast to the inauthentic type, there is the technical and philosophical type of existentialism which can be termed the authentic type. Sartre points out that this type of existentialism is "the least scandalous, the most austere of doctrines. It is intended strictly for specialists and philosophers."² The authentic type can be classified under two headings. Under the first heading can be placed the Christian existentialists such as Jaspers and Marcel; under the second Heidegger and French existentialists including Sartre. The latter may be called atheistic existentialists. Jean Wahl, while constructing a few rules-of-thumb for distinguishing between existentialists and non-existentialists, also distinguishes between Heideggerian and Sartrean existentialism:

If we say: 'Man is in this world, a world limited by death and experienced in anguish; is aware of himself as essentially anxious; is burdened by his solitude within the horizon of his temporality,' then we recognize the accents of Heideggerian philosophy. If we say: 'Man, by opposition to the "in-itself" is the "for-itself," is

² Ibid., p. 12.
never at rest, and strives in vain towards a union of the "in-itself" and the "for-itself;"" then we are speaking in the manner of Sartrean existentialism.  

The preceding statements of Wahl make it clear that Sartre's existentialism is different from that of Heidegger, even though both of them are in the atheistic camp. Having noted these preliminary remarks, one can go on to summarize the basic tenets of Sartre's existentialism. The summary which follows does not claim to be comprehensive and detailed. But an attempt will be made to present the main ideas around which all of Sartre's existential philosophy revolves. The different ideas will be discussed in detail when they are compared and contrasted with the themes of Nausea.

In general, these are the main ideas of Sartre's existential philosophy:

1. Philosophy is anthropocentric—i.e., man is its genuine concern.

2. Man is a unique type of being. Man, by opposition to the "in-itself," is the "for-itself."

3. Man has no God-given essence. Man first exists and then creates his essence. Therefore, in man, existence comes before essence.

4. Man is absolutely free and absolutely responsible.

5. Anguish is the outcome of man's absolute freedom and absolute responsibility.

6. Man's existence is contingent and unjustified. Man's ideal is to justify his existence by attempting to fuse the "for-itself" with the "in-itself." This ideal is contradictory and hence unattainable.

Sartre's existential philosophy regards man as the genuine concern of

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philosophy. Sartre states that existentialism is "a doctrine which makes human life possible and, in addition, declares that every truth and every action implies a human setting and a human subjectivity." Sartre places priority on human existence because he regards man as a unique and central kind of being in the universe. This uniqueness consists in the fact that man, in contrast to the "in-itself," is the "for-itself." The "in-itself" and the "for-itself" are the two aspects through which the being appears. The "in-itself" aspect, on reflection, appears to be massive, undifferentiated existence. It is neither active nor passive, neither necessary nor derived from any necessary being; it is neither created from within nor from without. The only thing one can say about the "in-itself" is that it is; it is in itself; and it is what it is. In short, the "in-itself" is contingent, absurd, and "superfluous for eternity." In contrast to the "in-itself," the "for-itself" characterizes man's nature. It is fluid, and hence cannot be reduced to the massiveness of the "in-itself." Moreover, it can never be identical with itself. Man, who is characterized by the "for-itself," is the only being who has the ability to differentiate, to distinguish, to negate and to put everything into question. And if it is man alone who has the ability to negate, then the "for-itself" must be basically negative. Therefore, Sartre concludes that the "for-itself," or the nature of man, is characterized by nothingness.

Since the being of man is characterized by nothingness, man is a mere existence without essence. By essence is meant "the ensemble of both the

4 Sartre, Existentialism, p. 10.
5 Sartre, Being and Nothingness, p. lxxvi.
production routines and the properties which enable it [an object] to be to be both produced and defined."\(^6\) Man is a being that is a mere existence without any qualities and is not the consequence of a formula. In man, therefore, his existence comes before essence. Sartre criticizes those philosophers who believe in some sort of essence of man. His criticism is directed against two types of philosophers. First, he criticizes those philosophers who believe that "God produces man, just as the artisan, following a definition and a technique, makes a paper-cutter."\(^7\) These philosophers, therefore, regard every individual man as a certain concept realized by God's intelligence. In this sense, man is regarded as possessing a divine essence. Second, Sartre criticizes certain atheistic philosophers of the 18th century, who conceive of man as having a nature which is common to all men. According to these philosophers, "each man is a particular example of a universal concept, man."\(^8\) The consequences of such a belief in universality is that "the wild-man, the natural man, as well as the bourgeois, are circumscribed by the same definition and have the same basic qualities."\(^9\) The positions taken by the preceding philosophers have one thing in common. Both positions stress that in man essence comes before existence. On the other hand, Sartre's atheistic existentialism emphasizes that if God does not exist then there is one being, man, in whom "existence precedes essence."

Naturally, one wants to know the meaning of the phrase "existence

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\(^7\) Ibid., p. 14.

\(^8\) Ibid., p. 14.

\(^9\) Ibid., p. 15.
 precedent essence." By this phrase Sartre means that "first of all, man exists, turns up, appears on the scene, and, only afterwards, defines himself."¹⁰ Since there is no predetermined concept or role for man to fill, one can say only this with regard to him—that he exists. In his bare existence, he is nothing. It is only through his acts and enterprises that man creates himself or his essence. This is one of the basic principles of Sartre's existential philosophy.

Man who is without any predetermined nature, is free to choose what he wants to be. The capacity for choice is fundamental to the being of man. Sartre identifies the capacity for choice or freedom with the being of man: "What we call freedom is impossible to distinguish from the being of human reality." Man does not exist first in order to be free subsequently; there is no difference between the being of man and his being-free."¹¹ Since the "for-itself" is the being of man, freedom is therefore identical with the "for-itself."

Sartre introduces the idea that the "for-itself," or the human reality, is condemned to be free. The human reality is condemned because it did not create itself, and yet it is free. Sartre declares, "We are a freedom which chooses, but we do not choose to be free."¹² The fact is that man cannot help acting in the world and cannot help being free. So the "for-itself" is not free not to be free. Since man is free, he is responsible for what he is. Sartre believes that since there is no God to determine man's actions, man is absolutely free. By absolute

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 15.
¹¹ Sartre, Being and Nothingness, p. 25.
¹² Ibid., pp. 460-461.
freedom, Sartre means that man's freedom is unrestricted or without any limits.

Sartre does not believe in the conditioning power of passions. Some psychologists argue that man's actions are influenced by passions or motives, that it is motives which guide our actions and before the power of which, we are helpless. Other psychologists argue that in some actions, motives are more at work than in other actions. They hold that in these strongly motivated actions we are less free than in actions involving little motivation. Sartre points out that if it is conceivable that man is free in some actions while determined in others, then the following problem arises: if freedom disappears when it is not active in some actions, then how does it arise in others? The psychologists have no satisfactory answer to this problem. Sartre thinks that his own interpretation of freedom eliminates the problem at its roots. Once human reality is free, it is always free. Freedom is not restricted by motives but it is freedom which chooses motives as motives. Motives make sense only in connection with freedom. Sartre concludes, therefore, that "man is responsible for his passion." 13 Similarly, Sartre argues that man is not determined by his birth or death, his place, his past, his surroundings, or his fellow brethren. Hence, the human reality is absolutely free.

Sartre also emphasizes the intimate connection between human freedom and responsibility. The significance of man's choice is not determined only by the act of choosing, but it also incorporates the thing which is chosen. Responsibility for Sartre is the "consciousness (of) being the

incontestable author of an event or of an object." Sartre goes a step further in holding that when a man chooses himself, he not only chooses for himself but he chooses for all men. One can thus say that in the act of choice, the individual is saying not merely "This is what I choose," but also "This is what is to be chosen." When a particular person chooses, through this choice he becomes human. Since a particular individual's choice makes him human, it also contributes something to humanity. Therefore, by deciding a particular course of action, even though it arises out of one's special situation, one is creating an image of man which he desires every man to approve of or to follow. In fashioning himself one is setting an example for mankind as a whole. In this sense, when one fashions himself, he fashions man. This idea of Sartre is similar to the Kantian categorical imperative: "You must never will what you cannot consistently will should be willed by all other rational beings." Consequently, Sartre says that in every act of choice man is not only responsible for his individuality, but he "carries the weight of the whole world on his shoulders; he is responsible for the world and for himself as a way of being." What sort of consequences follow from the awareness of this heavy responsibility which man is to shoulder? Sartre is very clear about the consequences. When a man becomes aware of the fact that in making a

14 Sartre, Being and Nothingness, p. 529.
16 Sartre, Being and Nothingness, p. 529.
particular decision, he is not only responsible for himself but for mankind as a whole, this awareness gives rise to anguish. This state of anguish is frightening, and most people would like to avoid it. And they do so by falling into some sort of bad faith.

A man in bad faith lies to himself. He pretends that he is not really free. He deceives himself by thinking that his actions are due to the force of circumstances, to the will of God, or to heredity or environment. In this way, he tries to throw the burden of responsibility on something other than himself. Sartre is critical of all those philosophers, psychologists, and theologians who, by positing some sort of determinism, hide from man the truth that he is responsible for his actions. His criticism is directed towards the psychological determinism of Freidians, the historical determinism of Marxists, the theological determinism of the theologians and, by extension, he is above all repudiating determinisms which rest on a scientific base. All of these thinkers have tried to believe that there is a necessity behind the contingency of the world and human reality. This search for a necessity behind the contingency is a search for essence behind existence. The acceptance of God, the first principles, and a fixed nature of man are attempts at putting the responsibility of man's actions on something other than man. Hence, this leads to bad faith. To live in good faith is to face the fact that there is no necessity behind the contingency of human reality and the world; there is no fixed nature of man; there are no a priori values in reference to which human actions can be explained; and therefore, man is responsible for what he does and what he is.

Man who is without God, without any scriptures to guide him, without any fixed nature, is free and alone in the universe. There is no reason
for his birth or his death. His existence is contingent and unjustified. It seems to Sartre that man's whole endeavor is to justify his existence. Man's wish is to fuse his freedom or subjectivity with the impermeability of things—i.e., to attain a state of justified existence (a fusion of the "for-itself" with the "in-itself"). But this stage cannot be achieved because it is a contradictory ideal. Therefore, man's seekings are futile, and man is a useless passion.

This, in short, sums up the basic ideas of Sartre's existential philosophy. No claim is made here with regard to the completeness and the comprehensiveness of the summary. Keeping in view these basic ideas of existential philosophy, one can now attempt to compare and contrast them with the major themes of Nausea. It will also be made clear, in the section which follows, that certain themes of existential philosophy are absent from Nausea.

In Chapter III of this dissertation, it was established that Nausea contains four major existential themes: existence, nausea, freedom, and justification of existence. Actually, Sartre devotes most of Nausea to the themes of existence, nausea, and justification of existence; they are more fully developed than the theme of freedom, to which one finds only implicit references in the novel. Sartre's major concern in Nausea is with the revelation of existence through an intuitive experience. He makes it very explicit that no train of logical arguments or linguistic analyses or manipulation of concepts and terms can demonstrate the presence of existence. One can comprehend existence only by becoming aware of it directly through moods like nausea. So Sartre makes no attempt at presenting a philosophy of existence. That is because no philosophy of existence is possible if, by philosophy, one means a logical description
of existence.

In *Being and Nothingness*, in which Sartre presents his existential philosophy, he is not concerned with the intuitive experience of existence. Instead, he is attempting to describe the two aspects of being which are the "in-itself" and the "for-itself." Sartre thinks that by describing these two aspects of being he will be able to answer the following questions: "What is the ultimate meaning of these two types of being? For what reasons do they both belong to being in general? What is the meaning of that being which includes within itself these two radically separated regions of being? . . . . And how can the being of the phenomenon be transphenomenal?" Sartre concedes that an attempt to reply to the above questions is the task of his existential philosophy.

From the preceding discussion, it is clear that Sartre's concern in *Being and Nothingness* is quite different from his concern in *Nausea*. In the latter work, he is attempting to reveal existence through the intuitive experience of Roquentin. At every step in the novel, Sartre emphasizes the fact that no logical description of existence is possible. The use of words, concepts, terms, and categories is regarded in *Nausea* as a hindrance to the experience of existence. But, in *Being and Nothingness*, Sartre's aim is completely the opposite. Here, he is mainly concerned with the descriptions of the two aspects of being, and therefore he utilizes all types of complex terms, concepts, and categories. He does so because this complex terminology is essential to the task of meaningfully describing the relation between the two aspects of being.

In *Nausea*, the emotional interpretation is given preference over the

17 Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, p. lxvii.
logical description of existence, whereas, in *Being and Nothingness*, one finds that all ideas are tied together in a rational system which gives one the feeling of complete logical congruity. Therefore, the mood of *Nausea* and the task which is accomplished in it are completely different from the mood and the task accomplished in *Being and Nothingness*.

There are some interpreters like Barnes and Murdoch who are so obsessed with their own presuppositions that they overlook this fact that the mood and the aims of *Nausea* are quite different from the mood and the aims of *Being and Nothingness*. Their mistake lies in their failure to distinguish between the emotional interpretation of existence which is provided in *Nausea* and the logical description of being which is presented in *Being and Nothingness*. This mistake is quite apparent from the forceful and clear assertions of Barnes in her introduction to Sartre's *Being and Nothingness*. She points out that the descriptions which Sartre provides for the contingency and the absurdity of existence in *Nausea* are "echoed in *Being and Nothingness* where Sartre uses almost the same words to describe Being-in-itself."\(^{18}\) Barnes fails to stress that the descriptions of existence in *Nausea* are at a different level from the descriptions of being in *Being and Nothingness*. In the novel, existence is revealed to Roquentin through his intuitive experience and his descriptions are nothing but emotional interpretations of this experience. On the other hand, in *Being and Nothingness*, Sartre is not describing his experience of being but, instead, is presenting a rational description of the way being might appear to him. Roquentin goes through an existential

\(^{18}\) Hazel Barnes, *Introduction to Jean-Paul Sartre's Being and Nothingness*, p. xvii.
doubt in which he is not only doubting the things which surround him, but his body and thoughts as well. Roquentin's doubt is unlike the logical doubt of Descartes, because the former feels his doubt, whereas the latter never really doubted the existence of things. Through feeling his doubt, Roquentin finds that existence reveals itself to him. Therefore, he establishes the presence of existence through the intuitive experience. On the other hand, in Being and Nothingness Sartre never doubts being but instead takes it for granted. With this assumption in view, Sartre goes on to describe the fissure in the being—i.e., he goes on to describe the "being-in-itself" and the "being-for-itself."

It is then quite clear from the preceding discussion, that Sartre's concern in Nausea is very different from his concern in Being and Nothingness. Sartre of Nausea reveals existence, whereas Sartre of Being and Nothingness postulates that there is being and then works out his entire existential philosophy from this postulate. The reason that Sartre develops a negative philosophy in Being and Nothingness is that Roquentin's experience of existence is negative. The experience of existence in Nausea is presupposed by the descriptions of being which are presented in Being and Nothingness. Without the support of the intuitive demonstration of existence in Nausea, Sartre's existential philosophy in Being and Nothingness would be left with an unsupported postulate. Therefore Nausea complements Sartre's existential philosophy.

The preceding discussion establishes that the moods and tasks undertaken in these two works are quite different. Since the themes of existence, nausea, and freedom find expression in both of these works, interpreters like Barnes and Murdoch are misled into thinking that Sartre is doing the same sort of thing in both. This mistake is two-sided. First,
it consists of the identifications of the emotional descriptions with
the logical descriptions. Second, it consists of the failure to recog-
nize that some of the themes of Nausea are similar to the corresponding
themes of Being and Nothingness in name only and are quite different in
content. Barnes and Murdoch are trapped by both of these mistakes. In
the previous discussion, Barnes' mistake was brought to focus. The
position of Murdoch will be examined now.

Murdoch is so overwhelmed by the analysis and the philosophical con-
tents of the novel that she declares, "This peculiar book lives on many
levels. It is a sort of palimpsest of metaphysical aperçus. It gives
expression to a pure metaphysical doubt, and also analyses that doubt in
terms of contemporary concepts. It is an epistemological essay on the
phenomenology of thought; it is also an ethical essay on the nature of
'bad faith.'"¹⁹ From these statements of Murdoch it is quite clear that
she fails to distinguish between the emotional descriptions and the
logical descriptions.

The second mistake of Murdoch is her failure to recognize that the
themes of existence, nausea, and freedom in the novel are similar to the
corresponding themes in Being and Nothingness in name only and are dif-
ferent in content. Some light can be thrown on this point by comparing
and contrasting the above themes in the two works. It is quite clear
from the above discussion that the major concern of Sartre in Nausea is
with existence. In Being and Nothingness, too, Sartre, is mainly con-
cerned with the discussion of being. But that is the only obvious simi-
arity one finds in the two works. The treatment of existence in Nausea

¹⁹ Iris Murdoch, Sartre Romantic and Rationalist, p. 4.
is on a different level from the treatment of being in *Being and Nothingness*. In the novel, Roquentin is mainly concerned with understanding the existence of the world, as well as his own existence. This understanding is not accomplished through the use of concepts and categories but, instead, through the avoidance of them. Through his subjective intuition and emotional interpretation, Roquentin gains an insight into existence in general and his own existence in particular. Roquentin's emotional comprehension of existence reveals to him that existence is superfluous, absurd, contingent, and viscous: superfluous because it is in excess; absurd because there is no reason for it to be or not to be; contingent because there is no necessary being in it or outside it to give it a direction or a meaning; and viscous because it is neither liquid or solid nor captured by any concepts or categories. The superfluity of existence in general and his own existence in particular is expressed by Roquentin as follows:

We were a heap of living creatures, irritated, embarrassed at ourselves, we hadn't the slightest reason to be there, none of us, each one, confused, vaguely alarmed, felt in the way in relation to the others. In the way: it was the only relationship I could establish between these trees, these gates, these stones.

And I—soft, weak, obscene, digesting, juggling, with dismal thoughts—I, too, was In the way. ... I dreamed vaguely of killing myself to wipe out at least one of the superfluous lives. But even my death would have been In the way. In the way, my corpse, my blood on these stones, between these plants, at the back of this smiling garden. And the decomposed flesh would have been In the way in the earth which would receive my bones, at last, cleaned, stripped, peeled, proper and clean as teeth, it would have been In the way: I was In the way for eternity.20

These descriptions also find expression in *Being and Nothingness*, in

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which Sartre is making an attempt at a logical description of being-in-itself:

Being-in-itself is never either possible or impossible. It is. This is what consciousness expresses in anthropomorphic terms by saying that being is superfluous (détrop)—that is, that consciousness absolutely cannot derive being from anything, either from another being, or from a possibility, or from a necessary law. Une-created, without reason for being, without any connection with another being, being-in-itself is détrop for eternity.21

These two passages from Nausea and Being and Nothingness are attempts to describe the superfluity of existence and that of being-in-itself. Sartre arrives at them by using two different methods. The passage from the novel is an interpretation of Roquentin's intuitive experience of existence. This experience is subjective and personal and therefore has the authority of truth and irrevocability. On the other hand, the passage from Being and Nothingness presents a logical description of being-in-itself which is arrived at not through an intuitive experience, but through a long and complex train of philosophical arguments. One might find some logical flaws in the arguments and thus challenge the authenticity of the description which can, therefore, be refuted, unlike those descriptions of Roquentin's experience. This, then, is one of the main differences between the emotional descriptions of existence and the logical descriptions of being-in-itself.

A second point worthy of mention is that in Nausea Sartre is concerned with dissolving all conventional distinctions. Roquentin's experience of existence reveals to him that the world, as well as he himself, are superfluous, absurd, and contingent. In this experience the distinction

21 Sartre, Being and Nothingness, p. lxvi.
between the world, or being-in-itself, and his own being, or being-for-itself, is dissolved. On the other hand, Sartre of Being and Nothingness is very eager to distinguish between being-in-itself and being-for-itself. In Being and Nothingness, Sartre accepts the validity of Roquentin's experience of the contingency of existence and provides the reader only with a logical proof for the existence of being-in-itself. Moreover, Sartre goes a step further than Nausea by providing reasons for the contingency of being-for-itself. Being-for-itself is contingent because it is "free to choose its way of being, [but] it was never able to choose not to be, or to choose not to be free. Nor is there any meaning for its being, other than what it makes for itself." This lack of distinction between being-in-itself and being-for-itself in Nausea is the second distinguishing feature between the emotional interpretations of existence and the logical descriptions of being.

Another important theme which finds expression in both the works is that of nausea. In the novel, Sartre's predominant concern is to explore the condition of nausea in order to give a full description of it. Consequently, this theme finds a complete and comprehensive development throughout the pages of the novel. It is very unfortunate that many interpreters, as well as professional philosophers, have identified the entire philosophy of Sartre with this particular theme. This unfortunate identification is an erroneous result of the fact that Sartre develops this theme in full detail in Nausea. Unfortunately, the interpreters overlook the fact that Sartre devotes very few pages in Being and

22 Hazel Barnes, Introduction to Jean-Paul Sartre's Being and Nothingness, p. xvii.
Nothingness to this theme. In these few pages, Sartre refers to nausea only on one or two occasions and in a couple of lines. Nausea is not even a secondary theme in the work. It is referred to only in connection with the theme of body. Nausea is one of the feelings which makes one become aware of one's body. In his philosophical work, Sartre never goes deeper than this into the nature of nausea, which may be due to the fact that he regards it as unimportant to the understanding of the philosophy he is developing in Being and Nothingness. Therefore, it is clear from the preceding discussion that there is no sound reason to identify Sartre's entire philosophy with this theme.

To substantiate the above point, it will be worthwhile to compare and contrast the theme of nausea as developed in both works. It has been pointed out earlier that in the novel nausea is one of the major themes. The main purpose of Roquentin's explorations is to understand the nature of nausea which he experiences and also to comprehend the things or qualities which are responsible for it. Through his personal experiences and explorations, Roquentin comes to an understanding of the nature of nausea and the things or qualities to which nausea is his reaction. He becomes aware of nausea in connection with objects, his own body, and his own thoughts. On the basis of his experiences with different objects, Roquentin concludes that nausea is the feeling or sensation, or, in short, the awareness that objects exist. He also realizes that nausea is not only the awareness that objects exist, but also the awareness that his body, as well as his thoughts, exists. Therefore, nausea is the awareness that everything exists.

The second step in Roquentin's exploration consists in finding out those aspects of existence which nauseate him. His exploration leads him
to the realization that when objects, his own body, and his thoughts are found to be superfluous, absurd, contingent, and viscous, his natural reaction to them is nausea. Hence, nausea is the awareness that every existing thing is superfluous, absurd, contingent, and viscous. These are the revelations presented by Roquentin with regard to nausea in the novel.

On the other hand, Sartre of Being and Nothingness is not concerned with the description of the nature of nausea. He does not make any attempt to determine why objects cause nausea or why thoughts are nauseating. He talks about nausea only in connection with the theme of body. Sartre thinks that there are three ontological dimensions of the body: the body as being-for-itself; the body as being-for-the-other; and one's body as body-known-by-the-other. Sartre develops the theme of nausea only in connection with the first ontological dimension of the body—i.e., the body as being-for-itself. In this dimension, there is no distinction between consciousness and the body. Consciousness and the body are not united but they are one—i.e., the body is consciousness. Sartre says, "the body is what this consciousness is; it is not even anything except body."23 In this dimension, consciousness does not know body but lives it. This is the dimension of non-positional consciousness. Here, there is not a body and a soul in the Cartesian sense, but a consciousness, which, if it wants to be in the world, has to be its body. In order to exist in the world of instrumentation, consciousness has to live its instrument, and this instrument is body.

After establishing that in the first ontological dimension of the

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23 Sartre, Being and Nothingness, p. 306.
body, consciousness is identical with body, Sartre goes on to study consciousness in connection with "how it lives its body" without transcending it (body) toward the world. The experiences of physical pain and of nausea can help one to study consciousness as "living its body." If one who is reading a book has a pain in the eye and he studies the pain, he will find that the pain is nowhere in the world. It is neither in the sentences of the book he is reading, nor outside the book, nor in his body considered as an object. The pain is one of the ways consciousness or the for-itself lives its body. No other person can find or locate this pain in one's body. This pain "is a mere translucid form of existence of consciousness."\(^{24}\) Since this pain is merely lived by consciousness, it is not an object. But as soon as one reflects on this pain, it becomes an object-pain. On this reflective level, the pain is not identified with body but is looked upon as something distinct from body. The body seems to be something passive on which this pain resides. Even on this reflective level, pain is not something known but, instead, is only lived or tolerated. Therefore, physical pain reveals one's body to himself.

Besides physical pain or suffering, there are many other experiences which reveal consciousness as "living its body." Sartre declares, "it goes without saying that we have chosen physical pain for the sake of an example and that there are thousands of other ways, themselves contingent, to exist our contingency."\(^{25}\) Nausea is one of these thousands of

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other experiences which help one reveal consciousness as "living its body." Sartre points out that when consciousness does not exist or live a particular pain or pleasure or a satisfaction or a dissatisfaction, still "consciousness does not cease 'to have' a body." This pure painless "apprehension of the self as a factual existence," is nausea. Sartre makes this point explicit by saying that "this perpetual apprehension on the part of my for-itself of an insipid taste which I cannot place, which accompanies me even in my efforts to get away from it, and which is my taste—this is what we have described elsewhere under the name of Nausea." Nausea is then the dull, insipid, colorless, tasteless feeling which "perpetually reveals my body to my consciousness." Thus nausea reveals the contingency of one's body. This dull and indiscrète nausea is the basis on which all distinct and empirical nauseas are revealed. One may like to free oneself from this indiscrète and unbearable nausea by looking for the pleasant or for the physical pain; but the moment consciousness exists or lives this pleasure or pain, that, in turn, reveals the contingency of one's body. Therefore, nausea is the taste of one's contingency.

That, in short, is the gist of what Sartre says about nausea in Being and Nothingness. The preceding discussion makes clear that it is wrong to identify the entire philosophy of Sartre with the theme of nausea. The major points of difference between the theme of nausea as developed

26 Ibid., p. 314.
27 Ibid., p. 314.
28 Ibid., p. 314.
29 Ibid., p. 314.
in the novel and in *Being and Nothingness* can now be specified.

The first major difference lies in the approach or the methods which are utilized in *Nausea* and in *Being and Nothingness*. In the novel, the approach to the understanding of nausea is through the intuitive method. Nausea is experienced in the person of Roquentin who is not approaching nausea from an external point of view—i.e., Roquentin is not moving around nausea but enters into it. He feels oneness with nausea by living it. He realizes that he is nausea. The experience of nausea assumes the status of a truth for Roquentin, and, in this sense, the experience is irrefutable. In the Bergsonian sense, Roquentin's "feeling into" nausea through an intellectual sympathy is the attainment of an absolute understanding or knowledge. On the other hand, in *Being and Nothingness* the case is completely opposite. Nausea is not understood with the assistance of the intuitive method but is approached from the method of analysis. Sartre, the author of *Being and Nothingness*, neither experiences nor contemplates nausea but, instead, talks about it from a distance. He does not enter into nausea but goes around it. He looks upon it from an external or a particular point of view. Thus, nausea is understood through the use of concepts and categories of intellect—that is, it is understood through the use of the analytic method. Therefore, the understanding or knowledge which is obtained with regard to nausea in *Being and Nothingness* is relative and not absolute.

The second point which differentiates the theme of nausea as presented in the novel from its presentation in *Being and Nothingness* is the content of the theme in the two works. In the novel, it has been established earlier that nausea is a sensation that physical objects, one's body, and one's thoughts, exist—that is, nausea is a sensation
which overcomes the individual who realizes that everything exists. Moreover, this sensation of nausea is experienced when one becomes aware of the superfluity, absurdity, contingency, and viscosity of existing things. In the novel, therefore, Roquentin realizes that every existing thing is nauseating. But this is not at all the case in *Being and Nothingness*, because here nausea is not a sensation but a feeling or a mood. This feeling or mood does not reveal that everything exists but only that one's body exists. One feels nausea not because one realizes the superfluousness, absurdity, contingency, and viscousness of existence in general, but only when one realizes the contingency of one's body.

From the preceding discussion it is explicit that in *Being and Nothingness* Sartre seems to be abandoning the view that all existence is nauseating. Therefore, it seems that Sartre is moving away from his original position with regard to nausea which was upheld in the novel. A Bergsonian will criticize Sartre's abandonment of his original point of view by declaring that Sartre of *Being and Nothingness* is so enmeshed in his intellectual concepts, categories, and symbols that he has lost sight of the light of the absolute understanding which he had gained through his intuitive experience in *Nausea*.

The above discussion specifies the difference between the theme of nausea as developed in the novel and in his philosophical work. Next to nausea, the theme of freedom forms an important part of Sartre's philosophy. Therefore, it too should be compared and contrasted in the two works. In *Nausea*, the theme of freedom finds expression only in embryonic form. Roquentin becomes aware of his freedom with regard to three main episodes. First, Roquentin, through his enlightenment, becomes aware of the fact that every existing thing is a free gift. On the basis
of this enlightenment, he realizes that man's essence is freedom. Roquentin lives this awareness of freedom. Second, he becomes aware of freedom through the threat imposed by the material world to his consciousness. In this connection, freedom is realized in terms of the task of assigning meanings to things. Finally, he realizes that freedom means independence from the meaning and value systems of others. Therefore, for Roquentin, freedom is man's essence; it is the task of assigning meanings to things and the activity of liberating oneself from the meaning systems of others. This realization of freedom appears as an awareness. Since it is an awareness, this freedom is pure and empty. To what use this freedom can be put Roquentin does not know. He finds that this awareness of freedom is unbearable. In the last pages of the novel, the reader finds Roquentin struggling with the problem of giving some sort of form to this awful empty freedom. In the end, Roquentin decides that he might be able to give some form to his freedom through the creation of a work of art. But he never puts this freedom into action. Since his freedom is never put into action, he does not become aware of the sense of responsibility which is a logical requirement of it. Therefore, Roquentin's awareness of freedom is without any concrete form.

In *Being and Nothingness*, freedom is one of the basic themes. Sartre devotes more than one hundred pages to the discussion of it. In these pages, he provides a comprehensive analysis of the concept. This analysis consists of detailed arguments given in the defense of his position. Because of the centrality of this problem in Sartre's philosophy, an attempt at a detailed analysis of it will be worthwhile here. Unlike most language analysts, Sartre does not concern himself with the analysis of the use and the function of the term "freedom" in ordinary
language. He finds it more interesting to analyze and to reveal the ontological structure of it. Because of the difficulties associated with such a project, Sartre makes use of his own philosophical terms to reveal this structure.

Sartre does not provide any specific definition of freedom because he thinks that to define a word or a thing is to put forth its special characteristics or essence. Since freedom does not have any such characteristics, it is indefinable. Moreover, freedom does not refer to a thing or a quality, and therefore it is unnameable. Sartre asks the question, "Indefinable and unnameable, is freedom also indescribable?" Sartre affirms that freedom can be described. Freedom is not something concrete or anything in the world, nor is it any specific faculty or an aspect of man distinguishable from other faculties and aspects. Furthermore, freedom is not an aspect of being or an instance of being in the world but, instead, means "a lack of being." All philosophical attempts are doomed to failure if they start looking at man as a being in the world and then try to locate some faculty of freedom in him. Freedom is not a faculty but, instead, the activity of transcending and nihilating the being. In Sartre's words, "freedom in its foundation coincides with the nothingness which is at the heart of man ... freedom is precisely the nothingness which is made-to-be at the heart of man and which forces human-reality to make itself instead of to be."

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30 Sartre, Being and Nothingness, p. 414.
31 By the phrase "lack of being," Sartre means that freedom is not anything concrete or substantial. It lacks all substantiality or plenum which is associated with being. In this sense, freedom is a lack of being.
32 Ibid., p. 416.
Freedom means that man is not identical with any form of being, no matter how much he may mold himself and his environment. Freedom is a lack and this lack is interminable—that is, man can never eliminate this lack except by becoming a thing. He can become a thing only when he dies. So freedom as a lack continues until man's death.

The preceding descriptions of freedom can become clear if they are viewed against the background of Sartre's philosophical system. Sartre holds that the being manifests itself through the "for-itself" and the "in-itself." The "for-itself" is the conscious subject, whereas the "in-itself" is the non-conscious being. Consciousness comes into existence by separating itself from the "in-itself." This separation is achieved through the activity of negation. The "for-itself" causes this separation from the "in-itself" in two different ways. First, it separates itself from the "in-itself" in the sense of regarding itself as something different from the objects—that is, it is not the physical objects. Second, it also separates itself from itself by making its own past the "in-itself." Therefore, the act by which the "for-itself" separates itself from the "in-itself" as an external object or its own past constitutes its freedom.

Following the above train of thought, one can say that the series of negations by which man constitutes himself also constitute his essential freedom. Sartre identifies the being of man with freedom. Man, says Sartre, is "nothing else than his plan; he exists only to the extent that he fulfills himself; he is therefore nothing else than the ensemble of his acts, nothing else than his life." This means that man is nothing

33 Sartre, *Existentialism*, p. 32.
other than his free acts. Thus, human reality is identical with freedom, or one can say that freedom is human reality. This is confirmed by Sartre's statement in which he says, "what we call freedom is impossible to distinguish from the being of human reality." Man does not exist first in order to be free subsequently; there is no difference between the being of man and his being-free." Therefore, freedom can be described as the being of human reality which dissociates itself from the "in-itself" in the sense of the external object or its own past by "secreting its own nothingness."  

The preceding discussion leads to the assertion that the "for-itself" is the seat of freedom. Sartre declares that the "for-itself" is condemned to be free. By this Sartre means "we are a freedom which chooses but we do not choose to be free." Man cannot help acting in the world, and he cannot help being free. So freedom is not free not to be free. This, for Sartre, is the facticity or the contingency of freedom.

Another point which is worth noticing is that freedom is a relation of the "for-itself" to the "in-itself." Freedom is a relation insofar as the "in-itself" is regarded as a given to be molded according to the ends posited by the "for-itself." This is confirmed by Sartre when he says, "freedom is originally a relation to the given." The question now is,

34 Sartre, Being and Nothingness, p. 25.

35 The phrase "secreting its own nothingness" is used by Sartre for the "for-itself." Sartre thinks that the "for-itself" is the seat of nothingness and thus all negations originate from this source. The "for-itself" can not only negate the external world but also its own past. In this sense, the "for-itself" secretes its own nothingness.

36 Sartre, Being and Nothingness, pp. 460-461.

37 Ibid., p. 462.
what is this relation with the given? One may be mistaken in reasoning that the given conditions freedom. Sartre points out that the given cannot condition freedom. First, the given cannot be a cause of freedom because the given can be a cause only of the given; second, the given cannot be a reason for freedom because all reasons arise from freedom itself; and last, the given cannot be a necessary condition of freedom, because freedom is in the domain of contingency—that is, it is not determined by anything other than itself. Therefore, Sartre concludes that the given does not enter into the constitution of freedom in any manner. Freedom is the internal negation of the given, whereas "the given is the plentitude of being which freedom colors with insufficiency and with negation by illuminating it with the light of an end which does not exist." The given as a resistance or an aid is revealed in accordance with the end posited by freedom. Sartre identifies the given with the facticity of the "for-itself." This given manifests itself in several ways such as one's place, one's body, one's past, or one's position as decided by others. Sartre's major arguments are concerned with demonstrating that all these manifestations of the given do not restrict one's freedom.

Freedom, for Sartre, is absolute and unrestricted. To say that someone is free is to point out that nothing determines his actions. This is an extension of the notion that there is "nothing" at the heart of human existence. Sartre is criticizing those traditional philosophers who believe that there are restrictions to freedom. Traditionally, two types of obstacles have been recognized: first, there are internal obstacles like the passions, emotions, and desires which are regarded as restrictions

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38 Ibid., p. 463.
to one's freedom; second, there are external objects or the outside world which is regarded as restricting man's freedom. Sartre tries to show that these two types of obstacles do not restrict one's freedom.

It will be worthwhile to present one example from each of these two obstacles mentioned above. First, then, are passions. It has been held traditionally that there are motives which influence man's actions. Motives guide man's actions and one is helpless before their power. Sartre criticizes this view on two main grounds: first, the trouble with such a point of view is that it conceives of mind as an object run by motives; moreover, such a point of view makes emotions psychic forces which control one's mind. Sartre points out that the being of man is not anything substantial. Emotions are not psychic forces guiding man's actions but, instead, are the ways an individual copes with the world. It is man's freedom which adopts certain emotional ways of reacting to the world and to situations. So, emotions do not compel one to behave in a certain manner in the face of a particular situation, but it is man's freedom which either chooses an emotional way or a rational way to deal with a particular situation in question. Sartre concedes the fact that if a person has chosen a particular emotional way of reacting to a certain situation and if he repeatedly does so, he might form a habit which is hard to change. But such a habit is not impossible to change. Therefore, emotions or passions do not determine one's actions but are chosen by one's freedom to tackle the problem which a particular situation presents.

Second, Sartre's criticism is directed to those psychologists who believe that in some actions motives are strongly at work, while in others their influence is negligible. They conclude that in the former case we
are less free than we are in the latter. Sartre points out that if it is conceivable that man is free in some actions while determined in others, then the following difficulty arises: if freedom disappears while it is not active in some actions, then how does it arise in others? The psychologists have no satisfactory answer to the problem. Sartre thinks that his own interpretation of freedom eliminates the problem at its roots. Once human reality is free, it is always free. Freedom is not restricted by motives or emotions. Motives are motives only for freedom. It is freedom which chooses them. Motives are objective facts in the external world which are cited as reasons for one's actions. Since all reasons originate from freedom, it is therefore freedom which recognizes motives as reasons. Thus, motives do not determine one's actions but it is freedom which, through projecting an end, makes motives significant. Therefore, passions, emotions, and motives do not restrict one's freedom.

After demonstrating that there are no internal pulls to restrict man's freedom, Sartre goes on to show that there are no external restrictions either. Traditionally, it has been believed that the external world of brute existence, one's past, one's place, and one's death, are obstacles which restrict man's freedom. According to the common sense view, the brute existence imposes limitations on one's freedom. A steep cliff acts as a restriction to one's free plan to climb it. Sartre's answer to the above criticism is that "although brute things . . . can from the start limit our freedom of action, it is our freedom itself which must first constitute the framework, the technique, and the ends in relation to which they will manifest themselves as limits."\(^{39}\) The steep cliff is neither

\(^{39}\) Sartre, *op. cit.*, p. 458.
climbable nor unclimbable in itself, but it is the freedom of the person which recognizes it as scalable or unscalable with regard to the end chosen. If a person is indifferent towards this end, the cliff is not left with any such significance. Therefore, the cliff does not restrict one's freedom, but it is freedom itself which constitutes it as a restriction to the end chosen.

It can be pointed out that besides the brute existence, one's past, one's place, one's birth, one's death, and one's fellow brethren may restrict his freedom. In the domain of human relations, another person may regard someone a Jew, an Aryan, a shy person, a Don Juan, an intellectual, a body, or even a mere object. In all these cases, one's freedom seems to be restricted. Sartre will accept the view that the other is free to regard someone all these things, but he argues that it is the individual who weighs and accepts the other's presence and opinion of himself. It is by a free act that the individual chooses whether to accept himself as a Jew or an Aryan or any other designation assigned to him. The individual is free to disregard other people's opinions towards himself completely. Moreover, a person is free to regard the other as a freedom or an object. It is therefore, one's freedom which finally counts.

With similar arguments, Sartre tries to show that one's past, one's place, one's birth, one's death, and one's surroundings do not restrict his freedom. Thus, Sartre concludes that freedom is without internal or external restrictions. The result of this unrestricted freedom is awful because it throws the burden of absolute responsibility on the individual. Sartre declares that "man being condemned to be free carries the weight of the whole world on his shoulders; he is responsible for the world and
for himself as a way of being." Man finds himself burdened by a heavy responsibility because he is not only the incontestable author of himself, but also of the world. He is the one through whom the world comes into existence, and, at the same time, he creates his own way of being. The world is a human world; it is made by man and he has to take it as it is. Every situation, tragic or otherwise, is human because there are no inhuman situations. Man, is, therefore, responsible for everything except his own responsibility. Since this heavy responsibility is frightening, man's state is that of anguish. Many people avoid this anguish through some sort of self-deception.

This is, in short, Sartre's view of freedom in *Being and Nothingness*. This view is quite different from his view in *Nausea*. Roquentin's awareness of freedom is essentially negative. He experiences freedom in terms of its nihilistic possibilities. His freedom is a freedom from prejudice, customs, absolute standards, social conventions, and social relationships. This freedom is pure emptiness and is experienced in solitude. Alberè's puts it succinctly by declaring that Roquentin, "by making use of clear judgment and critical insight, discovers that he lacks the stuff of life, that he does indeed possess a freedom which nothing can distort or constrain but which in turn finds nothing to which it can be applied." Since Roquentin's freedom does not take any concrete form, Alberè goes on to suggest that Sartre's major concern in *Nausea* has been to demonstrate that "our freedom and lucidity are

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40 Ibid., p. 529.

worthless until given a meaning." Cranston, arguing in a similar fashion, points out, "he [Roquentin] is dégagé or uncommitted; and it is one of Sartre's central beliefs that dégagement is only a mockery of freedom, is, in fact, a form of running away from freedom." Cranston concludes, therefore, that Roquentin is not really free.

Following these arguments of the critics, one can point out that since Roquentin's freedom is never put into action, it is formless and contentless. Freedom gets form and content from the obstacles one surmounts and the resistances one overcomes. It seems that Roquentin is not concerned with any of these things. Since he never engages his freedom, he never realizes the sense of responsibility which is the logical counterpart of his freedom. These pronouncements of Roquentin then are different from the type of freedom Sartre is presenting in his philosophical work. In Being and Nothingness, Sartre does not seem to be concerned with the experience of freedom, but his task is much more complex. Here, in contrast to Nausea, Sartre wants to show that freedom does not make any sense without a situation. Freedom gets its meaning through its actualization in action. Since freedom and its manifestation in action are identical, Sartre tries to demonstrate that the logical requirement of the consequences of such a freedom is absolute responsibility. Therefore, it is clear that Sartre's emphasis on the identity of freedom and action and on responsibility as a logical counterpart of freedom in Being and Nothingness is different from his emphasis on the experience of freedom and a possible use to which it should be put in Nausea.

42 Ibid., p. 16.
The above reflections on freedom can be understood in four steps. The first two steps are developed in *Nausea*, while the other two are developed in *Being and Nothingness*. The first step consists of one's feeling his freedom and thus realizing that his essence is freedom. Roquentin realizes this step. The second step consists of one's reflection on different ways and means of utilizing this freedom. Roquentin shows some concern with regard to this step. He reflects on the possibility of giving some form to his freedom through the creation of a work of art. But Roquentin's search ends here, and he never actualizes his freedom. In the third step, one must give some concrete form to freedom through its actualization in action. This step is realized by Orestes in *The Flies*. In *Being and Nothingness*, Sartre presents philosophical arguments to show that freedom becomes meaningful only through its manifestation in action. In the last step, one assumes the responsibility of his action. Orestes realizes this step by taking upon himself the sin of the city of Argos. In *Being and Nothingness*, Sartre discusses this point by arguing that responsibility is the logical counterpart of one's freedom. Therefore, one can say that the idea of freedom as developed in *Nausea* complements the idea of freedom in *Being and Nothingness*.

Cranston's comments that Roquentin's freedom is a mockery of freedom are too strongly worded. In *Nausea*, Sartre is not concerned with the actual utilization of freedom, but instead, with the genuine experience of it and a possible use to which it should be put. And Sartre has been very successful in this attempt. The unsympathetic approaches of both Alberes and Cranston, have led them to overlook the fact that the idea of freedom as developed in the novel complements the idea of freedom in *Being and Nothingness*. A more sympathetic approach to *Nausea* consists
in recognizing the above fact. This way, the individuality and the uniqueness of the novel are kept intact.

The theme of justification of existence is the next important theme in the two works. Sartre develops different aspects of this theme in these works. In *Nausea*, he is concerned with the exploration of different ways to justify one's existence. After rejecting the "way of being," (e.g., the belief in absolute rights, in perfect moments and in living adventures) and the first form of the "way of doing," (e.g., writing someone's biography), Sartre seems to suggest that one might be able to justify his existence through the creation of a fictional novel. In *Being and Nothingness*, on the other hand, it appears that Sartre is not interested in finding ways to justify one's existence but tries to demonstrate that man's ideal is to become being-in-itself-for-itself—in short, a justified existence. In this work, he concludes that this ideal is contradictory and hence unattainable. Therefore, he seems to be suggesting that all ways of justifying existence are illusory. But in *Nausea*, Sartre does leave a hope for struggling mankind—namely, that one might be able to justify one's existence through the expression of one's creativity in the field of art or literature. It is clear, therefore, that the Sartre of *Being and Nothingness* is rejecting the position with regard to justification of existence which he upheld in *Nausea*.

There are other important themes in *Being and Nothingness* which do not find any expression in *Nausea*. Two are of great importance to Sartre's existential philosophy. They are the themes of "man-in-the-world" and of the "look." The discussion of "man-in-the-world" is the basic problem of Sartre's existential philosophy. The understanding of the relationship between the "in-itself" and the "for-itself" is possibly only through
this theme. Moreover, the themes of negation, nothingness, time, freedom, and responsibility are intimately related to this theme. In *Nausea*, however, Sartre does not seem to be interested in this theme at all. Sartre's man in his philosophical work is involved in the world and with other human beings, whereas in the novel, his interest in this problem is negligible. This is evident from Roquentin's behavior. Roquentin's involvement in the world is absolutely nil. He shows no interest in other human beings. He detests them and regards all involvement as a trap. His concern is with himself and with his own condition. Consequently, Roquentin is not anything like the man Sartre discusses in *Being and Nothingness*.

The second theme, the problem of the "look," is developed in some detail by Sartre in *Being and Nothingness*, whereas in *Nausea*, he makes no significant reference to it. The problem of the existence of others and the human relations of love, hate, sadism, and masochism are understandable only in the context of the "look." In *Being and Nothingness*, Sartre's man is abnormally sensitive to the gaze of the other. He feels shame, pride, and alienation because the other "looks at" him. Therefore, there exists reciprocity between him and other people. In *Nausea*, Roquentin is moved and horrified by things only, but he shows complete insensitivity to other human beings. He is even at a loss to distinguish between other human beings and objects. He never recognizes the freedom of other people and, consequently, there exists no reciprocity between him and them. It is clear, therefore, that Sartre's man in the novel is different from his man in *Being and Nothingness*.

Following the above line of thought, one can now attempt to answer the central question of the thesis: *Is Nausea* an expression of Sartre's
existential philosophy? In Chapter I, it has been pointed out that *Nausea* is regarded as an expression of Sartre's existential philosophy for three main reasons: first, because Alberes thinks that *Nausea* illustrates in a literary form the essence of Sartre's thought; second, because Barnes regards *Nausea* as containing the basic existential themes which are developed systematically in *Being and Nothingness*; and third, because Murdoch believes that *Nausea* is an experiment in a new way of doing philosophy, in that it contains all the main interests of Sartre except the political ones. In Chapter I, it has also been established that Alberes' position is incorrect because Sartre is not concerned with illustrating the essence of his philosophy in *Nausea*. In this work, Sartre's basic concern is with the intuitive demonstration of the presence of existence through Roquentin's personal experience. This intuitive demonstration of existence is not at all one of the basic themes of Sartre's existential philosophy. To experience existence intuitively is one thing, and to describe the way being appears is another. The former falls in the domain of mysticism, whereas the latter is the problem of existential philosophy. It is *Nausea* which concerns itself with the first problem, whereas it is *Being and Nothingness* which is devoted to the second. Roquentin, as a mystic, establishes the presence of existence, while Sartre of *Being and Nothingness* takes for granted the presence of existence as a presupposition for his existential philosophy. And from this presupposition, he works out his entire philosophy in *Being and Nothingness*. *Nausea*, then, is not the expression of the essence of Sartre's philosophy but is, instead, concerned with a problem which is outside the domain of existential philosophy. Since the problem of existence cannot be considered philosophically, Sartre is bound by the
problem itself to utilize another medium (i.e., the novel form) to explore the problem. The critic might be tempted to argue that Sartre is exploiting two different media—one of novel form and the other of philosophical arguments—to express the same ideas. This position is incorrect because the type of analysis in *Being and Nothingness* can never give one the idea of existence. The literary medium which is used to illustrate the problem is essential because no pure philosophical medium can do the job. Hence, Alberèes is mistaken in asserting that *Nausea* is an expression of Sartre's existential philosophy.

Barnes gives another reason to support the above claim. Her reason is that the novel contains some of the major existential themes which are systematically developed in *Being and Nothingness*. From the preceding discussion of the present chapter, it seems that Barnes' position is also untenable on two main points. It is true that some of the major existential themes of *Nausea* are also present in *Being and Nothingness*, but Barnes overlooks the fact that these themes are developed on different levels in the two works. The problems of existence, nausea, and freedom find expression in both works, but in *Nausea* Sartre provides the reader with emotionally charged artistically formed interpretations of these problems, whereas in *Being and Nothingness*, these problems are grasped through philosophical descriptions. Barnes' mistake lies in her failure to distinguish the emotional interpretations from the philosophical descriptions. This mistake leads her to regard *Nausea* as an expression of Sartre's existential philosophy. It has also been argued previously that the main themes in *Nausea* are similar to the corresponding themes in *Being and Nothingness* in name only and are different in content. Barnes' assertion that the main themes of *Nausea* are systematically
developed in *Being and Nothingness* is based on the belief that the similarity consists in terms of content. It has been established that there is no such similarity, so that Barnes' reason for regarding *Nausea* as an expression of Sartre's existential philosophy can also be rejected.

Another reason has also been put forward by Murdoch. She regards *Nausea* as an expression of Sartre's existential philosophy because she finds in it a new way of doing philosophy, in that it contains all the main interests of Sartre except the political ones. Murdoch's claim is inadequate for four main reasons: first, it is a highly exaggerated claim; second, it is based on the unfortunate identification of the emotional interpretation with the philosophical description; third, it ignores the fact that the themes in *Nausea* are similar to the corresponding themes in *Being and Nothingness* only in name and are different in content; and last it overlooks the fact that certain important and essential problems in *Being and Nothingness* are completely absent from *Nausea*. The second and third points are discussed in connection with the criticism presented against Barnes' position. The same arguments can be offered against Murdoch's position. That Murdoch makes a highly exaggerated claim is clear from the following statements.

*La Nausée* was Sartre's first novel, and it contains all his main interests except the political ones. It is his most densely philosophical novel. It concerns itself with freedom and bad faith, the character of the bourgeoisie, the phenomenology of perception, the nature of thought, of memory, of art.

This peculiar book... is a sort of palimpsest of metaphysical aperçus. It gives expression to a pure metaphysical doubt, and also analyses that doubt in terms of contemporary concepts. It is an epistemological essay on the phenomenology of thought; it is also an ethical essay on the nature of 'bad faith.' Its moral conclusions touch aesthetics and politics.44

In short, Murdoch's interpretation seems to present *Nausea* as if it is a philosophical treatise in the style of Descartes' *Meditations*. Since Descartes' *Meditations* is the complete exposition of his philosophy, Murdoch makes the reader feel that *Nausea* is also the complete exposition of Sartre's existential philosophy. It is maintained in this thesis that Sartre is not presenting any philosophical arguments about the major existential themes but is concerned instead with emotionally charged artistically formed interpretations bearing close resemblance to French cinematic styles. Murdoch is making an exaggerated claim because Sartre is not presenting a philosophical approach to these problems, and because some of the basic problems of existential philosophy are completely absent from *Nausea*. Therefore, on both these counts, it is incorrect to assert that *Nausea* contains all the major interests of Sartre, and consequently, it is a mistake to hold that *Nausea* is an expression of Sartre's existential philosophy.

Thus, all the reasons given in support of the claim are shown to be inadequate. Therefore, it can be concluded that *Nausea* is not an expression of Sartre's existential philosophy. The reader should not be misled into thinking that this conclusion undermines the worth of the novel. In fact, this conclusion heightens the uniqueness and the individuality of *Nausea*. In the thesis, the uniqueness and the individuality of the novel have been brought to focus by demonstrating that *Nausea* is a philosophical novel which contains some major existential themes and that these themes are made evident through the use of literary devices. Furthermore, it has been shown that *Nausea* deals with certain existential problems which cannot be adequately treated in a book of existential philosophy. Since philosophical analysis has been shown to be inadequate in
the treatment of these existential problems, Sartre is forced to use a literary medium (i.e., the novel form) to consider them. Roquentin's experience of existence has been shown to be irrevocable and forms the basic presupposition of Sartre's existential philosophy. But the method to arrive at this truth has been demonstrated to lie outside the domain of existential philosophy. Thus, it has been pointed out that since Sartre's existential philosophy is dependent upon the negative enlightenment attained in *Nausea*, the novel complements his philosophy and is, indeed, a first step to the comprehension of it.
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