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Final Paper

Existentialist themes in Sartre’s book: *Nausea*

Existentialism is a form of philosophical inquiry that explores the problem of human existence and centers on living experience of the thinking, feeling, and acting individual. What all existentialists have in common is the fundamental doctrine that existence precedes essence. Usually, literature expresses existentialist themes accurately, and in this paper, I will list some of the existentialist themes in Sartre’s book, *Nausea*, and relate them to the philosophical works I have read.

One existentialist theme in *Nausea* is Phenomenology, a kind of method and philosophy. It attempts to observe the characteristics of the object from its surroundings, the prejudices, and the relationship between thought and separated. Husserl gives the special meaning of "phenomenon", which refers to the various experience class consciousness "essence". Therefore, this phenomenon is logic in nature and causality. It is the result of phenomenological reduction method. Phenomenology is not a collection of theory, but a method of research that describes phenomena through "direct knowledge".

Bakewell gives an example of the phenomenological approach with a description of a cup of coffee. It does not matter how the coffee is made, where it comes from, whether it tastes good, or whether it is comparable with previous cups of coffee in one’s memories, instead, Bakewell defines the important aspects as the rich smell of the coffee, the way the steam off the cup looks and feels, the weight of the cup in our hand, the temperature of the first bite and the coffee’s taste and aftertaste. She supposes that this experiential cup of coffee is the one she can speak about with certainty, while everything else to do with the bean-growing and the chemistry is hearsay.

In addition, Antoine Roquetin, the main character in *Nausea*, also describes himself phenomenologically, and observe his surroundings. For example, he says that there is something new about his hands, a certain way of picking up his pipe or fork(Nausea, p. 22). Besides, when he describes what he saw, he uses the descriptions such as “a little woman in sky blue was running backwards, laughing, waving a handkerchief. At the same time, a Negro in a cream-colored raincoat, yellow shoes and a green hat, turned the corner of the street and whistled (Nausea, p. 25).” These phenomenological descriptions are important when Sartre explains his statement about bad faith, another existentialist theme I will talk about.

Bad faith is the attempt to flee from anguish and it results in inauthentic existence. Sartre considers that people can be in bad faith in one of the following two ways: by seeing themselves as an other, or by seeing themselves as a thing (being in itself). In *Nausea*, those phenomenological descriptions show that Antoine tries to objectify everything around him, even himself. He considers himself as a thing! Besides, He holds the notion that people and events he meets are objects. Through phenomenology, Sartre supposes that Antoine Roquetin is in bad faith, because Antoine Roquetin is leading himself into being in itself.

Besides, M. Fasquelle, manager of the Café Mably, is also an example of bad faith. All his behavior shows that he seems to be playing a game. What is he playing? He is playing at being a manager in a café! He concepts concerning and is introspective on his condition. He knows well his roles in a café, and he knows the rights he has. On one hand, he really is a manager; on the other hand, he is trying too hard to be a manager. Conclusively, he is a manager but goes beyond being a manager. He tries to create for himself an essence, a definition, to avoid his freedom, and yet leading himself into being in itself. To summarize, he tries to be both being in itself and being for itself, and this is one way that Sartre describes as having bad faith.

A woman on a date whose behaviors reflects bad faith is also an example in Sartre’s *Being and Nothingness*. The woman ignores the obvious sexual implications of her date's compliments to her physical appearance but accepts them instead as words directed at her as human consciousness. As the man takes her hand, she lets it rest indifferently in his, neither consenting nor resisting. Thus, she delays the moment when she must either reject his advances or consent to them. She conveniently considers her hand only a thing in the world, unrelated to her body and his compliments just simple compliments. The only thing that changed everything, as Sartre mentions, is the fact that I have hidden the truth from myself in bad faith (Existentialism : Basic Writings, p. 330). In this example, the woman knows very well the intentions of her date, but she does not want to realize the urgency to respond and chooses to lie to herself (Existentialism : Basic Writings, p. 332).

To summarize, I cite two existentialist themes in *Nausea* namely phenomenology and bad faith in this paper to show that literature can express existentialist themes quite appropriately, and I focus more on explaining those existentialist themes themselves and how they relate to the philosophical works I have read. At the end of my paper, I want to reconnect those existentialist themes and relate them to the theme of *Nausea*.

Through those phenomenological expressions, Antoine expressed his disgust for the contingency and unintelligibility of the world, for the meaninglessness of existence itself, for the contingency and unreasoning of human existence, for the alienation of human nature, and for the absurd reality. More importantly, he feels nausea because he is in bad faith. Antoine thinks that he is losing himself, in a state of strangeness and confusion. Furthermore, Antoine Roquetin acts an observer. He observes himself, and everyone he meets in the hotel Printania, but he is lonely. He thinks “I take a few steps and stop. I savor this total oblivion into which I have fallen. I am between two cities, one knows nothing of me, the other knows me no longer. Who remembers me?” (Nausea, p. 196). However, this loneliness, anxiety, confusion and despair atmosphere changes in the end. Antoine vaguely feels a hope in the end when he decides to leave Bowell. He makes up his mind to write a novel. He considers that at first, a book, naturally, would only be a troublesome, but it would not stop him from existing or feeling that he exists (Nausea, p. 205). A time would come when the book would be written, when it would be behind him, and he think that a little of its clarity might fall over his past. Then, perhaps, because of the book, Antoine could remember his life without repugnance (Nausea, p. 205).

Above all, *Nausea*, with abstract philosophical thinking, is the illustration of Sartre's existential philosophy, and is a sign of Sartre novels’ maturity. My main point is to find out the existentialist themes in this book and describe them clearly. Additionally, I also make a simple analysis to the themes I have found. They are not too specific but are enough to help with my explanation and description of me explain and describe those existentialist themes.

Reference

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