

CHAPTER FOUR

CONCLUSION

Based on the analyses of *Notes from Underground* and *Nausea* in the previous chapters, I will now provide a number of conclusions. As I have stated from the beginning, the purpose of the analysis is to show how the authors portray a protagonist whose characteristics connect with existentialism. The protagonists are characters that searches for the meaning of their existence.

In *Notes from Underground*, we follow the story that appears as the Underground Man rambles about his inertia, the society he lives in and his relationships with the people around him. He starts with the explanation of his outlook on life, which causes him to stay inert. In the next section of the novel, we begin to see his erratic behavior and how he constantly changes from one state of mind to another, which causes him to develop a fickle characteristic. In the last part we see how after several failed attempts at maintaining and establishing good

relationships with the people he meets, the Underground Man finally decides to go back to his earlier state of staying in his room. The novel ends with the remark from the Underground Man that human beings are beginning to feel more and more content with the condition of the people at that time and have begun to lose their independent will. He returns to his dark corner of his room, which he calls 'the Underground', showing himself to be a static character. The Underground Man is fully aware that human beings are to stay independent and that they must act according to their own volition. However, because the Underground Man is so conscious about his reason for living, he cannot settle on one decision about his life. This traps him in an endless search for primary reason to act, making him inert. His fickle characteristic also reinforces his inertia.

In *Nausea*, we follow Roquentin's search for the true meaning behind the existence of himself and of the objects around him. Every time Roquentin encounters existence that he cannot comprehend, he is stricken by a feeling of disgust and nausea. The nausea will then push him further into anxiety, as he searches for the meaning behind existence. He eventually loses hope of continuing his life when he finds no more reason to continue the book he is writing. Roquentin will eventually come into terms with the fact that existence has no meaning from the start and that it is Roquentin himself that needs to put meaning in his own existence. This leads him to find purpose and hope to continue his life, stating that he will begin to write a book that future generations will remember him for. It shows how Roquentin is depicted as a dynamic character as he undergoes a change from losing hope to finding a new one.

It is also apparent that the two novels share some similarities. First, both novels uphold the existential theme where the protagonists are concerned with the meaning of their existence. Fyodor Dostoevsky is almost a century apart from Jean-Paul Sartre, but he has already established an existentialism theme in *Notes from Underground*. Existentialism has not yet been officially recognized by the public, yet both novels contain similar existential theme.

The second similarity is that the two novels also features protagonists who are both at odds with the society they live in. The Underground Man in *Notes from Underground* disagrees and even despises the people of his time, who seems to live in conformity with the norms and systems within the social sphere of Russia at that time. The Underground Man thinks that human beings should live according to their own volition. Roquentin, the protagonist in *Nausea*, feels confused as to how the people in the town he resides in seem to be completely oblivious with the existence of all the things around them.

However, the two novels also share a striking difference. The most apparent difference comes from the fate of the protagonists. In *Notes from Underground*, the Underground Man does not undergo a change as he ends up returning to his dark corner of his room despite having a fickle characteristic. His frequent changing of thoughts does not help him to change his outlook on life. He finds that there is no use in fighting for an independent meaning of his existence and remarks that men are slowly agreeing to and being more and more content with their current condition. According to the Underground Man, men are living their life in accordance with the laws of nature and not according to their independent idea. The Underground Man chooses to do nothing, stays inert and

ends up being portrayed as a static character. In *Nausea* though, Roquentin breaks free from his despondency and anxiety. He comes to the conclusion that existence is inherently without meaning and that he himself needs to find his own meaning for existence. He decides to write a novel that will be remembered by people. He becomes a certain and spirited person in living his life. Roquentin's change from losing hope to finding a new one proves him to be a dynamic character. He chooses to break free from his confusion and reaches an understanding of the real meaning of existing.

To conclude my analysis, the two protagonists show us that existence is inherently without any meaning and that it is up to one's own effort, which is free from the limitations of societal norms and systems, to create a meaning for their existence. It also comes down to one's own choice to live life of action and give meaning to one's own life or to stay still and make no choices at all.

In my opinion, *Nausea* is the better novel in comparison with *Notes from Underground*. The conflicts presented in *Nausea* is much more personal and seem to concern only Roquentin himself and the nauseous feeling he feels. This makes his characterisation easier to follow when compared with the Underground Man's seemingly rambling line of thoughts in *Notes from Underground*.