

Portrayals of Dissociated Subjectivity in Sartre's *Nausea* and Dostoyevsky's *Notes from Underground*

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Abstract:

This paper examines subjectivity as a structural and ethical problem emerging from the destabilisation of metaphysical substance. Departing from the classical conception of the subject as a reflection or modification of substance, the paper evaluates the reciprocal dependence between subjectivity and substance. Through close readings of Sartre's *Nausea* and Dostoyevsky's *Notes from Underground*, it traces the demystification of substance and the consequent dissociation of the subject. This analysis demonstrates how this collapse produces a form of subjectivity that is no longer anchored by the apodictic foundations of metaphysics - revealing an ethical condition marked by contingency, negation, and a narcotic constancy to nothingness.

Keywords: subjectivity, metaphysics, ethics, substance, negation.

Introduction

The question of subjectivity – in both literature and philosophy – has been a varied one. Both literature and philosophy have tried to come to terms with a series of contradictions and ambiguities that irrevocably problematise any unified notion of the subject. However, the idea of subjectivity has not always been a problem in its own right. The isolation of subjectivity for an exegetic evaluation entails a particular historical condition. Unaware of the issue of subjectivity as such, Classical philosophy has always considered individuals as “beings” of a certain “essence”. It was not until the Enlightenment that philosophers began to approach the question of subjectivity devoid of any metaphysical veneer. It was Descartes’ valorous declaration (*cogito ergo sum*) that announced the notion of a self-transparent subjectivity. All the subsequent philosophical convolutions - both supporting and renouncing the Cartesian *cogito* – only managed to radicalise Descartes’ stance. It was then Structuralism that proposed a thoroughly deterministic approach of understanding the subject. Later, Lacan also found some merit in Structuralism in terms of its prioritisation of language as such. Lacan contends that the subject never exists without a predicate – regardless of whether it is concrete or a fictional one. For Lacan, the subject is a ‘being of language’ (*parlêtre*) as well as being of an Other. In this line of thought, the subject is constructed as a subject of knowledge. The history of literary and philosophical exegesis is replete with this proclivity of finding an exoskeleton of socio-economic institutions, ideologies and other ‘structures’ of knowledge ‘of’ which the subject has always been an existential register. However, the central question of this study carries with the question about what happens if the subject is not a subject ‘of’ something? What happens if the knowledge or the discourse that is said to contain the subject is demystified? Does it entail a liquidation of the subject as well? To find a convincing disquisition, Jean-Luc Nancy invited a number of prominent intellectuals to formulate an answer to the question: “Who comes after the subject?” (Nancy 1). The question entails a sense of confusion as to what

accounts for the disposition of the subject after its own annihilation. In this regard, we encounter a self-righteous and a self-sufficient notion of the subject itself. We reencounter Descartes as he, in his *A Discourse on Method*, wrote: “I am thinking therefore I exist, was so secure and certain that it could not be shaken by any of the most extravagant suppositions of the sceptics, I judged that I could accept it without scruple, as the first principle of the philosophy I was seeking” (28). However, Descartes’ first principle of philosophy fails to sustain this self-transparent *cogito* without grounding it to a *res cogitans* (Dolar, *Cogito as the Subject of the Unconscious* 16). The problem for Descartes was not to sustain an idea beyond the symbolic network but “his whole problem was how to proceed from there, and it turned out that this point could only be sustained by being pinned to the Other, the big Other epitomized by God...” (Dolar, *Cogito as the Subject of the Unconscious* 16). The subject is then a subject of the Other that regulates and sustains the subject’s symbolic existence. In this regard, the subject “is nothing but the impossibility of its own signifying representation - the empty place opened up in the big Other by the failure of this representation” (Žižek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology* 236). It is from this ground that this paper will look into the modernist topos of ‘self-conscious’ writing that transpires its own “impossibility”. To return to Nancy, even if there is a subject, it is likely that “there is no “Weltanschauung” for it” (Nancy 1). So, the question of being can no longer be that of an essence but of a space where existence registers itself. Through the analysis of Dostoyevsky’s *Notes from Underground*, this paper will attempt to evaluate the narrator’s solipsistic inscriptions from a ‘monadized’ (Jameson, *The Political Unconscious* 143) space of the ‘underground’. This paper will then analyse Jean-Paul Sartre’s *Nausea* to account for the narrator’s nihilistic attitude to existence as a crisis of value and as a value of a certain crisis (Nietzsche 38) that pervaded 20th-century Europe. Lastly, this paper will conclude by reassessing both the novels by transposing the Freudian notion of ‘sublimation’ (Freud 186)

from the problem of sexuality to the “problem of ethics” (Lacan, *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis* 107) while arguing that it is ultimately the problem of sublimation that *eo ipso* generates the portrayals of dissociated subjects.

Dostoyevsky and the underground subject

Very few of the 18th-century literary works have been as overtly spiteful in renouncing modernity that Dostoyevsky's *Notes from Underground*. The thematic value of this novel presage the inception of many other deeply existentialist arts that arise out of the murky mire of modernity. Among other major themes, the novel mainly stands as the “best overture for existentialism ever written” (Kaufmann 14). However, existentialism itself is a certain attitude to reality that cannot just be codified as a literary motif. The unavoidable awareness of life's redundancy and the subsequent sedimentation of it into the philosophical school of ‘Existentialism’ calls forth a historical dynamic when the inconsistency of the symbolic order becomes pervasive. It is generally considered that it was the gradual yet progressive withdrawal of the ‘sea of faith’ along with the genesis of Darwinism that demystified the pre-existing beliefs of humankind. It was also the “materialism and philistinism of the new industrialist(s)” (Jameson, "The Vanishing Mediator: Narrative Structure in Max Weber" 55) that liquidated the traditional forms of labour. The capitalist ethic and its drive towards separating “means from ends” (Jameson, "The Vanishing Mediator: Narrative Structure in Max Weber" 58) in the production process disallow any form of libidinal investment in labour. Insofar as this failure to sublimate one's libido in productive social acts pertains to a crisis of “socially recognized value(s)” (Lacan, *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis* 107), we must understand both to be counterproductive as well. In this regard, Nietzsche's "transvaluation of all values" and Weber's misnamed and misunderstood ideal of a "value-free science" must both be seen as attempts to project an intellectual space from which one can study the instrumental aspect of value with all

the variety of reasons and motives the citizens of a secular society have at their disposal (Jameson, *The Political Unconscious* 237). The narrator of *Notes from Underground* can be seen within this contour of constant pontificating of values in accordance with reason.

His evocation of the “l’homme de la nature et de la verité” (Dostoyevsky 32) is an apprehensive mockery of the idea of a natural man of reason. The narrator accepts the theory that “all human life is simply a mechanical product of the laws of nature. But the underground man knows what the man of action does not – that this theory makes all moral action impossible, or at least meaningless” (Frank 10). The binary between nature and culture is necessarily false and that what we call ‘nature’ is always mediated by culture (Žižek, *The Metastases of Enjoyment* 10). Dostoyevsky, in a way, anticipates that the post-structuralist criticism of the self-righteous man of nature. He believed that man was innately evil, irrational, capricious and destructive; not reason but only faith in Christ could ever succeed in helping him to master the chaos of his impulses (Frank 2). The predicament of the narrator from the underground is metaphysical. His nihilistic misanthropy and embittered recriminations point to a morbid metaphysical poverty. Religion is the symbolic order that allows the subject to situate his ‘castrated’ self after his entry into the world of logos. The name of Christ or the Lacanian “Name-of-the-Father functions as the agency of interpellation, of symbolic identification” (Žižek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology* 135). The Name-of-the-Father opens up the field of the Other qua symbolic order. The liquidation of symbolic faith also dissolves the homeostasis of desire. Along with the lack in the Other, there emerges what Lacan called *jouissance* (Žižek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology* 137).

Jouissance is what the Symbolic can never symbolise and it exists as a parasitic stain (Zupančič, *Ethics of the Real* 249). The religion of Christianity allowed the subject to domesticate his *jouissance* by loving one’s neighbour (Zupančič, *Ethics of the Real* 23). The underground man’s failure to devote himself divulges the source of his predicament. The alienation from the

symbolic points to his lack of identity. “Yes, a man of the nineteenth century ought, indeed is morally bound, to be essentially without character...”, he writes (Dostoyevsky 14). His confinement and solipsism in the underground pertain to his unconscious guilt. Grigg writes: “In Freud's Oedipal myth the law is there from the outset; it is an inexorable law, demanding punishment even when the transgression has been committed unwittingly or unconsciously and exists for the subject as an unconscious sense of guilt” (61). Guilt is the effect on the subject of an Other that judges (Miller 13). The field of the Other is always inconsistent. Fantasy conceals the fact that the Other, the symbolic order, is structured around some traumatic impossibility which is *jouissance* (Žižek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology* 138). If guilt pertains to the field of the Other then shame pertains to *jouissance* that is the most intimate in the subject (Miller 13). *Jouissance* is what belongs to the subject beyond subjectivation. The dissolution of the symbolic order renders the subject irrevocably guilty of his existence. “And secretly, in my heart, I would gnaw and nibble and probe and suck away at myself until the bitter taste turned at last into a kind of shameful, devilish sweetness and, finally, downright definite pleasure”, he writes (Dostoyevsky 16). The paradigm of pleasure is what the underground man uses to register the affect of guilt through auto-mutilation. He is intent on harming himself or persisting with his illness [“Is my liver out of order? – let it get worse!” (Dostoyevsky 13)], all point to his peculiar subjective position of dissolution. This ‘pleasure in pain’ eludes the idea of the subject’s well-being. The subject perceives the act of self-harm as a “good cause” and allows him to disavow the lack in the Other (Zupančič, *Ethics of the Real* 82). The underground man carries with various ‘compromise formations’ to sustain his precarious subject position. The lack of authority in the desacralised world of the underground man makes him perceive a glimpse of authority in the midst of tavern brawl. “One night, walking past a tavern, I saw through a window some gentlemen round a billiard-table using their cues as weapons and throwing one of their members through a window”, he observes (Dostoyevsky 45). He later

contends that he even entered the tavern to get into a fight just so that he could be thrown out of the window. (Dostoyevsky 45). The underground man's desire for punishment is directed at relocating his subjective position in the usual order of things. However, he perhaps has an implicit awareness that the Other does not have what he himself lacks. He gives his implications through his mocking references to lying ["If I have said so much, it was not in order to justify myself in the least.... But no! that was a lie!" (Dostoyevsky 45)]. Therein lies the nihilistic attitude of the novel. On the other hand, the staging of the subject's acts of auto-mutilation is an attempt to avoid his death drive. Zupančič in her book explains: "we precipitate ourselves towards death in order to avoid this realization [...] sheltered from jouissance, sheltered from the drive that makes us do things which go against our well-being. Death proves to be the best shelter against the death drive" (Zupančič, *Ethics of the Real* 254). It is the underground man's jouissance qua death-drive that makes him organise the near-death encounters. The subject is willing to embrace physical death to avoid the psychic catatonia of death-drive. The reification of the modern world breaks up old social unities, "human relations, cultural events, even religious systems" (Jameson, *The Political Unconscious* 48). This disallows the subject to find his symbolic identity in a community which further truncates his inability to domesticate jouissance. The methodical flow of the novel will lead to the act that takes the underground man closer to organising his mandate. The event will occur through the figure of a prostitute named Liza. The figure of the prostitute stands for feminine jouissance that suspends the Name-of-the-Father and whose domestication restores phallic potency (Žižek, *The Metastases of Enjoyment* 75). The underground man's desire to 'domesticate' the figure of Liza leads to the same resolution. He says to her that such impulse can exist only in certain "accursed families where there is neither God nor love" (Dostoyevsky 82). The underground man reorganises the contours of his Symbolic space. His reestablishment in the Symbolic matrix of Christianity is now organised through the domestication of feminine

jouissance. However, Dostoyevsky's artistic sensibility stops the process from taking place. Unlike the "violent passage à l'acte in *Taxi Driver*, an outburst by means of which the subject circumvents the deadlock" (Žižek, *The Metastases of Enjoyment* 215), the underground man rejects the opportunity when Liza approaches him. "I wanted her to disappear. I wanted to be left in peace, alone in my underground" he writes (Dostoyevsky 106). Dostoyevsky's vision in the novel is radical. Through the underground man's constant reproof of modernity, the palace of crystal and mathematical law, Dostoyevsky points to a dramatic shift in the world. The quantification of reality and the extraction of value manage only to leave behind a morbid world of windless apathy. The underground man writes on a final note: "We even find it difficult to be human beings, men with real flesh and blood of our own; we are ashamed of it, we think it a disgrace..." (Dostoyevsky 109). The novel presents a radically dissociated form of subjectivity. The alienation of the subject from the Being of existential order makes him remain anchored to nothingness.

Abjection as Nausea in Sartre

Hayden Carruth - in his introduction to the *New Directions* paperback edition of *Nausea* - writes: "Someone has said that Existentialism is a philosophy - if a philosophy at all - that has been independently invented by millions of people simply responding to the emergency of life in a modern world" (v-vi). Sartre strived to encompass all his philosophical ideas in the novel and it gave them a form. A form for nothingness. A form whose content is a gaping void underneath the letters of its inscription. Twenty-six years after publishing *Nausea*, Sartre reinstates this fact in his autobiographical work: "I was I, the elect, chronicler of Hell, a glass and steel photomicroscope peering at my own protoplasmic juices" (*The Words* 251-52). The central character, Antoine Roquentin, participates in this existential liquidation as a chronicler. The very first sentence of the novel alludes to this. Roquentin conjectures about keeping a diary

“to see clearly” (Sartre, *Nausea* 1). The convergence of the ‘field of letters’ into the ‘field of vision’ pertains to the parasitic presence of Symbolic in ontology. Žižek explains this topic by his idea of the parallax that is a certain shift in perspective. However, this shift in perspective does not only alter the epistemological disposition of the ‘object out there’ but also transmutes its ontological aspect. That is to say, there is no such thing as an ‘object in-itself’ but that every object is symbolically mediated. The subject’s gaze (that is really a gaze of the Other) is “always-already inscribed into the perceived object itself” (Žižek, *The Parallax View* 17). Roquentin’s dependence on the written to perceive the visible signals to the inconsistency of his subjectivity and gaze. Roquentin’s alienation from the symbolic order is overtly reflected in the actual entries of the diary. The opening words of the diary uncannily recall Dostoyevsky’s *Notes from Underground*: “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” (Sartre, *Nausea* 5). The illness that comes without “certainty” is something that changes Roquentin’s existential attitude. Like Dostoyevsky, Sartre uses this metaphor of the illness as a virtual paradigm for organising all the visceral events that are strewn throughout the novel. This psychic illness is the inability to situate oneself in the ‘great chain of being’. As Žižek puts it: “Modern subjectivity has nothing to do with the notion of man as the highest creature in the “great chain of being,”...modern subjectivity emerges when the subject perceives himself as “out of joint,” as excluded from the “order of the things,” from the positive order of entities” (Žižek, *Introduction* 4). Roquentin makes explicit the existential crisis of modernity. His detached perambulations through the town and his mundane observations populate the pages of his diary. He takes walks, works at the library, drinks coffee and ruminates about his past lover. The quotidian affairs of Roquentin’s life are filled with a listless apathy. His search for meaning only allows him to confront the vacuity of existence and he mechanically recounts events. He writes: “Never, until these last few days, had I suspected what it meant to ‘exist’. I was like the

others, like those who walk along the seashore in their spring clothes. I used to say like them, 'The sea is green; that white speck up there is a seagull,' but I didn't feel that it existed, that the seagull was an 'existing seagull'; usually existence hides itself." (Sartre, *Nausea* 152)

Existence is no longer hidden for Roquentin but has become visible. Existence, for Roquentin, has become a piece of philosophical datum that he is able to examine in isolation. The speculative space that is opened for this examining of existence is not "merely a reflex of capitalist reification and rationalization, also in some measure serves to compensate for the dehumanization of experience reification brings with it, and to rectify the otherwise intolerable effects of the new process" (Jameson, *The Political Unconscious* 48). Existentialism for Sartre thus becomes an axiomatic principle to organise the thematic level of the narrative. The emptiness that is intrinsic to modern life transpires the spectral contours of existence 'as such'. There is no inherent principle of either existence or being, yet both provide a space where events register themselves. This event is what Heidegger called "ein Ereignis" – an event that shrouds the anxiety of privation (Lyotard 532). Roquentin is dealing with this privation of existence. Sartre in his *Being and Nothingness* associated the very origin of human action to the idea of "human being as lack, as ontological privation, attempting to satisfy itself, to fulfill itself, and thereby to arrive at some definitive state of being" (Jameson, *Marxism and Form* 232; emphasis added). It is not a surprise that Sartre's "first hero Roquentin should have been a biographer, with the peculiar anxiety caused by his own capricious power to arrange and rearrange the past..." (Jameson, *Marxism and Form* 210). Roquentin's almost symptomatic vocation of writing the biography of Marquis de Rollebon is a peculiar act of organising the presence of his life (or accounting his life as 'coming to presence'). The figure of Rollebon carves out a new axis (almost like a subtext) to understand the jagged nature of the novel. Rollebon, a figure from the days of the French Revolution, is said to have taken an active part in the assassination of Paul I (Sartre, *Nausea* 16). Assassination of the traditional master figure

recalls the catatonic horror of the old revolutionary days of Europe. The French Revolution, in particular, emblematically stands as a paradigm of radical shift in the nature of the symbolic order. Revolution is then an affair of life and death, more precisely, of the second, symbolic death (Žižek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology* 16). Revolution – along with Western Enlightenment – is another axiom along which we are to understand the dissolution of older social regimes that managed to predetermine the subject position in the symbolic matrix (Jameson, *The Political Unconscious* 81). The secular modern world that we perceive in *Nausea* pertains to the depersonalisation of labour and the development of a capitalist market culture. Roquentin's obsession, then, with the figure of Rollebon ["How I loved the Marquis de Rollebon that year!" (Sartre, *Nausea* 15)] creates a peculiar dialectic in the fabric of novel. Rollebon's presumed act of displacing the Tsar qua traditional power structure can be seen as the symbolic act of killing the paternal figure. The dissolution of the Name-of-the-Father not only dismantles the symbolic structure but also liquidates the subject's symbolic anchorage as well. This is what Lacan tried to explicate through his idea of a passage from traditional 'master's discourse' to a modern 'university discourse' which involves the triumph of pure objective knowledge that "desubjectivizes the subject" (Žižek, *Four Discourses, Four Subjects* 79). Rollebon's surmised act of assassinating Paul I exists on the very plain that announces the disillusioned world of the novel. Roquentin's admiration of Rollebon exists on pathological grounds. His act of writing the biography offers a symbolic resolution and allows him to deal with "the experience of anomie, standardization, rationalizing desacralization in the Umwelt or world of daily life" (Jameson, *The Political Unconscious* 27). As Roquentin's own past is occluded by vague opacity ["however much I search the past I can only retrieve scraps of images and I am not sure what they represent, nor whether they are remembered or invented" (Sartre, *Nausea* 39).], he desires an organised corpus of the past in the life of Rollebon. As a figure from the days of the French Revolution, he acts as a "paradigm of group behaviour"

(Jameson, *Marxism and Form* 257). Jameson writes that the formation of the group, for the members, is a “recuperation of their lost being, of their serial and individual dispersal in the world. On a mythical level, the formation of the group and the taking of the oath are, in Sartre's words, “the beginning of humanity”...” (Jameson, *Marxism and Form* 257). The taking of oath allows an individual to understand the command of the Other and find a cause. Miller writes: “The meaning of this practice is not thinkable without honor, is not thinkable if the other side of psychoanalysis is not functioning, this other side that is the master's discourse and the master signifier established in its place” (Miller 20). With the advent of modernity, we can see this “honor becoming twisted, enfeebled, being captured by the court...” (Miller 23). Roquentin, thus, finds a pathological support in the figure of Rollebon [“Monsieur de Rollebon now represents the only justification for my existence” (Sartre, *Nausea* 85)]. We can say that Rollebon functions as his “ideal-ego”. Everything he does other than writing the biography is filled with a detached morbidity. He speculates existence, observes other people, visits Café Mably while “time resumes its everyday slackness” (Sartre, *Nausea* 45). He remains close to people, “on the surface of solitude” (Sartre, *Nausea* 10). There is no group formation and no communitarian value to be found in the real world of the novel. Along with this corporeal detachment, there is the windless boredom to be accounted for. Jameson explain the modern experience of boredom or ennui to be an experience where “the soul, having first registered its shock and distress at the new and barren world in which it finds itself, begins with a kind of paralyzed detachment to take an inventory of its surroundings...” (Jameson, “The Vanishing Mediator: Narrative Structure in Max Weber” 57). The modern pathology of boredom pertains to the capitalist dispersal of traditional working culture. Roquentin bears witness to this pathology. “It is a deep, deep boredom, the deep heart of existence, the very matter I am made of”, he writes (Sartre, *Nausea* 188). Moving along the existentialist axis, we encounter another thematic doxa of the novel – humanism. Sartre employs two different paradigmatic axes to

include two major epistemological categories that undergird the ontological contour of modernity. The figure of the autodidact allows Sartre to condense the subjective attitude of humanism. We learn that the autodidact “has been a prisoner of war” (Sartre, *Nausea* 126). He was taken a prisoner at the end of 1917 and during that time he learned that “a lot of soldiers recovered their childhood faith during their captivity” (Sartre, *Nausea* 136). The fervidity of the autodidact relates to what Sartre in *Being and Nothingness* calls the “we-subject” (Jameson, *Marxism and Form* 250). The subject’s self-conscious experience of communion. He does not believe in God but in the internment camp, he learnt “to believe in people” (Sartre, *Nausea* 137). The autodidact is a perfect embodiment of the modern subject of knowledge where – with the dissolution of the traditional master’s discourse – the State and the people become the incarnation of rational existence. “There is a goal, Monsieur, there is a goal...there are people”, the autodidact says (Sartre, *Nausea* 135). The autodidact and Roquentin contradict each other to the point where the autodidact speculates whether Roquentin is a misanthrope. (Sartre, *Nausea* 141). Regardless, both of the figures characterise particular attitudes to the crisis of modernity itself. After their conflictual casuistry, Roquentin leaves and takes a stroll through the town. The language of the following passages becomes dense: “Bluish objects move jerkily past the windows, all stiff and brittle. People, walls; through its open windows a house offers me its thing that is black, give a blue colour to this big yellow brick all of a sudden, taking a nosedive forward” (Sartre, *Nausea* 149). This expressionistic passage makes space for the autonomous language of colour “to restore at least a symbolic experience of libidinal gratification to a world drained of it, a world of extension, gray and merely quantifiable” (Jameson, *The Political Unconscious* 48). Having abandoned his task of writing the biography of Rollebon, Roquentin moves into the inundation of this “quantifiable” world of modernity. Sartre ends the novel with a dialectic of being and nothingness. The modern world of sheer contingency is not able to provide any lineament of essence or causality. Roquentin’s spectral

perambulations and his symptomatic attachment to his vocation of writing offers him, as Kierkegaard would have put it, an illusory “anticipation of being from the perspective of becoming” (Žižek, *Tarrying with the Negative* 84).

Conclusion

Through the discussion of Jean-Paul Sartre’s *Nausea* and Dostoyevsky’s *Notes from Underground*, this paper has managed to expound various portrayals of subjectivity that are radically dissociated from any traditional metaphysical matrix. Both novels display a peculiar singularity in terms of their primary attitude to existential reality that is expressed through the philosophical paradigm of ‘nihilism’. Lacan mentioned that the idea of sublimation is related with creating socially recognised values (Lacan, *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis* 107). Nietzsche’s idea of “modern nihilism” pertains to the “crisis of values” and the latter is what Lacan meant by “crisis of sublimation” (Zupančič, *The Shortest Shadow* 80). Nihilism as an existential attitude of subjectivity is thus related to a fundamental crisis of sublimation. This paper has explained the idea of “rationalisation” from Fredric Jameson to evaluate this idea. The advent of capitalism and its alienation of labour into a “mean and end” binary truncated the corporeal act of realising one’s substance through labour (Jameson, “The Vanishing Mediator: Narrative Structure in Max Weber” 58). The depersonalisation of labour also rendered the subjects as empty bearers of abstract labour power. Through the usage of the theoretical maxim of psychoanalysis, this paper has managed to showcase the problem of desire as well as the tragedy of it. Both Roquentin and the underground man’s ultimate separation from the female figures testify to their disjointed contiguity to the symbolic order of the Other. Roquentin’s narcotic aloofness from the symbolic order also denies him any transcendence of Symbolic “non-relation” to acquire Imaginary fulfilment. While the underground man, unable to acquire phallic agency, witnesses the lack in the Other and indulges in acts of auto-mutilation

to deal with castration complex. Between a desired spiritualism and an American economism, the subject desperately tries to find traces of a community to ameliorate the displaced nature of his desire and existence. Because, to end with Nancy, it is the singular that liberates the plural and the plural that liberates the singular in this community without the subject (Nancy 8).

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