



p-ISSN : 2520-0348 | e-ISSN : 2616-793X

DOI(Journal): 10.31703/gssr
DOI(Volume): 10.31703/gssr/.2024(IX)
DOI(Issue): 10.31703/gssr.2024(IX.IV)

DOI(Journal): 10.31703/gssr
DOI(Volume): 10.31703/gssr/.2024(IX)
DOI(Issue): 10.31703/gssr.2024(IX.I)

GSSR

GLOBAL SOCIAL SCIENCES REVIEW
HEC-RECOGNIZED CATEGORY-Y

VOL. IX, ISSUE IV, FALL (DECEMBER-2024)

Article Title

Subjective Truth and The Leap of Faith: A Textual Analysis of Updike's Terrorist

Global Social Sciences Review

p-ISSN: 2520-0348 e-ISSN: 2616-793x

DOI(journal):10.31703/gssr

Volume: IX (2024)

DOI (volume):10.31703/gssr.2024(IX)

Issue: IV Fall (December 2024)

DOI(Issue):10.31703/gssr.2024(IX-IV)

Home Page

www.gssrjournal.com

Volume: IX (2024)

<https://www.gssrjournal.com/Current-issues>

Issue: IV-Fall (June-2024)

<https://www.gssrjournal.com/Current-issues/9/4/2024>

Scope

<https://www.gssrjournal.com/about-us/scope>

Submission

<https://humaglobe.com/index.php/gssr/submissions>

Google Scholar



Visit Us



Abstract

Kierkegaard's existential theory that an individual with faith truly exists correspond to his idea of subjective truth that prompts the individual to take leap of faith. The current paper explores the treatment of truth in Updike's Terrorist from theoretical perspective of Kierkegaard's concept of subjective truth. After conducting textual analysis of the novel, we have come to understand that the higher truth is subjective and functions in an individual in such a way that he is ready to live or die for it. We also found out that passionate inwardness and commitment with the truth is necessary and truth develops with the passage of time according to the turn of events in the life of an individual, the way it happened in the life of Ahmad. Updike's treatment of truth and its reshaping with the realization and understanding of Ahmad is tantamount in understanding how Kierkegaard is still relevant today.

Keywords: Subjective Truth, Leap of Faith, Existence, Faith, Passionate Inwardness

Authors:

Ghulam Zakaria Khan: (Corresponding Author)

PhD Scholar, Area Study Centre for Africa, North and South America, Quaid-i-Azam University, Islamabad, Pakistan.

(Email: tozakria@gmail.com)

Umaima Kamran: Associate Professor, Department of English, Quaid-i-Azam University, Islamabad, Pakistan.

Pages: 84-91

DOI:10.31703/gssr.2024(IX-IV).09

DOI link:[https://dx.doi.org/10.31703/gssr.2024\(IX-IV\).09](https://dx.doi.org/10.31703/gssr.2024(IX-IV).09)

Article link: <http://www.gssrjournal.com/article/A-b-c>

Full-text Link: <https://gssrjournal.com/fulltext/>

Pdf link: <https://www.gssrjournal.com/jadmin/Auther/3rv1olA2.pdf>

Citing this Article

Subjective Truth and The Leap of Faith: A Textual Analysis of Updike's Terrorist						
09	Author	Ghulam Zakaria Khan Umaima Kamran		DOI	10.31703/gssr.2024(IX-IV).09	
Pages	84-91	Year	2024	Volume	IX	Issue IV
Referencing & Citing Styles	APA 7 th	Khan, G. Z., & Kamran, U. (2024). Subjective Truth and The Leap of Faith: A Textual Analysis of Updike's Terrorist. <i>Global Social Sciences Review</i> , IX(IV), 84-91. https://doi.org/10.31703/gssr.2024(IX-IV).09				
	CHICAGO	Khan, Ghulam Zakaria, and Umaima Kamran. 2024. "Subjective Truth and The Leap of Faith: A Textual Analysis of Updike's Terrorist." <i>Global Social Sciences Review</i> IX (IV): 84-91. doi: 10.31703/gssr.2024(IX-IV).09.				
	HARVARD	KHAN, G. Z. & KAMRAN, U. 2024. Subjective Truth and The Leap of Faith: A Textual Analysis of Updike's Terrorist. <i>Global Social Sciences Review</i> , IX, 84-91.				
	MHRA	Khan, Ghulam Zakaria, and Umaima Kamran. 2024. 'Subjective Truth and The Leap of Faith: A Textual Analysis of Updike's Terrorist', <i>Global Social Sciences Review</i> , IX: 84-91.				
	MLA	Khan, Ghulam Zakaria, and Umaima Kamran. "Subjective Truth and the Leap of Faith: A Textual Analysis of Updike's Terrorist." <i>Global Social Sciences Review</i> IX.IV (2024): 84-91. Print.				
	OXFORD	Khan, Ghulam Zakaria and Kamran, Umaima (2024), 'Subjective Truth and The Leap of Faith: A Textual Analysis of Updike's Terrorist', <i>Global Social Sciences Review</i> , IX (IV), 84-91.				
TURABIAN	Khan, Ghulam Zakaria and Umaima Kamran. "Subjective Truth and the Leap of Faith: A Textual Analysis of Updike's Terrorist." <i>Global Social Sciences Review</i> IX, no. IV (2024): 84-91. https://dx.doi.org/10.31703/gssr.2024(IX-IV).09 .					



Global Social Sciences Review

www.gssrjournal.com

DOI:<http://dx.doi.org/10.31703/gssr>



Cite Us



Title

Subjective Truth and The Leap of Faith: A Textual Analysis of Updike's Terrorist

Authors:

Ghulam Zakaria Khan: (Corresponding Author)

PhD Scholar, Area Study Centre for Africa, North and South America, Quaid-i-Azam University, Islamabad, Pakistan.

(Email: tozakria@gmail.com)

Umaima Kamran: Associate Professor, Department of English, Quaid-i-Azam University, Islamabad, Pakistan.

Contents

- [Introduction](#)
- [Research Question and Methodology](#)
- [Literature Review](#)
- [Analysis of Updike's "Terrorist"](#)
- [Conclusion](#)
- [References](#)

Abstract

Kierkegaard's existential theory that an individual with faith truly exists correspond to his idea of subjective truth that prompts the individual to take leap of faith. The current paper explores the treatment of truth in Updike's Terrorist from theoretical perspective of Kierkegaard's concept of subjective truth. After conducting textual analysis of the novel, we have come to understand that the higher truth is subjective and functions in an individual in such a way that he is ready to live or die for it. We also found out that passionate inwardness and commitment with the truth is necessary and truth develops with the passage of time according to the turn of events in the life of an individual, the way it happened in the life of Ahmad. Updike's treatment of truth and its reshaping with the realization and understanding of Ahmad is tantamount in understanding how Kierkegaard is still relevant today.

Keywords: [Subjective Truth](#), [Leap of Faith](#), [Existence](#), [Faith](#), [Passionate Inwardness](#)

Introduction

The foremost question in existential narrative is nonetheless truth which locates its true place and color in religious discourse. As an existentialist, Kierkegaard was the first to identify truth with the religious crisis of the time he lived through Jon (2024). An organized religion, for him, was a threat to both individuals and society because it was losing its ground against emerging revelations of science (Ludlow, 2004, p. 208). He seems to have a

shared perception of religion which carries a symbolic significance for human beings to live in a society and also sets a context for a select number of people to have a deeper experience of religion. Kierkegaard also comments that every man on this planet is going through some sort of depression, imbalance, and even anxiety towards something unknown (92).

A tasteful experience of an individual's existence seemingly became the starting point of his



argument which said that "the crowd is untruth" (Kierkegaard, 1847, p. 4). To exist, for Kierkegaard is to not merely be there in the world nor live in it rather he applies an example from a drunkard peasant who believes in holding the reins of the horses in his hands but in truth, he is asleep (Kierkegaard, 1941). So is the life that many individuals simply drift along to taste existence barely in an ontological sense. Kierkegaard says that it takes a decision to choose one's true self which reciprocates an appropriation of existence won by choice. He talks deeply about Christianity however ambiguity of interpretation and understanding creates his appeals for all religious schools of thought. People thought it appropriate to pay attention to religion and more to Catholicism for, its anti-rational stance on religion and against science. Protestants believed that it was the right time to focus on rationale in religion and to awaken the spirit of inquiry directed to the justification of faith and a sort of dislike for philosophy. A Lutheran in temperament, Kierkegaard left a great influence on the emergence of neo protestant theology of Karl Barth and his likes.

As the current research paper explores the treatment of truth in Updike's novel "Terrorist", we would like to begin with the understanding of the concept of truth by Soren Kierkegaard. For Kierkegaard, truth is an uncertainty that cannot be understood in an objective manner. Truth is subjective (Jacoby, 2002). He raises objection to objective truth not by rejecting objective truth but by claiming that subjective truth is higher because it ascertains the total commitment of the individual to the truth in his life. He raises questions on objective truth that it is not at all beneficial if it is not part of the life of the person who knows it (Kierkegaard quoted in Gill (1969)). The higher truth, which is subjective, can be achieved through the relationship between the individual or seeker and the premise or object. He further says that commitment and concomitant risk are required by the individual to follow subjective truth (Kierkegaard quoted in Gill (1969)). "Faith alone provides the basis for religious truth" (Kierkegaard, 2005 quoted in Gill, 1969) and thus, subjective truth is the most effective one in an individual's life. As there is no proof of subjective truth therefore it is higher than the objective one and the individual has to take a leap of faith. It must be noted here

that subjectivity is "experienced as passionate inwardness" (Sanborn, 1968, p. 35).

Kierkegaard's next discussion on the goal of the life of an individual is also of extreme importance, especially for the purpose of this research paper. He says that the individual must understand himself and know the purpose of his creation by God (Bretall 1946). In the wake of the conflict of religious ideologies in the world today, there are various subjective truths that have been part of the debate due to political and military turmoil in current affairs. However, for Kierkegaard, it is not just the finding of the subjective truth but also sticking to the idea of the truth which is of supreme importance. He uses the words like 'life and dies', as quoted above, to suggest that there is a persistent commitment to the idea. And that is also the leap of faith because one cannot see faith and truth in objective and factual form. "Only the man of faith truly exists" (Gill, 96). To exist is to be in the truth.

Transcendence emerges out to be the most critical factor of Kierkegaard's writing. It seems to have provided leverage to both anti-religion to accept transcendence as an alternative to religion and as a key point in understanding the true nature of existence. In this fashion, we can take liberty in defining Kierkegaard's idea of transcendence as a subject matter of Subjective Truth. In the case of Objective Truth, he takes us back to the presence of God as an 'objective uncertainty'. Here he sets the path straight for Heidegger to accept Kirkegaardian assertion except that he conceded to the existence of God though he did not deny His existence too. Kierkegaard is also considered a pioneer among those who made contributions toward the understanding of theistic existentialism. Jasper and Marcel stand in line with Kierkegaard while tracing the meanings of existence. All three philosophers believed in the deeper meaning of the familiar events essential for the transcendence of finite to infinite.

Immediacy, urgency, and inevitability are other important factors of evaluation with respect to Kierkegaard's ascending to or moving to the Aesthetic perspective of Existence. When an individual is solely concerned with the present, it erupts into aesthetic existence. Walter (Kaufmann, 1975)I, "*Existentialism from Dostoevsky to Sartre*", Water Kauffman elaborates existentialism in the

following words: "The refusal to belong to any school of thought, the repudiation of the adequacy of any body of beliefs whatever, and especially of systems, and a marked dissatisfaction with traditional philosophy as superficial, academic, and remote from life—that is the heart of existentialism" (98).

Research Question and Methodology

This paper focuses on the treatment of truth by Updike in his novel *Terrorist*. However, the specific question is how Updike's protagonists in the novel arrive at subjective and objective truths from the theoretical perspective of Kierkegaard's existential theory. Updike being among the prominent American novelists and picking up such topics at a time when the world was engaged in a specific religious and political discourse of terrorism and the involvement of the religion of Islam makes the novel further significant to be studied and evaluated. Yet, the researchers have opted not to go for the political discourse but to explore the formation and development of subjective truth for which the individuals are ready to live and die. Alan Mackie's textual analysis has been selected as the appropriate research method (13) to analyze the text of the novel by developing and exploring the discussion related to truth and its search in man's life.

Literature Review

In *Postscript*, Kierkegaard writes that "there is objectively no truth for existing beings, but only approximations; while subjectively the truth exists for them in inwardness, because the decisiveness of the truth is rooted in the subjectivity of the individual". (195). He was not romantic though he lived during an era when romanticism was at its height. He does not believe in the romantics' claim of seeing the possibility of communicating subjective experience through the medium of words (Helms 2023). Kierkegaard's *Concluding Unscientific Postscript* lays a foundation for Heidegger and Sartre to draw their respective theories on secular existentialism. He says that "the supreme paradox of all thought is the attempt to discover something that thought cannot think "or faith (*Fear & Trembling* 46). In this stream of thinking, reason takes an opposite position to the paradox which in Kirkegardian terms is faith.

Out of three phases of life i.e. aesthetic, ethical, and religious, the religious phase of existentialism offers a leap into faith to embrace truth, but in a subjective manner which is considered the higher truth by Kierkegaard as discussed above in this paper. Kierkegaard's dictum "truth is subjectivity" is interpreted in contradiction for its being relativist and expressive of the notion of denial of truth itself. He interlinks truth with the embracement of one's existence. He sets forth a few principles to rationalize his breach from the existing view of truth which adheres to the core principle of objectivity of the truth. Personal appropriation of objective facts is the stand-alone point of difference and deference to the objectivity of truth. He does not simply deny the presence of objective truth rather he believes that subjective truth is more transformative and meaningful for an individual. In both religious and worldly percepts of truth, Kierkegaard believes that an individual takes a calculated and appropriate risk to let the facts have a shaping impact on his existence. Here, he acknowledges the need for a leap of faith to embrace religious truth. For him, important truths are an individual's existence, purpose, and relationship to God. He rated one's relationship with God as the highest form of truth which needs no rationale but a leap of faith into the unknown

(Updike, 2006). The concept of a terrorist has been analyzed from various perspectives by researchers and scholars leaving the gap to be evaluated from the theoretical framework of Kierkegaard's theory of truth. Herman (2015) analyzed the concept of terrorism in lieu of American culture and presented a critique of the novel by suggesting that the work could be observed from a broader perspective and gives insight into American culture which also provides ground for the extreme ideas and needs to be re-assessed (691). Haseeb (2017), on the other hand, gave a detailed analysis of the novel in an attempt to prove that there is a clear misrepresentation of Islam in the novel and that Updike had taken an oversimplified understanding of the religion whereas the blame may not lie on the religion (1084). Haseeb (2017) also points out that the novel is a typical representation of the popular postcolonial boundary of "us" versus "them". Similarly, Haseeb (2017), is also of the view that Updike is keen on labeling the religion as promoting conservatism and fanaticism with its

non-inclusive and absolutist ideologies by exploring various literary devices and techniques that are applied in the novel to make the case against Islam in a coherent and logical manner. It is a premeditated effort by the novelist to go about the proclamation of a religion with a huge number of followers in the wake of the 9/11 incidents.

Salehnia (2012) made a detailed study of the novel and came to the conclusion that it is a typical representation of political Zionism in fiction (488). She is of the view that the character of Jack Levy in the novel represents both Jewish Zionism and American culture who is shown as the prophet for Ahmad who is stuck in the abyss of misunderstanding of the true spirit of the religion. Another point that she asserts in her research paper is that in the aftermath of 9/11, many popular writers took it upon themselves to align themselves with the popular political discourse of the time i.e. anti-Islamic agenda or islamophobia and create such works that could or would represent the religion in a negative manner. Salehnia

(2012) brings out the implication of Updike through the mouth of Jack "In the years to come, Arab-Americans are going to need plenty of lawyers" (Updike, 2006). The need for lawyers implies that Arab-Americans i.e. Muslims are criminals.

A similar kind of finding of misrepresentation of Islam in fiction is explored by Alosman et al. (2018). who have argued in their research work that Updike represents Muslim characters in the novel as flawed and faulty in their beliefs which is a kind of othering in its own way asserting differentiation and intersectionality (58). They use the conceptual framework of Orientalism in order to explore that the West is still preoccupied and obsessed with specific mistreatment of the Orient in their writings and clearly Updike's work is a typical example.

Dilaga (2012) conducts a descriptive-analytical study of Updike's terrorist from an interesting point of view of the process of becoming a terrorist. Through the theoretical perspective of Erickson's adolescence theory, he tries to explore that Ahmad was an adolescent going through the stage of puberty who could be easily beguiled and manipulated by the religious leader as that is also the stage of faith and hope (41). Dilaga (2012) makes the point that at an early age, Ahmad, the central

character of the novel is embedded with the identity of Muslim and through the manipulative use of language by Shaikh Rashid is reassured time and again that Ahmad was a Muslim and that he was not afraid of death as he wanted to enter paradise.

The review of most of the scholarly research work on Updike's penultimate novel *Terrorist* suggests that most of the works focus on exploring and evaluating the novel from the perspective of islamophobia, orientalism, "us" versus "them" binary, political environment of the world and concepts like fanaticism, Islamisation, conservatism, American culture, and freedom. However, the researcher has found a clear gap in analyzing the novel from the theoretical perspective of subjective and objective truth by Kierkegaard and the crisis of existence in the world.

Analysis of Updike's "Terrorist"

As discussed earlier in the preceding paragraphs Soren Kierkegaard's philosophy of truth revolves around the concept of subjective truth being held as higher than objective truth, faith as the basis of religion, leap of faith, religious stage, and commitment of the individual with subjective truth as the aim of life. Although Kierkegaard took Christianity as an example his philosophy could be easily applied to other faiths.

The research study analyzes John Updike's 'Terrorist' which determines influences on Updike for bringing in elaborative themes coined with the interpretation of existentialism with particular reference to its father Soren Kierkegaard. Like for example, we find Updike at its zenith while introducing and tackling the theme of Subjectivity and individual experience. The world around sounded to him indifferent and at best hostile. What remains to taste and experience is the individual perspective and response to existence. Another important correlation of Updike's themes to existentialism is the question that his characters usually explore to extinguish their thirst for meaning in moments of anxiety, freedom, and the inevitability of death. Above all, it is a domineering aspect of Updike's novels that its characters face the dilemma of faith with respect to doubt. He is left with no choice but to propagate the inevitability of a leap into faith to embrace higher truth in our relationship with God.

Terrorist, the novel by Updike for the penultimate time after 9/11 revolves around three major characters i.e. Ahmad, Jack Levy, and Shaikh Rashid. Ahmad is a young guy who was born American to a father of Egyptian descent and a Muslim who is greatly influenced by the teachings of Shaikh Rashid, the religious cleric who has his own typical fanatic and conservative views of Islam and considers Jihad as the only solution to the problems of Muslims after 9/11. It seems that the young boy is manipulated by Shaikh Rashid to become part of the suicide bombing act in a tunnel but Ahmad has his own subjective experiences that lead him to internalize the concepts of faith that he had learned from his surroundings. Although he goes to school and is also influenced by the Jewish mentor Jack Levy, throughout the story, there is internal conflict in Ahmad regarding carrying out the bombing act. Jack tries to convince Ahmad to go for a law degree but he is convinced by the arguments of Shaikh Rashid to become the truck driver. Toward the end of the novel, while Ahmad is going alone to explode the ammunition in a loaded truck, he is met by Jack on the roadside who also mounts the truck on the way to the tunnel, Jack makes another effort to convince Ahmad not to carry out the evil design. Ahmad re-evaluates his truth about religion and arrives at the conclusion that God would not have wanted him to kill innocent people. He quits the idea of suicide bombing and goes away with Jack towards the city leaving the truck behind.

Ahmad struggles to find his subjective truth as he wants to find out the Straight Path. He says that,

"I seek to walk the Straight Path," Ahmad admits. "In this country, it is not easy. There are too many paths, too much selling of many useless things. They brag of freedom, but freedom to no purpose becomes a kind of prison." (Updike 148)

Even at the start of the novel when Ahmad is monologuing, he is critical of the American culture and the mixing up of males and females in such a free manner as is the custom there. He also has his sexual urges and has a fight with a boy Tylenol over the issue of a girl which further reinforces his gap of adopting American culture. It further alienates him from that society and Ahmad starts spending more time at the mosque. Shaikh Ahmad sees him as the easy prey to carry out his plot of bombing.

As Kierkegaard argues subjective truth needs to be appropriated in the life of the individual, similarly, Ahmad also tries to develop affinity and commitment with the subjective truth that he holds dear. Although that truth is conveyed to him by Sheikh Rashid and turns out to be a different one towards the end of the novel, at that moment, this was what he thought to be the will of God and the purpose of his life. This was the very Straight Path for which he had been struggling since his childhood. Since objective truth is based on facts and pieces of evidence, here in this novel the readers encounter the issue of faith of Ahmad which is purely subjective and is considered to be higher truth. It is considered higher by Kierkegaard because it all depends on subjective commitment and leap of faith which is a daring move of the individual demanding total commitment by the individual. That commitment is also confirmed by Sheikh Rashid in various ways for Ahmad. Sheikh, at one point in the novel, asks,

"Tell me, dear Ahmad, are you afraid of entering into Paradise?" "Oh, no, sir. Why would I be? I look forward to it, as do all good Muslims" (108).

The response of Ahmad clearly suggests that he had, by then, internalized and accepted the truth of his life and was not afraid of death. Although it was presented to him in a manipulated manner by the sheikh Ahmad seemed to believe in it and was ready to take a leap of faith. Unfortunately, that leap of faith comes from his agreeing to carry out the plot of the bombing. But viewing through the philosophical concept of Kierkegaard, it would be sufficient to say that passionate inwardness had taken root in Ahmad as he was ready to sacrifice his life for the sake of the truth that he had accepted and was struggling to spend his life accordingly.

However, at the same time, Ahmad also keeps on understanding, revising, and re-evaluating his subjective truth which could also be considered as the act of development of truth. Although Kierkegaard talks more about the commitment to the subjective truth than the revision and development of it, we have been able to find out that there is also a phenomenon of revisiting the faith. As Ahmad says,

"Jihad doesn't have to mean war," Ahmad offers, his voice shyly cracking. "It means striving,

along the path of God. It can mean inner struggle" (149).

Further interpretations of the concept of Jihad are also pondered upon by Ahmad which shows his conscious commitment and evaluation of faith. As Kierkegaard argued the purpose of an individual is to understand himself and what God wishes for him, this process of understanding continues with Ahmad throughout the novel. It is also through this process that Ahmad is able to discern between the act of killing innocent people and Jihad as a struggle within the individual. His struggle with the concept continues as on another occasion he is asked if,

Ahmad's lack of response leads the other to ask in a quick, testing voice, "You are with the jihad?" "How could I not be? The Prophet urges it in the Book." Ahmad quotes: (183)

Updike also shows that the act of manipulation by the extremist elements also keeps on working on the assurance and commitment of individuals to the truth. As Charlie asks,

Charlie is asking him a question. "Would you fight them, then?" Ahmad has missed what "them" refers to but says "Yes" as if answering a roll call. Charlie appears to repeat himself: "Would you fight with your life?" (189)

The leap of faith is clearly working here and Ahmad seems to have taken that leap. Kierkegaard also argues that a man with the faith is the one who truly exists. It is clearly suggestive of the existentialist philosophy of Kierkegaard that the existence of an individual is dependent on faith which is the true purpose of the individual in this world. The will of God is subjectively understood by Ahmad which also changes towards the end of the novel. In the start, the will seems to be giving life in Jihad as interpreted by Shaikh and Charlie,

"How do you mean?" Charlie is insistent; his brows bear down. "Would you give your life?" The sun leans on Ahmad's neck. "Of course," he says, trying to lighten the exchange with a flicking gesture of his right hand. "If God wills it." (189)

However, towards the end of the novel, the will of God is interpreted in a different way by Ahmad. While sitting in the truck with Ahmad, Jack has a dialogue with Ahmad,

"I don't think I'll get out. We're in this together son" His pose is brave but his voice is hoarse and

weak. (p. 296) "Please, Mr. Levy," he says, "It is mine to do. The meaning change from a victory to a defeat. If you do it." (304)

This was the time when Ahmad's faith seemed to develop and he entered into a new phase of his life. He starts understanding that the subjective truth with which he was so passionately attached was wrongly interpreted and embedded in him. He feels himself at a loss when he says towards the end, "That, and only that. These Devils, Ahmad thinks, have taken away my God." (310).

Kierkegaard argues that the pursuit of the individual living in the religious faith is to find the idea that is true for him, an idea for which he could live or die. Ahmad eventually finds an idea for himself for which he could live and idea. Initially, the subjective truth which he followed turns out to be wrong but eventually, with the help of Levy, he realizes that the real idea is,

"This was the will of the Beneficent, the Merciful, the ar-Rahman and ar-Rahim, the Living, the Patient, the Generous, the Perfect, the Light, the Guide. He does not want us to desecrate His creation by willing death. He wills life" (311).

This developed and transformed subjective truth is the one that gives solace to Ahmad and he happily gives up the idea of bombing and moves towards the city with Levy. It is evident that Updike was very well aware of Kierkegaard's philosophy of truth and that the subjective truth is the higher one which is not to be replaced by the objective one. For faith affirms the existence of Ahmad. He finds his identity in the faith because that is what Kierkegaard says that only the man of faith truly exists. Finding one's existence is also testimony of finding one's identity in this multi-layered web of ideologies in the world.

Ahmed seems to have been presented as a prototype of a young American Muslim who approaches approvingly existential questions of identity, faith, and alienation towards society. Updike finds ample space to reveal to readers the internal dialogue Ahmad had with himself to ascertain the validity of the information shaping his precept of faith as a determinant factor of his life. To make this existential perspective stand-alone, Updike introduces juxtaposition which reveals a passionate appeal to subjectivity as a prime face of existentialism. Jack Levy is disillusioned whereas Imam is a radical ideologist. Now Ahmed's

perception of truth is challenged by a cultural divide which leaves him marred with the challenges of understanding contrasting meanings and opinions. His radicalization is portrayed in a way that implies unpleasant implications of faith on human's attempt to understand truth as a transcendental and subjective code of life.

Alienation is dealt with rigor in the case of Ahmad who is caught between two extreme positions of his strict religious upbringing and the values of American culture. He struggles to find meaning in his existence oscillating between the two extremes. His religious faith does not provide him any meaning and he ends up on the path of violence and destruction. Absurdity overlaps him like a bombshell. Ahmad is portrayed as an active agent in making his choices, therefore, he is presented as a master of his own destiny as freedom can only be enjoyed in the presence of responsibility. Ahmad chooses to live in a state of deception that denies him the freedom and responsibility to achieve authenticity. He identifies himself to a rigid and later somewhat moderate form of religion which in turn creates an absurd situation for he gets alienated from the values of American society. His journey becomes complex and deprived. The novel's primary focus seems to be a human condition that determines the consequences of choices made and freedom embraced.

Ahmad breeds anger against materialism and the emptiness he encounters in the world around him. It ignites a disconnect with society hence an obvious lack of understanding. Strangely enough, he is alien to both American and Muslim societies. His classmates are suspicious of his outlook on life. His Imam (religious guide) was concerned about his devotion to the choices he was making and unmaking. Updike sets it in a context where it is easy to suggest that Ahmad was running after a religious source to ward off the absurdity of existence and it could only arise in a situation where an individual experiences meaninglessness. He considers suicide as an option to put an end to his conflict with absurdity and search for meaning. This very act of considering death as a choice tells

of the agony and anxiety, Ahmad might have gone through.

Other characters in 'Terrorist' serve contrasts to Ahmad's disposition, thereby providing Updike an opportunity to amplify the existentialist undercurrent of his protagonist. A guide and counselor, Jack Levy presents the absurdity and despair of existence. His failed marriage, unrealized satisfaction with his career, and a damning sense of aimlessness. It brings forth Ahmad's pervasive search for meaning even if it provokes him to take a destructive and highly radical approach in pursuit of meaning.

Conclusion

The search for truth is innate in man and one cannot make sense of the world without developing a complete understanding of the environment and realities around him. However, mere facts and pieces of evidence are not sufficient to quench the thirst of an individual and support him in the turn of events in life. Subjective truth is far higher and more important because it addresses those queries of an individual that are otherwise not provided in the form of facts and evidence. These are experiences that can only be subjectively understood. Yet at the same time, the commitment and passionate inwardness with the subjective truth demands the individual to take the leap of faith for which more courage and determination is required. It is easy to believe what is obvious and can be sensed through the five senses whereas matters of faith are not in the sunlight unless experienced by an individual. That is why Kierkegaard calls it a higher truth. He is still relevant today as Updike's terrorist opts religious phase of life and makes a leap of faith that helps him in better understanding of the world. The treatment of truth by Updike further affirms that Kierkegaard's relevance and understanding of faith and truth are of philosophical and practical importance even today amidst a myriad of ideologies competing against each other in this turbulent world.

References

- Alosman, M. I. M., M, R. M., & Hashim, R. S. (2018). Differentiation and imperfectionality in John Updike's Terrorist. *3l the Southeast Asian Journal of English Language Studies*, 24(2), 58–70. <https://doi.org/10.17576/3l-2018-2402-05>
[Google Scholar](#) [Worldcat](#) [Fulltext](#)
- Bretall, R. (Ed.). (1946). *A Kierkegaard anthology* (p. 5). Princeton University Press.
[Google Scholar](#) [Worldcat](#) [Fulltext](#)
- Dilaga, G. K. (2012). *The process of becoming a terrorist in the main character in John Updike's Terrorist (Unpublished undergraduate thesis). Universitas Negeri Jakarta.
<http://repository.unj.ac.id/689/1/Skripsi%20Gryna%20Kistia%20Dilaga.pdf>
[Google Scholar](#) [Worldcat](#) [Fulltext](#)
- Gill, J. (1969). *Essays on Kierkegaard* (pp. 91–92). Burgess Publishing Company.
[Google Scholar](#) [Worldcat](#) [Fulltext](#)
- Haseeb, A. (2017). The (mis)representation of Islam in John Updike's Terrorist. *International Journal of English Language, Literature in Humanities*, 5(6), 1083–1098.
[Google Scholar](#) [Worldcat](#) [Fulltext](#)
- Helms, E. (2023). Thoughtlessness as an intellectual vice in Kierkegaard and Aristotle. *Religions*, 14(11), 1401. <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel1411401>
[Google Scholar](#) [Worldcat](#) [Fulltext](#)
- Herman, P. C. (2015). Terrorism and the critique of American culture: John Updike's Terrorist. *Modern Philology*, 112(4), 691–712. <https://doi.org/10.1086/679599>
[Google Scholar](#) [Worldcat](#) [Fulltext](#)
- Jacoby, M. G. (2002). Kierkegaard on truth. *Religious Studies*, 38(1), 27–44. <https://doi.org/10.1017/s0034412501005868>
[Google Scholar](#) [Worldcat](#) [Fulltext](#)
- Jon, S. (2024). The views of the early Kierkegaard on actuality and "life": A flashpoint in the conflict of the nature of philosophy. *Discipline filosofiche*, 34(1), 1–xx.
- Kaufmann, W. (1975). *Existentialism from Dostoevsky to Sartre: Basic Writings of Existentialism by Kaufmann, Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Jaspers, Heidegger, and Others*. Plume.
[Google Scholar](#) [Worldcat](#) [Fulltext](#)
- Kierkegaard, S. (1846). *Concluding unscientific postscript to philosophical fragments*. In R. Solomon (Ed.), *Existentialism* (2nd ed., pp. 17–23, C. Martin, Trans.). Oxford University Press.
[Google Scholar](#) [Worldcat](#) [Fulltext](#)
- Kierkegaard, S. (1847). *The crowd is untruth*. Christian Classics Ethereal Library.
[Google Scholar](#) [Worldcat](#) [Fulltext](#)
- Kierkegaard, S. (1941). *Kierkegaard's concluding unscientific postscript*. Princeton University Press, for the American-Scandinavian Foundation.
[Google Scholar](#) [Worldcat](#) [Fulltext](#)
- Kierkegaard, S. (2005). *Fear and trembling* (A. Hannay, Trans.). Penguin Books.
[Google Scholar](#) [Worldcat](#) [Fulltext](#)
- Ludlow, M. (2004). Universalism in the history of Christianity. In R. A. Parry & C. H. Partridge (Eds.), *Universal salvation?: The current debate* (1st ed., p. 208). Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing.
[Google Scholar](#) [Worldcat](#) [Fulltext](#)
- Salehnia, M. (2012). Political Zionism and Fiction: A Study of John Updike's Terrorist. *Journal of Language Teaching and Research*, 3(3). <https://doi.org/10.4304/jltr.3.3.484-488>
[Google Scholar](#) [WorldCat](#) [Fulltext](#)
- Sanborn, P. (1968). *Existentialism* (p. 35). Pegasus.
[Google Scholar](#) [Worldcat](#) [Fulltext](#)
- Updike, J. (2006). *Terrorist*. Penguin Books.
[Google Scholar](#) [Worldcat](#) [Fulltext](#)
- Updike, J. (2006, May 31). Updike explores the mind of a terrorist. *The New York Times*. <https://www.nytimes.com/./31iht-updike.html>
[Google Scholar](#) [Worldcat](#) [Fulltext](#)