

TRIBHUVAN UNIVERSITY

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Alienation in Updike's Rabbit, Run

**A Thesis Submitted to the Central Department of English
in the Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Arts in English**

By

Netra Prasad Dhakal

Central Department of English

Kirtipur, Kathmandu

December 2007

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This thesis entitled "**Alienation in Updike's *Rabbit, Run***" by
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committee.

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Abstract

John Updike in his *Rabbit Run* raises a burning issue of suburban life of America. The novel focuses on the problems faced by the common people in this modern material world. The novel presents a bleak, existential view of the late 1950s. Rabbit's running is also a metaphor for seeking a better life. Rabbit Angstrom of *Rabbit Run*, representing the epitome of modern America, is an ex-basketball player, who can't himself adjust in the world of work, and thus runs away from his family.

He feels alienated because of his inability to fulfill the desires of his wives Janice and Ruth as well as his son Nelson. He is unable to exist himself in his own family environment because he cannot overcome the tendency created by materialistic world. His efforts seem inadequate to cope up with the problems of his family as he lacks right choices and due to his economic limitation. These are the reasons behind his alienation. This study traces the development of existentialism and notes their convergence with John Updike's ideas. It concludes with a claim that one should try to exist, no matter the hardship of the material world they have to undergo.

Contents

Acknowledgements

Abstract

I. Introduction 1-6

II. General Survey of Existential Philosophy 13-26

Background 13

Theistic Existentialist 17

Atheistic Existentialism 21

III. Textual Analysis 33-40

IV. Conclusion 47-42

Bibliography 49-44

I. Introduction

The research focuses on Updike's novel *Rabbit Run* (1960) to prove how Updike tacitly exposes and expresses the trauma of Angstrom's Alienation from his family. The novel represents the American suburban life of 1950s and 1960s, the life after the World War II. The novel highlights the crisis faced by Angstrom, the spaces he is living in, and from where he escapes to seek liberation. In John Hoyer Updike's novel *Rabbit Run* the protagonist of the novel Rabbit Angstrom, undergoes in the state of alienation because he was fail to make right choices which ultimately puts him in a state of confusion. So he is compelled to realize his whole existence in a state of alienation at the final part of the novel. Angstrom, an ex-basketball star, is not able to establish good relationship with his families after he was alienated. Alienation refers to the feeling of separateness, of being apart from others which causes powerlessness and meaninglessness of his life and the whole cosmos. So he realizes his existence in such alienation.

Apart from, *Rabbit Run*, another novel of Rabbit series *Rabbit Redux* (1971) is set in the summer of 1969, the second volume of updike's Rabbit Angstrom, saga shows the thirty six years old attempting to cope with the 1960s in one of the most accomplished satirical treatments of the period.

Rabbit is Rich (1981) is his third Rabbit novel wherein Rabbit Angstrom gets in the swing of the 1970s by jogging and enjoying prosperity from his successful Toyota dealership. In the novel, Nelson, Rabbit's son becomes a problem, threatening to resurrect the kind of chaos.

Rabbit at Rest (1990) is the forth installment in updike's Rabbit Angstrom series completes it with reflections on the 1980s, now retired and somewhat

reconciled to life with his wife, Janice, restricts his athleticism to the golf course. At the end of book, he succumbs with uncharacteristic grace to a heart attack.

Updike's novel *Rabbit Run* was published in 1960s, when the stress of World War II was over and people were seeking for prosperous lives. People from rural areas were trying to move to urban locations. People in those emergent areas were bewildered with in the modern civilization and culture and were lost in the fun houses. Angstrom is one such example, who tries to do away with modern culture and modern civilization. As men are closely tied within the culture and civilization, they at the same time try to keep their identities to locate themselves differently. Likewise, Angstrom tries to figure out and establishes himself in sports, in the beginning. He was ex-high school basketball star who had performed very well in the basketball team of B division league and had become a popular player. When he married Janice, his life changed and the problems started. He starts struggling with his daily earnings. Now the marital world that he was in was contrasted with the marital world Angstrom was in his glorious days. "I once did something right. I played first rate basketball. I really did" (80).

The modern/ suburban life faced by Angstrom is quite different form what he has expected. To support him and his family, he does the job of demonstrating kitchen gadgets; "... demonstrating a kitchen gadget in several fine- and- dime stores and Brewer" (10). He was in discomfort to work with modern equipments. Next he faced the problem in selling the used cars of his father in law, cheating and dishonesty cause him disillusionment. His wife is pregnant for the second child, and becomes alcoholic and smokes a lot of cigars, "Harry, do you have a cigarette? I am out" (10). Angstrom being fed- up with Janice tries to get help through his basket all coach. Tohereto, his guru helps him to streamline the relationship with Ruth, a whore, but again fails to

establish any stable relationship. After returning home from the job, he always has to get his son Nelson from his mother's home, while Janice spends her time, sitting in front of television screen with drinks and cigars.

When Angstrom fails to get help from his basketball coach, he seeks help through Reverended Eccles of the Episcopal Church. Angstrom spends a lot of time with him, getting advice and counsel. Angstrom believes in a higher power though not much in his practice. Reverended Eccles does much good in his role as a minister, as a good shepherd on the golf course with Angstrom, but all ends in vain.

His second world, the world of his thinking starts when he fails to have adjustment with any of the advices given by Tothereto or Reverended Eccles. He is neither able to establish harmonious relationship with Janice nor with Ruth. He is trapped like a rabbit, somewhere in the middle, like a pendulum of the clock swinging constantly to and fro. The indecision is to go for Janice or Ruth. His glorious days reminds him of his happy moments, when he was an athletic hero. Now his dream is shattered like a glass: Cluttered house, a drunken wife and a son who will never be able to give him solace. He hopes to run like a rabbit. His psychological world puts him in dilemma. So he ponders whether he can overcome his obstacle to make his life prosperous, provide the secured life for him and his family. The reply is no, the solution is escaping from this mundane world, which lacks, spiritual content. Then he seeks for salvation, a destination where he can realize the wholeness of his life. Alienation, which the character undergoes, is because of his failure to make right choices which ultimately puts him in a state of confusion. Thus his whole existence is a state of crisis.

John updike's Rabbit Run has received many critical responses since its publication in 1960. Different critics have read the text differently. The great body of

literature about the book is concerned about the American life of late 1950's including the issues like family, marriage, sports, religion and sex.

Similarly, critic Joseph L. Price writes review on this text *Rabbit Run*. He takes the text not only religious but existential as well. He remarks:

Pasewark deals with arresting paradoxes in Updike's novel-and that is perhaps why, sounding out the resonance with Kierkegaard, Pasewark's piece is so stimulating. In turning to Kierkegaard's understanding of and celebration of paradox, Pasewark gets to the marrow of Updike's fictive worlds and our attraction to them. Paradox, he asserts, "is not finally irrational or antirational but that which simultaneously shatters reason and makes it necessary".

For Pasewark notes that "one paradox of reading Updike's fiction is that seemingly decent readers often prefer indecency itself, whereas decency itself, which we hope the world may embrace, seems, weak, enervated, and even impious." (107)

So according to Pasewark this novel is existential novel. In Merriam-Webster's Encyclopedia of literature, Updike's novel *Rabbit, Run* is taken as emotional record of a particular period in American society and the protagonist of the novel is in search for futile grace and order. He remarks:

The novel's hero is Harry ("Rabbit") Angstrom, a 26- year-old former high-school athletic star who is disillusioned with his present life and flees from his wife and child in a futile search for grace and order. The book is, in part, a condemnation of the secularization of society, in which religion and faith can no longer offer consolation. The novel has

been both praised as the social and emotional record of a particular period in American society and criticized for the vulgarity of its hero and its subject matter, which deals at length with Rabbit's sex life.

According to Bill Rankin, Updike's characters are more searchers than finders, sometimes exhibiting anxiety and a sense of God-forsakenness. Rankin expresses:

A later influence is the theology of Karl Barth, with whom Updike shares a respect for the infinite qualitative distinction between human and divine (direct apprehension of God is not a part of Updike's world.) Kierkegaard and other existentialists also figure in his work; his characters are more searchers than finders, sometimes exhibiting anxiety and a sense of God-forsakenness-they seem to be, in Camu's famous phrase, wanderers in search of a lost homeland.

Stanley Trachtenberg sees the sexual motif behind Angstrom's run. The frustration caused by sexual desire leads him to run away. He states: "The fallible hero struggles with his own sexuality" (New essays on Rabbit Run par.1). He sees only the problem of sexuality.

On the other hand, Carl Rollyson discussed about the failure of responsibility. He sees that every character in the novel fails to fulfill his/her responsibility. He mentions: "Angstrom runs away from responsibility rather than existing through struggle"(258). The Northern Anthology of American Literature also has quite similar opinion. It declares that Angstrom is the irresponsible character, who abandons his family instead of supporting them, disastrously sentimental and humanly irresponsible action"(2053).

Another great critic James Yerkes comments that Updike presents his existential hero in religious orientation like Lutheranism. He remarks;

Updike himself comments in his "Remarks upon Receiving the champion Medal," an award to a "distinguished christian person of letters". "I thought of my novels as illustrations for texts from Kierkegaard and Barth; the hero of Rabbit Run was meant to be a representative Kierkegaardian man, as his name, Angstrom, hints. "Darrell Jodock is nonetheless correct in noting" with Barth's help (Updike) renewed his faith but continued to understand it in a Lutheran way" (132). Jodock's chapter, "what is Goodness? The Influence of Updike's Lutheran Roots," explores how the reader can find in Updike's fiction a religious orientation that, like Lutheranism, is comparatively would accepting, centered in trusting relationships and free in the grace of God.

But Josephine Handing thinks quite differently. She sees that American housewife controlling the activities of house. Where, hardworking man is passive before his wife, "Momism is flourishing in an American housewife"(270-271). Similarly, Marshall Boswell opines that Angstrom fails to adjust because of biological and social conflict, "clash between instinct and law, biology and society" (8).

None of the critics above talks about the alienation faced by the protagonist. The protagonist of the novel undergoes through alienation to get the wholeness of his life. So, this research is trying to study such alienation of the protagonist of the novel.

II. General Survey of Existential Philosophy

Existentialism is a major twentieth century continental European philosophical movement. In popular accounts, it is sometimes said that existentialism was an expression of post war ennui that only flourished, and then withered, during the decade after World War II. But this is to confuse existentialist philosophy with "café existentialism", a cult vividly described in Simone de Beauvoir's autobiography, among young Parisians of the time who affected a distinctive style of dress, frequented certain bars, and delighted in iconoclastic behaviour. Philosophical existentialism, by contrast, was not an ephemeral episode, but a body of thought with roots in older philosophical traditions and one that continues to exert an influence on contemporary intellectual debate, especially in the areas of ethics and philosophical psychology.

Background

After World War II Europe found itself threatened alternatively by material and spiritual discrimination. Behind it was the holocaust of the war. Many writers and thinkers started to oppose the doctrines that view human beings as the manifestation of an absolute value. Nuclear holocaust of the World War Second smashed the certainties and scientific reasoning of the nineteenth century. Everything fell during the war. People lost faith in humanity, law, unity, rationality, and morality, and even in the Christianity. Thrown into an incoherent and disordered universe, in which individual destinies were torn, apart, they viewed the world totally absurd, not governed by the laws of providence and by rational laws but by the pure chance and contingency. They thought over the role and activities of an individual in the existence of human beings. Human being is free of routine and he is laid bare and face-to-face with his own destiny. As Nietzsche proclaimed, "God is Dead", all the

values of his own existence have to pass this void. The feeling of alienation was the product of the proclamation of the death of God. Thus man is left lost, alienated in the absurd and meaningless universe. Under those circumstances of uncertainty, the optimism of the nineteenth century, by which the destiny of man is infallibly guaranteed by an infinite force and propelled by it toward an indictable progress, appears to be untenable.

In this context many writers and thinkers were busy on finding the remedy of this horrible situation. Existentialism, in this scenario, finds fertile land to flourish. It is probably the most dynamic and appropriate philosophical movement to address and interpret the anxiety and absurdity of human existence. It isn't primarily concerned with metaphysics or logic or reason. Rather it is concerned with human condition. "As such existentialism presents itself as humanism" (The New Encyclopedia Britannica Vol-7 [1981]). Jean Paul Sartre also says:

Our point of departure is the subjectivity of the individual (the individual regarded as the subject who thinks, not as an object thought about)... we can begin by saying that existentialism, in our sense of the word, is a doctrine that does render human life possible, a doctrine also, which affirms that every truth and every action imply both an environment and a human subjectivity. (Castell 79-82)

His insistence on starting with man as subject as one who knows, wills and judges not as an external object that is known and willed and judged, is fundamental to his existentialism. The word 'existence' comes from the Latin root 'ex' means 'out' + 'sistere' means from 'stand to stare'. Thus the meaning of existence is to stand in the world that is incomprehensible and hostile to human being. Now the term

existentialism is used to describe the individual and his relationship or lack of one to the society and the universe of the God.

However, Existentialism is not a new doctrine of the 20th century. It is rethinking and purification of philosophical thinking. We can trace it back to Greek philosophy of Socrates, Plato and Aristotle. The name was coined by Sartre although the expression 'existence philosophy' had been used earlier by Karl Jaspers. The problem of what man is can be discerned in the Socratic imperative 'know thyself' because the unexamined life is not worth living. The transition from the views of the major Greek Philosophers came to those of the early Christian Augustine, Pascal and Montaigne. St. Augustine discovered that man is unable to extricate himself from this depraved and helpless condition through his own capacities. So, he has to take the shelter of God.

Pascal had insisted on the precarious position of man situated between 'Being' and 'Nothingness'. For him man is a 'frail reed' to whom the universe remains incomprehensible despite his effort to grasp it through reason. His desire to establish a friendly relationship with an otherwise hostile or indifferent universe is left unsatisfied. Since this desire is left unsatisfied any man is condemned to a solitary life or terror. For Pascal man is an imperfect and dependent creature seeking the perfection of the eternal. Peterfreund, Sheldon P. and Theodore C. Denise write, "what a chimera than is man! What a novelty! What a monster! What chaos! What a contradiction! What a prodigy!" (187). Pascal directed his attention to the problem of belief in God. He concluded that only belief in God would save man from chaos. It is only in God alone that human despair comes to rest.

Hegel stands in very interesting relationship to the existentialists. His concept of 'alienation' or 'self-estrangement' shows his direct contribution to contemporary existentialism. In his *Philosophy of Mind* Hegel used the term 'experience' to describe

the conscious process of 'alienation'. His account of rational experience and his view of the cognitive origin of alienation are accepted by existentialists. He distinguished between 'datum' (piece of information) and 'Pure thought'. He said that both 'datum' and 'pure thought' seem to exist independent of our consciousness.

For Hegel 'alienation' was an ontological fact rooted in the nature of man's existence in the world. Ludwig Feuerbach and Marx transformed 'alienation' into a secular and materialistic idea. The New Encyclopedia Britannica writes:

The 'alienation' was no longer abstract and inescapable for them, for 'alienation' was a product of specific forms of social organization. For Feurbach, the source of 'alienation' lays in religion. For Marx, the alienation of man from his true being was grasped by neither Hegel's existential duality nor Feuerbach's religious projection. It was man's nature to realize him in work... Thus the very problem was alienated labor under capitalism... workers had little control over the work process. (vol. IV, [1981]574)

A third stream of influence of alienation retained the existential emphasis of Hegel. Soren Kierkegaard stressed the importance of subjective experience over objective knowledge. For him attaining an adequate self in a world dominated by purposelessness and despair was the central problem of alienation. The same theme continues into the works of Heidegger, Sartre and other existentialist philosophers.

The modern definition of 'alienation' is more suitable to 'self-estrangement', the understanding that one can be 'out of touch' with oneself in one-way or another. For Sartre and other existentialists, 'self-estrangement' is a natural state of affair in a world that is bereaved of meaning and purpose. The absurdity of existence is held to

be fundamental. 'To be authentic' is to have a lucid consciousness that life is indeed meaningless and yet to commit oneself through active choice.

Jean Paul Sartre divides existentialist thinkers into two groups: 'Theistic' and 'Atheistic'. He writes, "The question is only complicated because there are two kinds of existentialists. There are, on the one hand, the Christians and on the other the existential atheists" (83). The first group includes Soren Kierkegaard, Martin Buber, Gabriel Marcel, Karl Jaspers, Karl Barth and Paul Tillich. They believe in God and His existence. In the second group Sartre includes himself, Heidegger and many other French existentialists. They do not believe in the existence of God. They view that 'God is Dead' (Nietzsche). And man is alone in this universe. In this helpless universe they undertake to create a system in which the individual is paradoxically free to choose. To incorporate all the existentialists and their philosophical doctrines in this small research is quite impossible. So, I have tried to deal with the main ideas of some of them.

Theistic Existentialist

Danish philosopher and religious thinker Soren Kierkegaard is considered as the precursor of the modern existential mode and the chief exponent of religious existentialism that emphasizes faith and minimizes the place of reason on religion. He says that the important thing is not the merely intellectual and ill-conceived challenge to prove that God exist but the 'Subjective truth' of ones own existence in the face of objective uncertainty. The very word 'existence' for him has exciting and adventurous connotations. "To exist is to face the uncertainties of the world and to commit oneself passionately to a way of life" (Mautner 41-42). Existence, according to Kierkegaard, is not just 'being there' but living passionately choosing one's own existence and committing oneself to a certain way of life. Thomas Mautner writes, "to be or become

Christian, according to Kierkegaard, is to commit oneself to make a 'leap of faith'. In the face of an objective uncertainty one cannot know or prove that there is God. One must simply choose to believe" (224).

Kierkegaard emphasizes the concept of the individual, of choice, of subjectivity of dread and anguish. *The New Encyclopedia Britannica* writes:

Kierkegaard attacked Hegel's attempt to systematize the whole of existence declaring that a system of existence cannot be constructed. Kierkegaard puts forward the thesis that subjectivity is truth and the objective uncertainty maintained in the most passionate spirit of dedication is truth, the highest truth for existing. (Vol-6 [1990] 855)

Kierkegaard, in his essay 'Individual' says that the self-realization of he individual comes when he takes a full responsibility for his life. Individuality and its related notions of subjective truth is the core of his philosophy. Peterfreund Sheldon P. and Theodore C. Denise say, " For Kierkegaard, personal existence stands in absolute opposition to non-personal existence. This means that each individual man is faced with the inexorable situation of either being or not being himself " (190).

Thomas Mautner says, "At the heart of Kierkegaardian Philosophy is his emphasis on the individual and his related notion of 'subjective truth' "(224).

Kierkegaard gives the concept of existence and insists on the importance of subjective truth in opposition to the rationalist philosophy in particular Hegelianism. His true philosophical quest is a subjective experience acquired by an individual in the process of choosing a way of life. According to him choice is criterion less and it is the individual himself who has to fix criteria by making the choice. The Christian doctrine and its quest for objective truth have nothing to do with the Kierkegaardian concept of Christianity.

Kierkegaard describes human existence as an unfinished project in which an individual must choose passionately. He refers to the passion, which shapes a person's self, as 'the individual's inwardness or subjectivity'. He attempts to make each of us aware of our primal subjectivity so that we may live authentically. He says that one can only live authentically and become a person by bearing the sole responsibility for his decisions.

Karl Jaspers, a German philosopher, professor at Heidelberg and another leading theistic existentialist, views the contrast between individual and society. He says that the man, who totally accepts the society, belongs to him. He further says that each individual has a right responsibility that turns to individual struggle and allows us to become effective in our own life. He believes that it is only through such an agonizing experience that we can make contact with unlimited reality.

Martin Buber, Jewish philosopher and religious thinker was a strong advocate of conciliation between Jews and Arabs in Palestine. He puts forward the relationship between God and the world. He stresses the importance of the relation between 'self' and 'other' (I-Thou) and its radical difference from the relation between 'self' and 'object' (I-It). He rejects the idea of separated existence of human being. He believes that we exist in relation to other men, to nature and to God.

Gabriel Marcel, a French philosopher and playwright, opposes the distinction between subject and object, thought and being, self and God, the individual and society. He says that we encounter reality through communion with it. According to him we can overcome isolation, despair and tragedy. We can feel the presence of God if we challenge the world with love, joy, hope and faith within us. He stresses that faith in God can help man to overcome anxiety and despair.

Karl Barth, Swiss theologian and philosopher disclaims the authority of reason in religion and insists that faith alone constitutes the preconditions of the discovering of reality. Peterfreund, Sheldon P. and Theodore C. Denise write, "He is uncompromising in his biblical insistence that God manifests his word only at particular moments in history to particular individual" (228).

Paul Tillich, German Protestant Theologian, discusses three types of existential anxieties. First of these is the threat to 'Ontic self-affirmation' referring to 'our anxiety about death', the second is the threat to 'spiritual self affirmation' referring to 'our anxiety about the meaninglessness', and the third is the threat to 'moral self-affirmation' referring to 'our anxiety of guilt'.

In all three forms anxiety is essential in the sense that it belongs to existence such and not to an abnormal state of mind as in neurotic anxiety. Tillich writes:

The three types of anxiety are interwoven in such a way that one of them gives the predominant color but all of them participate in the coloring of the state of anxiety...They are fulfilled in the situation of despair to which all of them contribute. Despair is also the despair in an ultimate or 'boundary line' situation. (Sheldon 215-16)

or Tillich, 'faith' is the ultimate solution of these anxieties. Encyclopedia of philosophy writes, "Tillich conceives of 'faith' as he calls it 'ultimate concern' as a way of organizing human experience and activity. In his view, faith is an unconditional surrender to something and the willingness to recognize it as an absolute authority" (5).

He says that despite man's awareness of non-being, his confrontations with death, meaninglessness and guilt can exhibit the courage to be, i.e. there can be a self-formation of being in spite of non-being. Tillich calls the experience of this power,

though which we can affirm ourselves, 'faith'. So, he says that faith on God is the ultimate solution of these anxieties.

So, like Kierkegaard as well as other theistic existentialists, Tillich also says reason cannot justify the existence of God and we should have 'faith' upon God to understand our existentialists, theistic existentialists also accept that 'angst'; 'dread' or anxiety inevitable for modern man because of his absurd condition and they advise to seek the shelter of God or to believe on God to confirm our existence. Thus, the anxiety and despair with faith can be a pathfinder for true existence.

Atheistic Existentialism

Atheism is the view that there is no 'divine being' or no God. It states that if God doesn't exist, there is at least one being in whom existence precedes essence, a being, which exists before he can be defined by any concept. This being is man or as Heidegger says 'human reality' that is meant here by saying that existence precedes essence. It means that first of all man exists, turns up, appears on the scene and only afterwards defines himself.

Friedrich Nietzsche is the forerunner and chief source of instruction for atheistic existentialists. Atheistic existentialists discard the concept of God as an authentic shelter. The atheists regard human being as optimistically forlorn, free and powerless creature. Nietzsche's declaration 'God is dead' became the leading slogan for atheistic existentialists. For them religious belief seems like cowardice act or as Camus, Albert calls it 'philosophical suicide'. They believe that man faces his problems alone in the universe because God is dead. The concept of God is meaningless to authentic existentialists. In this helpless and hostile universe the atheistic existentialists undertake to create a system in which the individual is paradoxically free to choose.

Friedrich Nietzsche, a German philosopher, cultural critic and a poet, is one of the most original and influential figures in modern philosophy. Nietzsche's attack on Christianity and Christian morality is based on his accusations that religion provides crutches and weapons for the weak. Thomas Mautner writes:

Religion and morality too are the legacy of a 'slave morality', which prefers safety and security to personal excellence and honour. In contrast to this ideology of weakness and mediocrity Nietzsche holds up various examples of 'master morality' and 'higher man' who rejects and despises weakness and lives as exemplar of what he calls the will power. (142)

Nietzsche claims that every person's basic drive is the 'will to power'. The *Encyclopedia of Philosophy* writes:

The conception of 'the will to power' is central in Nietzsche's philosophy. In his aphoristic books he had found the will at work in all sorts of human behavior and valuations.... The only thing men want is power, and whatever is wanted is wanted for the sake of power. If something is wanted more than something else, it must represent more power. (510-11)

Thus Nietzsche takes will to power to be the basic fact of nature that every living form strives not only to survive but also to remake and then power its environment. Nietzsche warns that this life principle, this will to power that needs always to be affirmed by the individual was in danger of being subverted by the modern institutions. His slogan, 'God is dead, there is no God' is appropriate to understand the despair of present human being. Since the God is dead, we must be able to live with other alternatives, create new values. Thomas Mautner writes:

Nietzsche's Zarathustra preaches a new atheistic gospel of aspirations towards greatness. This aspiration is embodied in the figure of the 'superman', a new and superior type of human being who rejects existing morality, who overturns existing values by affirming the positive value of earthly life and of the active creative individual, and who undertakes the creation of his own life in the way the artist creates his work. (292-93)

There is no God. The supermen are the Gods. To be superman, the man must be able to transvalue all the accepted values of society and to innovate the 'master morality' as opposed to the Christian morality that Nietzsche condemned as the 'slave morality'. Nietzsche declared that superman, a new breed of nobles, would rule the world.

So, like Kierkegaard, Nietzsche also advocates 'authentic' living and says that individual must make his decisions entirely on his own without regard for social and religious mores because there is nothing that he could rely on. That is to say, Nietzsche too insists that we can become ourselves only by stripping away all externalities and taking the full responsibility of our actions and decisions.

Martin Heidegger, a German philosopher, is another leading figure of atheistic existentialism. He separates 'Being' from 'being'. *The Encyclopedia Britannica* writes:

Man stands out ('ex-sists' not merely 'ex-ists') from things....Man is not completely captivated and defined by things but he is apart from them because he is nothing. Man dwells in a world that he has been and continues to be thrown into things being there (Dasein). He falls away (verfall) and is on the point of view of being submerged into things. He is continually a project (ent-wurf). (Vol-8, 740)

'Dasein' becomes the main term in Heideggerian philosophy. It means 'being-here' or 'being-there'. For Heidegger it is a technical term for one kind of existence, the manner in which human individuals exist. This particular way of existence is different from the ordinary existence of things in the world around us. The difference is that things are determinate and have their distinctive properties but 'Dasein' lacks any distinctive property. Thomas Mautner writes, "Who I become is a matter of how I act in the contexts in which I find myself. My existence is always an issue for me and I determine by my action what it will be. Human existence is always a projecting of oneself into the future" (184).

In his *Being and Time* Heidegger differentiates and analyses in the Phenomenological tradition of man-'Dasein' or 'human being'. Since it is man who alone among beings seeks 'Being', this is the necessary preliminary to the search for being itself. Heidegger finds that human being displays three fundamental aspects:

'Facility', 'Existentiality' and 'Forfeiture' (verfallen).

'Facility' means that human being is always already in a world-a world into which, beyond its willing, it has been cast. 'Existentiality' means 'the act of appropriation', of making my world mine. It means transcendence. It doesn't mean existence in the sense in which sticks or stones exist but to the inner personal existence for the designation of which it has become the existence of Being. Human being exists as anticipation of its own possibilities; it exists in advance of itself and grasps its situation as challenge to its own power of becoming what it may be rather than being what it must be. 'Existentiality' is the anticipation of human being by itself and therewith of its world; its understanding of the world. 'Forefeiture', the third aspect of human being means that we forget 'Being' for particular beings. In other sense it means the scattering of the essential forward drive through attention to the

distraction and disturbing cares of everyday and of the things and people that surround us everyday.

In his second part of, *Time and Being*, Heidegger talks about an authentic being. He develops three concepts: 'dread', 'conscience' and 'destiny'. His answer to why people tend toward inauthentic rather than authentic existence is that we do so to avoid 'dread'. *The New Encyclopedia Britannica* writes, "But there is a mood, anxiety or dread (angst), that functions to disclose (dis-close) authentic being, 'freedom' (Frei-sein), as a potentiality" (Vol.-8[1981] 740).

However, we find that 'dread' ultimately has its origin in our very mode of being. No particular object or event causes dread. We experience that we belong to a world; indeed we find ourselves 'thrown' into it for no discernible reason. 'Dread' (Angst) has no such nameable, isolated object. It is a sense of the loss of objects, of nothingness that lays hold of individual. Dread is of life as a whole that is of death as end, ground and boundary of life. It lifts human being out of self forgetfulness to the vision of its wholeness-the knowledge of itself as 'being-to death'. It also brings to human being its proper freedom and transforms the alien absurdities of stubborn fact into an essential possibility of being itself.

He held the belief that man should face explicitly the problem of being; he has to determine his own existence, create his own possibilities and make choices, and commitment. The feeling of anxiety of dread leads us to struggle to transcend the feeling of dread for authentic living. If we take the dread as death, as an opportunity, we may construct our life unique and our own. The process of existing is always dynamic, not static.

Jean Paul Sartre, French Philosopher, play Wright, novelist and social critic was the leading advocate of existentialism. He was the only self-declared existentialist

and he gave the highly importance to the freedom of the individual human being. But he experienced man's freedom as a curse. Jostein Gaarder writes:

Man is condemned to be free, he said, condemned because he has not created himself and is nevertheless free. Because having once been hurled into the world. He is responsible for everything he does. That was precisely Sartre's point-nevertheless we are free individuals and this freedom condemns us to make choices throughout our lives. (58)

For Sartre the central idea of all existential thought is that existence precedes essence. For him there is no God and therefore no fixed human nature that force one to act. Man is totally free and entirely responsible for what he makes of himself.

Sartre writes:

That if God doesn't exist there is at least one being whose existence comes before its essence, a being that exists before it can be defined by any conception of it. That being is man or as Heidegger says it 'the human reality'. What do we mean by saying that existence precedes essence? We mean that man first of all exists, encounters himself, surges up in the world and defines himself afterwards. (Castell 84)

In the same light, Richard Eyre writes in the preface to *Being and Nothingness*, "First of all man exists", he said, "Turns up, appears on the scene and only afterwards, defines himself" (VIII).

Sartre says that man simply is. Not that is simply what he conceives himself to be, but he is what he wills to be. After that he leaps towards existence. Man is nothing else but what he makes of himself. However, circumscribed by his historical and environmental situation, man is the author of his own life. Each man is alone in the world that is devoid of any absolute power like God. God no longer exists and

therefore, man comes from nothing. There is no God's will that he depends on. Man must therefore create himself. He must create his own nature or essence because it is not fixed in advance. It is therefore useless to search the eternal nature. Jostein Garder writes, "We are condemned to improvise. We are like actors dragged onto the stage without having learned our lines, with no script and no prompter to whisper stage directions to us. We must decided for ourselves how to live" (475).

Thus Sartre says man's freedom is inescapable and manifests itself in each of the choices he makes. His point of departure is the freedom. He also stresses upon the subjectivity of the individual. His insistence on starting with man, as subject, not as some external object is fundamental to his existentialism. He writes, "Our point of departure is the subjectivity of the individual [the individual regarded as a subject who thinks, not as an object thought about]" (castell 79).

'Being and Nothingness' is regarded as a textbook of existentialism. In this book, Sartre talks about the existence of mere things ('being-in-itself' or 'en soi') and the existence of conscious being ('being-for-itself' of 'pour soi'). Thomas Mautner writes, "The contrast between what a thing is in itself and how it is in relation to consciousness is a common one in philosophy" (205).

He further says, "Sartre argues that consciousness is such (as 'being-for-itself') that it is always free to choose (though not free not to choose) and free to negate the given features of the world" (142).

Sartre defines his ontology in terms of the opposition of 'being-in-itself' and 'being-for-itself'. Warnock Mary says:

There are two kinds of entity in existence-'being-in-themselves' and 'being-for-themselves'. Beings-in -themselves 'are non-conscious things, which can be said to have essence, which exit independently of

any observer and which conscious being whose consciousness renders them entirely different from other things, in their relation both to themselves and to one another and to those things. (XII)

Thus 'en soi' (thing-in itself) applies to things in itself independent of consciousness and 'pour-soi' (thing-for-itself), a thing of consciousness. Sartre writes:

The 'for- itself' and 'the in-itself' are related by a synthetic connection, which is nothing other than the 'for-itself'. The 'for-itself', in fact, is nothing but the pure annihilation of the 'in-itself'. The 'for-itself' is like a tiny annihilation that has its origin at the heart of 'Being' and this annihilation is sufficient to cause a total upheaval to the 'in-itself'. (637)

Sartre also defines the third entity of existence: 'being-for-others' (the existence of others). Sartre writes:

'Being for-others' can be only if it is made to be by a totality which is lost so that 'being-for-others' may arise, a position which would lead us to postulate the existence and passion of the mind. But on the other hand this being for others can exist only if it invokes an inapprehensible and external non being which no totality, not even the mind, can produce or find. (325)

Sartre talks about some doctrines to talk about nothingness and being. These doctrines are 'anguish', 'abandonment' and 'despair' or 'bad faith', 'nausea' and 'absurdity'. These doctrines, for him, become the essentials of existentialism. For 'existential anguish', Sartre's point is that we are 'pour-soi' (things-for themselves), conscious or aware of our existence. For his second doctrine 'abandonment', he says that God doesn't exist and we are thrown into the world, free to choose (but not free

not to choose) and man is in consequence forlorn. We are provided with no values or commands that could legitimize our behaviour. Then we have nothing; neither behind us, nor before us, in luminous realm of values, any means of justification or excuse. Sartre writes, "We are left alone, without excuse that is what I mean when I say that man is condemned to be free" (qtd. in Castell 87).

For 'despair' he says that we limit ourselves to a reliance upon that which is within our wills, or within the sum of the probabilities that render our action feasible. First of all we have to commit ourselves and then act our commitment. Without hope we should work or act. Sartre says that committing to action is the solution of the anxiety and despair. He writes, "Man is nothing else but what he purposes, he exists only in so far as he realizes himself, he is therefore nothing else but the sum of his actions, nothing else but what his life is" (87).

Albert Camus, French writer, was another strong follower of atheistic existentialism. He also believes that decline of religious belief in modern period makes us think that the world is 'absurd', the key term in Camus's philosophy. 'Absurdity' means meaninglessness or irrationality that aims to show the lack of meaning in human life. The idea is not to cultivate the meaninglessness, by showing and exposing the absurd in ordinary everyday situations; the onlookers are forced to seek a truer and more essential life for themselves. Mautner, Thomas writes:

Camus concluded that the world is absurd; a term that has come to represent the whole of existential thinking...but even Camus insists that the 'Absurd' is not license for despair, and Nietzsche insists on cheerfulness'. Kierkegaard writes of glad tidings' and for Heidegger and Sartre the much-celebrated emotion of 'angst' is essential to the human

condition as a symptom of freedom and self-awareness not as despair.

(142-43)

Camus evaluates the condition of modern man and says that none of the speculative systems of the past could provide any positive guidance for human life or any guarantee of the validity of human values. He found himself in the situation that he describes in the *Myth of Sisyphus*. Camus writes:

A world that can be defined even with bad reasons is a familiar world. But, on the other hand, in a universe suddenly divested of illusions and lights, man feels an alien, a stranger. His exile is without remedy since he is deprived of the memory of a lost home or the hope of a 'Promised Land'. This divorce between man and his life, the actor and his setting is properly the feeling of absurdity. (13)

The Myth of Sisyphus is ostensibly a consideration of the problem of suicide, which Camus describes as the only serious philosophical problem. "There is but one truly serious philosophical problem and that is suicide" (11). *Encyclopedia of philosophy* evaluates:

In *The Myth of Sisyphus*, Camus presupposes, without very much argument, that none of these interpretations of reality as value supporting can survive critical scrutiny; the tenability of any purposive or evaluative attitude on the part of human beings—the only moral beings is thus called into question. It is this isolation of man as an evaluative and purposive being, in a world that affords no support to such attitude that Camus calls the absurdity of the human condition.

(16)

Camus believes that absurdity, in the sense of recognition and acceptance of the fact that there are no metaphysically guaranteed directives for conduct, could by itself guarantee a positive ethic. But he maintains that suicide cannot be regarded as an adequate response to the experience of absurdity. The reason he gives is that suicide deals with absurdity simply by suppressing one of the two poles: 'the human being' and 'the world' that together produce the tension between above. Suicide, for him, is an admission of incapacity.

At the center of Camus's thought is the thesis that human existence is absurd. This can be applied to man's search for unity, and to the search for meaning in human existence. We are aware of our demand for meaning and we have also become aware of the fact that this demand cannot be satisfied. This sense of despair makes us aware of the oncoming death. Death is there as the only reality. Camus says that the transcendence of the absurd is achieved only through an intense struggle, not through the passive acceptance of situation. Existents have to discover some principles of justification for life. Sisyphus knows the whole extent of his wretched condition that is powerless and rebellious. The lucidity that was to constitute his torture at the same time crowns his victory. According to Camus the transcendence of the absurd is not achieved without intense struggle. This is what Sisyphus does in *The Myth of Sisyphus*. Our existence is entirely irrational, but we expect the world to be governed by rational principles. Life can neither be explained nor justified. The reality is mysterious and unknown. The only way to make life meaningful is to revolt against the meaninglessness. Camus develops the idea of the rebellion against meaninglessness in his book *The Rebel* and writes:

I proclaim that I believe in nothing and that everything is absurd, but I cannot doubt the validity of my own proclamation and I am compelled

to believe, at least in my own protest. The first and only datum that is furnished in me, within absurd experience is rebellion. (16)

Rebellion is a philosophical process and process and universal. Man bears the full responsibility of his destiny in the universe. Man is alone in the world and can choose and create his own values. The tragedy of modern man is not due to the absurdity of feeling of meaninglessness but with the awareness of oncoming death.

Thus, Camus says that when human being becomes aware of the absurdity and futility of his living, he is filled with anxiety and hopelessness. This awareness doesn't lead us to death but brings light by consciousness and also leads us to freedom'. So, in Camus's opinion, to revolt is to exist. Sisyphus revolted the absurdity of the situation, so he existed.

III. Textual Analysis

In Updike's novel, *Rabbit Run* (1960), Harry Rabbit Angstrom, the protagonist of the novel, is a 26 years old former high school basketball star, who finds himself trapped in a marriage that is on the rocks, with a young son and the job he bathes i.e. demonstrating a kitchen gadget, called the magi peeler. Coming home from work one day, Harry steps to play basketball with some neighborhood kids and revels in his ability to tool on them, until he stands sucking wind. When he gets home, his pregnant wife is drunk and he goes out to get their son from his mom's house, but ends up driving to the West Virginia instead. Stopping at a roadside café and examining the clientele, he wonders and tries to realize whether he is in or outside America.

He decides to bail out, on his family, but wants to get some advice from his high school basketball coach, who proceeds to set him up with a semi-pro whore. Rabbit moves in with her and when he sneaks home to get some of his clothes, he is corralled by the family minister, who asks him, one of the great questions of the Age of Divorce.

Harry, of Course, is unable to answer the question, but he agrees to meet with the minister again and they become golf partners. Meanwhile, Harry takes a job of a gardener and lives with his trollop. But when his wife gives birth to a daughter, he moves back home leaving the new pregnant other woman behind and takes a job at his father-in-law's used car a lot.

When one night Harry decides that he must have sex, his wife spurns him and Harry takes off again. He knows he should go home but "something held him back- the feeling that somewhere there was something better for him than listening to babies cry and cheating people in used car lots. Meanwhile, as Harry wanders about his wife

proceeds to get drunk and while trying to give the baby a bath, accidentally drowns. At the funeral, Harry turns to his wife and says “don’t look at me, I didn’t kill her”(234) then runs away. He goes to his other woman and tells her, She has to have the baby, but hardly meets with a friendly, reception. He goes out for some groceries and just starts running.

In the initial part of the novel, Updike describes about the protagonist’s (Rabbit’s) situation. The situation of rabbit is alienated. He does not like the materialistic happiness. So, he does not identify the things in his house, Updike explains;

Rabbit pauses in the sunless vestibule, panting. Overhead, a day time bulb burns dustily. Three tin mailboxes hang empty above a brown radiator. His downstairs neighbour’s door across the hall is shut like a hurt face. There is that smell which is always the same but that he can never identify; sometimes it seems cabbage cooking, sometimes the furnace’s rusty breath, sometimes something soft decaying in home, the top floor. (8)

The above lines describe the effect of alienation upon him from the phenomenon world. He does not identify the smell but he is curious to know the effect of lights. So we come to know that he is in process of identifying himself in the existing world. Another character Jimmie says something to him. He describes;

Know thyself, a wise old Greek once said. Know thyself. Now what does this mean, boys and girls? It means, be what you are. Don’t try to be sally or Johnny or Fred next door; be yourself. God doesn’t want a tree to be a waterfall, or a flower to be a stone. God gives to each one of us a special talent. Janice and Rabbit become unnaturally still; both

are Christians. God's name makes them feel guilty. "God wants some of us to become scientists, some of us to become artists, some of us to become firemen and doctors and trapeze artists. And he gives to each of us the special talents to become these things, provided we work to develop them. We must work, boys and girls. So, know Thyself. Learn to understand your talents, and then work to develop them. That's the way to be happy." (10)

The above lines describe that the protagonist Harry Angstrom is in the process of becoming. So, he has been advised to know himself. Without knowing himself, he can't realize his being to exist in the phenomenal world. He is going to be alienated from the phenomenal world. "Rabbit freezes, standing looking at his faint yellow shadow on the white door that leads to the hall, and senses he is in a trap. It seems certain. He goes out"(14). He is alienating from this phenomenal world because he wants to realize his wholeness.

Angstrom tries to figure out and establish himself in sports, in the beginning. He was ex-high school basketball star who had performed very well in the basket ball team of B division league and had become a popular player. When he married Janice, his life changed and the problems started. He starts struggling with his daily earnings. Now the material world that he is in is contrasted with the material world Angstrom was in his glorious days. "I once did something right. I played first rate basket ball. I really did" (80).

The modern/suburban life faced by Angstrom is quite different from what he has expected. To support him and his family, he does the job of demonstrating kitchen gadgets-magi peeler.

"Remember how in Sunday school they'd tell you everybody God made was good at something? well, that was my thing, cooking. I thought, Jesus, now I'll really be a great cook."

"Well aren't you?"

"I don't know. All I do is eat out."

"Well, stop it."

"It's how you meet guys," She says, and his really stops him. It frightens him to think of her this way. It makes her seem, in terms of love, so vast. (65)

In those above lines, the protagonist feels himself as creator same like Jesus. He works in kitchen gadgets to cook something that is also a kind of creation. So he is trying to show his existence as the existence of God in this phenomenal world. The research explores the journey of Rabbit from spaces to escaping; the quest for meaning of life. His journey starts from the space, the material world where he is living in. His material world is the world of suburban American life, where the main character, Harry Rabbit Angstrom a former high school basketball player, the representative of suburban life struggling to make sense of his restrictive adult life in the suburbs.

He grips one white beam, warmed by the sun that now is sinking away from the zenith, and looks straight down, into the exploding heads of trees. A frightening view, remembered from the boyhood, when he used to wonder if you jumped would you die or be cushioned on those green heads as on the clouds of a dream? In the lower part of his vision the stone walled cliff rises to his feet foreshortened to the narrowness

of a knife; in the upper part the hillside slopes down, faint paths revealed and random clearings and the steps they have climbed. (98)

The protagonist in those lines comes to realize his being. He is searching his identity. He is frightening from the views, which he remembers from his boyhood.

He used to come to Connecticut and have dreadful arguments with my father. My grand father was the Bishop of providence, and had kept his church from going under to the Unitarians by becoming almost Unitarian himself. He used to call himself a Darwinian Deist. My father, in reaction I suppose, became very orthodox; almost Anglo-Catholic. He loved Belloc and Chesterton. In fact he used to read to us those poems you heard my wife objecting to. (109)

The protagonist of this novel remembers the condition of his grand father because he wants to know his identity throughout his life. His grand father was the bishop of the providence and he used call himself a Darwinian Deist. It means being a bishop, he believes in evolutionary theory because he had to identity himself in that phenomenal world for his existence.

The second part of the novel opens with the sentence, sun and moon, sun and moon, time goes" (117). These images reappear in Rabbit's dream at the end of the novel; the sun eclipses the moon in a symbolic enactment of death. Rabbit fails to extract any kind of lesson about the passing of time and mortality; when he wakes, he realizes that he has no secret to impart to the world.

Rabbit has waited all spring for this Crowning. The bushes puzzled him, they were so big, almost trees, some twice his height, and there seemed so many. They were planted all along the edges of the towering droop-limbed hemlocks that sheltered the place, and in the

acres sheltered there were dozens of great rectangular clumps like loaves of porous green bread. The bushes were evergreen, with their zigzag branches and long oval leaves fingering in every direction they seemed to belong to a different climate, to a different land, whose gravity pulled softer than this one. (118)

In these lines, the protagonist (the rabbit) is confused because of the height of the trees. Almost all the trees were so big, some trees were two times bigger than his height and there were so many trees like these. He wants his exist like the same but he can't find it like that. He is in problem of his existence. He can't existence in the artificial phenomenal world. He is in trap of his existence. His work of demonstrating kitchen gadget the magi peeler is the idea of capitalistic class where they are exploiting the proletariat people; for the sake of facility. He tries to learn more about the magi peeler to do with well of and to cope up with the modern materials. "Rabbit watches the big mouse keteer on the television attentively; he respects him. He expects to learn something from him helpful in his own life of work"----- (10). When he returns home he finds his wife drunk alcohol, and watch television is the symbol of luxury where people have become the slave to luxurious life. The struggle of maintaining family by Angstrom is the struggle against exploiting of poor people by the capitalistic one. So he is in problem to manage his family. On the one hand he is exploited by his owner, on the other hand, he has to manage his family at any cost. This is the problem of his existence. He couldn't be managed himself neither he could manage his family. So he is in a great problem of existence. When Angstrom fails to reconcile with the jobs of demonstrating Magi peeler, the kitchen gadgets and with his alcoholic and the smoker, the pregnant wife, he seeks the help of Tothereto, his basketball coach, but, Tothereto fails to transcend him, rather he sinks within the

relationship of Ruth, the part-time harlot, who also became pregnant like Janice, his first wife. Tothereto, here stands for existential mode, who dominates the common people for getting victory.

Reverend Eccles more or less has the same effect on Rabbit, although he at least tries to help Rabbit to solve his problems rather than transplanting him into an entirely new situation in which he must face an entirely new series of obstacles. "You never know what Eccles was really meaning"(133), we are told, once again via free indirect discourse from Rabbit's point of view, "You had to take what you wanted to" (134). Eccles like, Tothereto is characterized via Rabbit's perception of him, but to less degree. Reverend Eccles, being a Christ figure, fails to transcend Rabbit, which shows that there is the decaying of spiritual belief. Eccles is characterized not only by the way Rabbit contrast him with Totherto, and thus he is further characterized in the way his opposition to Tothereto's impulsiveness fuels Rabbit to held some of Eccles' warning, so that Tothereto and his world of which Ruth is a part, of will continue to have an effect on Rabbits life. Once again, so that the process of healing is complete. Two men in possession of differing ideologies help to shape one man in search of his own ideology and, as a result, the both effects are affected by the selective elements that he takes from their respective characters in order to forge the personality of character that is altogether his own.

The next world of rabbit Angstrom deals with the world of mind, where he is in dilemma. In his world, he analyses the past glorious days and the present traumatic feeling that he is strongly for. He was hero, where everybody raised hand for him, he was popular then, the basketball star. His life was the life of prosperity, no responsibility of holding family, no hardworking, could enjoy a lot according to his wish. The present situation that he is facing is totally different, demonstrating the

kitchen gadgets, selling of used cars, working in Garden are the representation of law existential profile, where he has to fight day and night for supporting his life. His pregnant alcoholic wife who also drinks a lot, watching television, taking cigar is intolerable for him. Now he feels that he is already bugged down in the net of society, the society of faithlessness. So his existence is in problem. He is in a crisis of his existence. In fact, he is alienated from this phenomenal world.

"I'll tell you," he says, "when I ran from Janice I made an interesting discovery". The tears bubble over her lids and the salty taste of the pool-water is sealed into her mouth. "If you have the guts to be yourself," he says, "other people'll pay your price." (129)

The protagonist is alienated from the phenomenal world. Updike describes that Rabbit ran from Janice. When he ran from Janice, he finds it as an interesting discovery. It shows his existential problem. He ran away from his family that is from his wife. He can't exist with his wife. His running away from his wife, Janice is also a kind of his alienation. He is to be established with the high existential quality but he is in problem.

He rolls on his stomach and spins in the grass, revolved by his own incoherent kicking. Eccles' heart seems to twist with the child's body; he knows so well the propulsive power of a wrong, the way the mind batters against it and each futile blow sucks the air emptier until it seems the whole frame of blood and bone must burst in a universe that can be such a vacuum. (131)

The protagonist himself being alienated realizing the wholeness of life. He comes in the Sisyphusian concept of futility. Here, the protagonist performs the futile acts because he realizes that life itself is futile. So he perfectly realizes his being in

wholeness. His being can be found only in the wholeness of his futile life. So he finds himself his being as futile one.

There exists a sense in which all Christians must have conversation with the devil, must learn his ways, must hear his voice. The tradition behind this legend is very ancient, was passed from mouth to mouth among the early Christians. Its significance, its greater meaning, Eccles takes to be this: suffering, deprivation, barrenness, warship, lack are all an indispensable part of the education, the initiation, as it were, of any of those who would follow Jesus Christ. Eccles wrestles in the pulpit with the squeak in his voice. His eyebrows jiggle as if on fishhooks. It is an unpleasant and strained performance, contorted, somehow; he drives his car with an easier piety. In his robes he seems a sinister man-woman. Harry has no taste for the dark, tangled, visceral aspect of Christianity, the going through quality of it, the passage into death and suffering that redeems and inverts these things, like an umbrella blowing inside out. He lacks the mindful will to walk the straight line of a paradox. His eyes turn toward the light however it changes his retinas. (203)

In these lines too, Updike describes the frustrated and meaningless life of Harry Angstrom, the protagonist of the novel. He is frustrated from his life as well as from his family too. According to Updike, the protagonist does not have the mindful will to walk the straight line of a paradox. His eyes turn toward the light however the light catches his retinas. The activities of his wife make him so frustrated that he considers himself as trapped in unhappy marriage. His glorious past days are over. Now he is a young married father, trapped in the suburban 60's, unhappy with a

cluttered house, drunken wife, and a son who will never be the athlete he was, "will this basketball star find a way to make his life better, or will he run like a rabbit?" (210) "The title says it all and Harry Angstrom does indeed run whenever things don't go his way. Now the only way he sees in front of him is to escape from the net of society. But the act of escaping is only free from burden, fleeing from responsibility, is it cowardly action?"

Siddhartha Gautam also did the same action, abandoned his house, wife and son, and was he coward too? The selfish nature of human beings leads us to live a very miserable life. In this novel too updike tries to show the miserable and alienated life of Harry Angstrom, the protagonist of the novel. It is because of his nature, he is being alienated and in a miserable condition and so is his existence.

The revolution and leaving home made by Rabbit Angstrom is the revolution against the wasteland into which he is born. When Rabbit Angstrom is rejected by his family and his wife, he runs away from his home because of his inner urge that is dedicated to something that he wants to find it. Rabbit breaks away from the hypnotic mediocrity of life long enough to realize its meaninglessness. As he is a questing man and because of his individualistic urge to seek what he wants, he is set aside from the world he lives in. His quest is not specifically defined, but may be defined as a force or the "angst" which is also hinted by his surname of Angstrom. It is the force, which makes him strike for the same perfection and deftness in skill that he had been known as a star basketball player. By running, Rabbit comes as close as possible to the sanctity of ultimate truth. His parent and the minister Eccles try to drag him back but he runs. "He is a beginning, not an end-----" (Charles Thomas Samuels: John updike, 42)

There are certain things, which every human being must come to term with, as they play a vital role in his existence. To deny their full seriousness is to deny life itself. The omnipresence of sex, religion and death is a striking feature of updike's fiction. In their quest for existence, updike's Characters encounter there mysteries to see if they can get an insight into existence.

Updike has sung the praises of heterosexual love. He has described the physical act with a rapturous and voluptuous language. In fact his explicit descriptions of the sexual act and his use of the slang dirty words have drawn a great deal of criticism and comments. Here, we must remember that sexuality and obscenity are different things although they deal in the same areas of human existence. Updike does not ignore the fact that obscenity often disguises itself as sexual frankness. The moral dimension is consistently emphasized using the direct approach; updike simply records and does not moralize. Updike has recorded how American society thinks, speaks and acts in relation to sex in present days. Sex is both central to man's existence and is one of the better things of life. Still even a good thing in a widely perverted, fallen world may appear as absence. Due to the achievement of sexual revolution, updike has taken liberty to speak about all aspects of sexuality without any restriction. Also, rather than give his own views, he allows his readers draw their own conclusion from the scenes he has described sexuality and obscenity function in the novel as vehicles of existence.

In the present novel, Rabbit Angstrom tries to seek transcendence through a woman's body. He convinces us that love is what he seeks, and that love infuses his sexuality with Ruth, the prostitute he joins after abandoning his wife, and it is her heart he wants to grind into his own, to comfort her completely. As he embraces Ruth, he cries in a silent exclamation "it is not her crotch he wants, not the machine, but

her" (35). The key symbol in Rabbit Run is word "hole". As a youth, Rabbit was a star basketball player, and knew the basketball game itself has a sexual significance. The ball had to be thrown into "the perfect hole" with "its pretty skirt of net" (36). As Rabbit is too old for basket ball games, it is now replaced with successful sexual games which provide his sole links with the time when he felt much bigger. His name Rabbit itself suggest both speed and sex. Still his search for a home in sexuality is frustrated because he wants the hole without the accompanying net. His research for perfection leads only to alienation.

In Rabbit Run, it is depicted that the man who lusts after the flesh cannot find an end to his desires. Human hardness of heart tries to turn away from the binding powers, which are the operations of this grace. The external power tries to bind him like a net. The book emphasizes that man is victimized by life itself, and it remains for him to seek salvation alone. Rabbit is alone when faced with liveliness and lack of values of the modern world, he can do three things. He can seek an escape through sensualism, he can attempt to find reconciliation with his fellows through some forms of humanism or he can break away from all conventional ethics. This does not mean that he lacks faith. Rabbit Angstrom does demand confirmation of a voice which calls to man and asks him to make life meaningful.

Rabbit Angstrom in Rabbit Run symbolizes both life and death. Whenever he goes, he tries to seek transcendence through women's body. Both his wife Janice and mistress Ruth are pregnant. He represents life and death as well. His baby daughter who is born dies after some weeks due to accident they blame eventually comes to Rabbit. Similarly, Ruth undergoes an abortion as Rabbit is not going to marry her. At the funeral of his daughter, Rabbit is overwhelmed by the enormity of justice being done to him and says that it was Janice's fault that the baby died. He runs from there

and tries to seek consolation from Ruth; Ruth too rejects him saying that he is Mr. Death himself. Ruth's world is exact for after the baby's death, he sees a dream in which he blots out the sun, lovely "life eclipsed by lovely death." In this way, Rabbit Angstrom has been alienated from his family. So he is in a kind of existential problem. He neither can exist with his wife Janice nor with his mistress Ruth. So his whole life is alienated and so is his existence too.

During this stolen doze he has a vivid dream. He is alone on a large sporting field, or vacant lot, littered with small pebbles. In the sky two perfect discs, identical in size but the one a dense white and the other slightly transparent, move toward each other slowly; the pale one is directly above the dense one. At the moment they touch he feels frightened and a voice like over a loudspeaker at a track meet announces, "The cowslip swallows up the elder."he realizes he must go forth from this field and found a new religion. There is a feeling of the discs, and the echo of the voice, bending over him importunately, and he opens his eyes. Janice stands by the bed in a brown skirt and a pink sleeveless blouse. (242)

The protagonist of the novel Rabbit Angstrom is in dilemma. He is in a fragmented condition because he wants to exist. Later he realizes that was a dream that he has nothing to tell the world because the world itself is nothing for him. So he realizes nothingness or futility of life.

At the end of the novel, the writer conveys the message through the protagonist that he is running from the phenomenon world to the ideal world to realize his wholeness of life. The writer regards:

He wants to travel to the next path of snow. Although this block of brick three-stones is just like the one he lift, something in it makes him happy; the steps and window sills seem to twitch and shift in the corner at his eye, alive. This illusion trips him. His hands lift at their own and he feels the wind on his ears even before, his heels hitting heavily on the pavement at first but with an effortless gathering out of a kind of sweet panic growing lighter and quicker and quieter, he runs. Ah: runs. Runs. (264)

The novel *Rabbit Run* opens on the image of a boy playing basketball. Rabbit Angstrom, 26 years old, is wearing a Business suit. He joins in game and becomes a high school basketball star again, feeling "liberated from long gloom" (6). The confrontation of Rabbit evokes the main theme of the novel. On the other hand, Rabbit's alienation is more pathetic because first he was basketball star and was so popular. Later when he gets married, he couldn't establish good relationship with his wife, Janice. Janice is involved in alcoholism. She takes cigar too. Her only one job is to sit in the room and to watch television. But Rabbit has to labour hard to fulfill the needs of his family especially his wife. So he becomes frustrated of his life. Then he comes to the contact with Ruth, a prostitute, through Tothero, his basketball coach. But there too, he fails to establish good relationship with Ruth. So he becomes alienated from his family, his own wife and his mistress too.

He is alienated from his society and home to exist in the real world. At last, he runs because he realizes that the world itself is futile and he is also in futile process. So he realizes his own being in the whole being. That's why, there is existential crisis in the novel.

IV. Conclusion

John Updike's novel *Rabbit Run* presents human life in crisis. This crisis creates alienation which leads Harry Angstrom, the protagonist of the novel towards hopelessness because the world is absurd and it provides us with no reason and redemption. Since the world is absurd, all the attempts to alter the situation prove to be futile. According to Sartre human being makes himself what he is not because he is a 'being-for-itself'. He calls this a process of becoming taking the full responsibility of one's own life and actions. By living authentically only we can overcome the absurdity of the world. The world is anarchic towards human being and our life is ruled by pure chance. What happens in the future can't be predicated. We can't separate ourselves from the situation. Rather we should make a new relation to the situation by protesting the absurdity of the world. Like Sisyphus, we should keep on our struggle. No matter whatever the condition is. Then only we can live authentically. Rebellion is the only remedy of the absurdity. The meaning of life is life, not beyond it. There isn't God or predetermined values to save us from this absurdity. So we should choose to become and we are doomed to choose.

Harry Angstrom (Rabbit), the protagonist of the novel takes every responsibility of his undertakings and he revolts against the meaninglessness of his life. His greatness lies in his revolt against this absurdity into which he is thrown. He is what he has made of himself because his life and his undertakings are his own choices.

Harry Angstrom (Rabbit), a basketball player goes in the state of alienation who himself unable to establish relationship with his own wife, Janice and his son, Nelson and alienated which brings major cause for his existence and later he realizes

his whole existence and state of alienation. So Rabbit, existential hero of this novel, at last realizes his being in alienation.

The epigraph of *Rabbit Run* comes from Pascal and foreshadows the tensions in the novel. "The motions of Grace, the hardness of the heart; external circumstances." Eccles warned his wife to keep her heart open to grace before they got married; she, like Rabbit wrestles with the demands of external circumstances. In a feature for the "Independent on Sunday" Updike, a Christian, writes of his interest in the philosophies of Kierkegaard and Karl Barth. He acknowledges that he "took from Kierkegaard the idea that subjectivity too has its rightful claims" (843). Marshall Brown's study of the Rabbit tetralogy examines the Kierkegaardian strain of the Rabbit novel in detail. Several critics have used Kierkegaardian models to analyse Rabbit's sensibility: he is, potentially, a 'Knight of Faith', committed to his individual identity, rather than a 'Knight of Resignation'. Comparisons between Rabbit and Jesus resurface continually in the text. The first day that Rabbit wakes up with Ruth is Palm Sunday. Rabbit sees a picture of a carpenter in the Eccles's house and the protective glass "gives back to (him) the shadow of his own head" (124). Mrs. Smith tells Rabbit that he has kept her alive. Ruth observes that Eccles has filled Rabbit with delusions about his Christ-like sensibility. When Eccles dismisses Rabbit's quest as an excuse for vagrancy, Rabbit sees a parallel with Jesus. Eccles replies that Christ warned saints not to marry.

The state of alienation which the character undergoes in the novel *Rabbit Run* is because of his failure to make right choices which ultimately puts him in a state of confusion. Thus, he is compelled to realize his whole existence is in the state of alienation.

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