

# Communicative Ethics as the Aura of Post-Postmodern Morality: A Study of Amy M. Homes' *This Book Will Save Your Life* and Philip Roth's *Everyman*

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## Abstract

In the postmodern era, there seems to be a pervasive decline of concept of ethics and community, leading to the devaluation of human life and moral values. The recent ethical turn in literary climate, however, has acknowledged a new version of ethics whose very quiddity needs further research. The present study aims to not only elucidate the moral codes of post-postmodern ethics, but also depict the significant role of communicative ethics, considered by the authors to be the infrastructure of the contemporary moral issues. Ergo, this article explores the theories of Habermas in two contemporary American novels in 2006, Amy M. Homes' *This Book Will Save Your Life* and Philip Roth's *Everyman*, so as to shed light on the resemblance of post-postmodern moral frames and Habermasian communicative ethics. Although the characters are initially illustrated in a postmodern setting with social alienation, solipsism, and instrumental actions, they undergo an ethical turn that is a manifestation of social and individual interactions, thus developing a cure and self-creation in the lives of the fractured characters. Finally, protagonists turn to be a self-satisfied and integrous people by maintaining the criteria of communicative ethics comprising the priority of well-being of others, empathy, and situational morality.

## Keywords

Communicative Ethics; Ethical Turn; Post-postmodern Novel; Jürgen Habermas; Communicative Action; Instrumental Action.

## 1. Introduction

David Foster Wallace declared in his 1993 interview: "We'd probably most of us agree that these are dark times, and stupid ones, but do we need fiction that does nothing but dramatize how dark and stupid everything is?" (McCaffery 26). As he anticipated, since the turn of the millennium, literary climate has witnessed the emergence of a generation of authors who have illustrated not only "this dark world" but also the possibilities of

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the construction of a fragmented self in an ethical framework. Such studies that react to postmodern spirit illuminates the passing of postmodernism and emergence of what is recently called post-postmodernism. Although a precise definition of post-postmodernism has been not suggested yet, theorists all agree that it predicates revitalization of values, ethics, pragmatism and communication (Huber 24). The last three decades have witnessed the turning point of much of the literary criticism into an ethical one which has spurred contemporary moral philosophy avidly seek irrecusable principles to regulate human conduct.

In the present study, two contemporary American novels, *This Book* (2006) by Amy M. Homes and *Everyman* (2006) by Philip Roth, were opted to scrutinize the ethical values and dilemmas of action in individuals and their community. Homes is a concoctor who generates a new version of morality in her fiction by questioning the possibility of communication, meaning, love, and redemption in her narrative with overemphasis on putting her characters in a situation where they encounter the consequences of their deeds. In addition, Philip Roth, one of the American major novelists of the last forty years, is a prolific novelist with more than thirty books, who gets across the exploration of the meaning of to be an American, an author, a man, and a Jew, making his novels appropriate to delineate American morality.

## **2. Literature Review**

Homes' fiction, which is often read but rarely critically discussed, deserves critical study for its pragmatic solutions to the ethical problems of the contemporary era. Mary Holland examines how Homes' novel, *This Book*, presents solutions to the problem of postmodern world by "a shockingly retro appeal to the moral certitude and narrative closure of realism" (214). This article also shows that her work is a return to realism and concentration on the structure of fiction and narrative convictions (229). Walter Krin in his review shows that Homes' *This Book* represents Los Angeles black comedy through not only leveraging her hero's adventure in recovery but also repairing his breakdowns and catastrophes with his human touch. Frank Cottrell Boyce, however, criticizes the actions of Homes' hero (Richard Novak) in "How to be Good" for going to extremes in noticing the people around him and being inquisitive about nature of kindness. He believes that these acts of kindness are merely a new alternative way for spending money designed for the affluent. Gregory Crewdson, moreover, in his interview with Homes, places great emphasis on her literary style in her recent novels particularly *The End of Alice*, which amalgamates "the tension between surface comfort and psychologically terror", called as "psycho-topology" (40). Jennifer Kornreich, also, psychologically examines *The End of Alice* in her review and approves the way Homes avoids provoking the readers' feeling about pedophilia and tells them what to think at crucial junctures.

Roth, on the other hand, is highly associated with “experimental ethics”. A great number of his novels such as *Zuckerman Bound* series, *The Ghost Writer* (1979), *Zuckerman Unbound* (1981), and *The Anatomy Lesson* (1983) illustrate the ethical and aesthetic conflicts of a post-war American-Jewish author. He believes in the power of fiction that acts as an “expansion of moral consciousness”, so by confronting with the fictionalized lives of others, one is motivated to judge actions in a new way apart from everyday life, leading to a different experience (Powell 62). In other words, the world of fiction, without a doubt, removes the social limitation on feeling, thus enabling readers and writers to have an experience beyond the daily conduct. To illustrate this, Patrick Hayes remarks the significance of Roth’s attempt to clarify the relationship between art and power through “the nature of literary value that took shape in postwar America among diverse writers and intellectuals” (3) in her full-length study. Furthermore, Leland de la Durantaye specifies sex, Judaism, and the connection between fact and fiction as three intertwined themes in Roth’s novels. She asserts that Roth has faded the boundary between fiction and autobiography (304). Concerning the same discussion, David Gooblar argues, “Roth’s forays into non-fiction contain an extended investigation into the ethical ramifications of writing” (33).

Besides, a few studies make an effort to depict the relationship between Roth’s novels and ethics. Josh Powell acknowledges Roth’s ethics as “new ways of bringing judgment to bear on human action” in regards to “self-interrogation and justification” (62). Gurusurthy Neelakantan, an Indian scholar who has conducted some research on Roth’s novels particularly on Jewish identity, mythology and apocalypse, takes a similar approach. He surveys Roth as an ethical thinker who provides the reader with the mechanism of human psyche. (93) In addition, David Brauner studies a number of his novels in a book, in which he delineates morality and masculinity in *Sabbath’s Theater*. Only in the Afterword, he mentions the novel *Everyman*, comparing Roth’s novel and the medieval play (220). Finally, Elizabeth Reilly, in her thesis, attempts to correlate the recent rise of the moral novel with the attacks of 9/11 through the survey of three novels by McEwan, Messud, and Roth. She provides a definition of moral fiction as well as survey to its roots in recent history. Although the mentioned works address the notion of ethics in Roth’s works, they underline the issues of experimental ethics. The present study, however, is an attempt to cast light on the new version of morality based on communication and pragmatic ethics, asserted to be the matrix of twenty-first-century ethical turn in Roth’s *Everyman* and its comparison to Homes’ *This Book* to display the validity of communicative actions.

### 3. Theoretical Framework and Method

Jürgen Habermas, generally considered as a leading Frankfurt-school theorist, dedicates his theories to examine the advanced capitalistic societies and democracy, role of law and reason in social context and contemporary politics. His seminal books cover a wide range of subjects including theory of language, Marxist interpretations of the states and history, ethics, and the development of the theory of communicative action, in which humans are considered as fundamentally communicative beings. He is also a prominent thinker contributed to the revitalized interest in pragmatism concentrating on social theory and epistemology. Pragmatism is a philosophical tradition, which was announced around 1898 by Charles Sanders Peirce. Contemporary pragmatic philosophers such as Richard Rorty, Hilary Putnam, and Jürgen Habermas, sometimes considered as Neopragmatists, have been strongly influenced by that tradition. Pragmatism puts human needs and practical interest of human as the criterion for evaluation and judgment. (Lafollette 400). Thus, pragmatic ethics disapproves any universal principles or values, and instead adopts a form of relativism. It does make out that in different circumstances various actions may be proper and applicable.

For a comprehensive study of Habermas' theory of communicative action, it is essential to elaborate on some concepts introduced in his magnum opus *Theory of Communicative Action* (1981). Habermas' morality is mainly based on communication that surpasses the American utilitarian ethics (utilitarianism emphasizes usefulness of an action), and all contributors to ethical enquiry are considered "communicants". (Croitor 255). Upon his belief that moral philosophy depends on "indirect confirmation from a developmental psychology of moral consciousness" (*Moral Consciousness and Communicative Action* 119), he analyzes the fundamental philosophical assumptions of Kohlberg's theory in *Moral Consciousness and Communicative Action*. It forms a method based on presuppositions to guarantee the fairness of the process of judging, not for generating justified norms (122). He also puts emphasis on the context of "individual purposive actions", and "the structures of social interaction" in which "teleological actions" are sited. Accordingly, different types of action are classified to "instrumental action", nonsocial actions oriented to success, and "communicative action" which is social and not egocentric, thus leading to understanding. (*The Theory of Communicative Action*, vol.1:285).

Habermas, moreover, elaborates on the two phenomenological perspectives of "lifeworld" and "system" in relation to the communicative action and strategic social action respectively in order to analyze the communicative rationality. The term lifeworld is the everyday social world that people may experience together with different structural

components including culture, society, and personality, corresponding to the process of “cultural reproduction, social integration, and socialization”. It chiefly relates to “the totality of interpretations presupposed by the members as background knowledge” (*The Theory of Communicative Action*, vol.1: xxv-13). His definition also denotes to Husserl’s concept of lifeworld as the universal horizon and immediate conscious experience. For Husserl, a person’s individual world is directly experienced by the ego at the center (138). On the opposite, system, is derived from Talcott Parsons’ philosophical sociology of systems-theoretic terms and Luhmann’s radicalized systems theory (Weber 199), referring to the common patterns of instrumental action which serves the interest of institution and organizations. System is a predefined situation such as legal system and economy, dominated by instrumental rationality (not communicative rationality), which structures people’s life. Habermas believes the most significant social systems are those allotting capital and power to the society, though there is a delicate dependency between lifeworld and system in this way (“A Reply” 252). Nevertheless, system sometimes dominates or even colonizes lifeworld by established rules, which dislocate rationality of social agents to the extent that they cannot question the rules that govern them (Edgar and Sedgwick 91).

Habermas recapitulates the concepts of communicative action as subjects’ interactions in order to achieve understanding about a situation through agreement and coordination. Meanwhile, the notion of consensus is of the great importance. Phenomenologically speaking, for Habermas consensus is communicatively achieved based on reason. In addition, the well-being of associated members of a community who intersubjectively share the same lifeworld brings about solidarity (*Moral Consciousness 200*). He then dismisses the pessimism of Frankfurt-school theorists, and offers hopefulness through combining critical and positive philosophy. Agnes Heller in “Habermas and Marxism” elucidates, “[Habermas] confronts the world with the values inherent in it, which although distorted still imply the possibility of progress” (22). Besides, there is an underlying implication of hope in his theory of communicative action by proclaiming that dialectical interaction can solve the problem and raise social integration. Communicative action provides actors with the tools to attain cooperative objectives, irrespective of the cultural, social or economic alterations dividing them. He states that if actors are willing to communicate the solutions, problems will be solved by mutual negotiations. Consequently, this potentiality of change creates hope for human being to cooperate and progress in future.

Upon scrutinizing the nature of communicative problems, Habermas finds its roots in both one’s self and relations to others; therefore, the key concepts of Habermas’ “communicative theory” are explored in the selected contemporary American novels in this study. First, the study focuses on examination of “instrumental and communicative

action” and its subdivisions such as self-centered and exploitive actions in the novels, and then attempts to detect the traces of “system” and “lifeworld” in the lifestyle of characters. Meanwhile, the very mechanism of moral imagination, based on Habermasian definition, and its two pivotal items, “empathy and perspective taking” are studied. Then, it turns to possibility and formation of moral consciousness and the development of “communicative ethics”. It, eventually, discerns “consensus” as well as the possibility of “individual and social hope” among family, friends and people around.

#### **4.1. *This Book Will Save Your Life: Implications of Communicative Action, and Hope***

Homes begins the novel with describing fog and smog in Los Angeles portraying a setting where a person may be easily lost, confused and isolated (4). Then everything is described as a fixed daily schedule that repeats every day and the term “usually” is reiterating five times to overemphasize this mechanical lifestyle. Meanwhile, Richard Novak, the protagonist, feels lonely: “After years of making sure that he is left alone, he is suddenly afraid to be alone, afraid not to hear, not to feel, not to notice” (5), then he thinks about a pain spreading from one part of his body to another. Subsequently, lying on a bed at the hospital, he thinks of his ex-wife, their courtship and the birth of their son. Richard, indeed, is a rich divorcé who has driven into a life of restfulness, isolation, and asexuality. In the hospital, “He lay there realizing how thoroughly he’d removed himself from the world or obligations, how stupidly independent he’d become: he needed no one, knew no one, was not a part of anyone’s life. He’d so thoroughly removed himself from the world of dependencies and obligations, he wasn’t sure he still existed” (16).

This isolation is the dire consequence of his instrumental actions towards people. As Habermas explains, instrumental action is “atomistic” and “isolated” since instrumental actors regard others as “either resources to be exploited in or constraints on the pursuit of their own plans” (Johnson 190). Richard continues the way of a prosperous businessperson through his life, as a child, he was merely obsessed with the world of business; he vaguely remembers carrying around a red metal cash box like it was his friend. As a peddler, he went up and down the street, door to door and managed to sell seeds to people who did not have gardens; he also made his father take him to the bank to open his own account (123). He counted money by making a pile of pennies, putting them in order and wrote down how much. His actions during his childhood were dedicated to his financial goals without interactions with other children and participating in their games, he preferred counting his coins rather than playing with marbles or cars with his brother or other playmates. Richard, additionally, resumes his instrumental actions in his adulthood toward his family. A salient illustration could be traced in the case of his son, Ben, who has been brought up by her mother, and spent a difficult time. He was so sick that went to rehab for a month when he was fourteen for family therapy

and Richard has not known about it (250). During the novel, when Ben visits Richard, complains about his childhood, passed with the lack of love and companionship of a father. Ben objects, “you never took me anywhere, never met my friends, never taught me how to be a guy, how to fix things” (258); “[...] to shave without slitting my throat, never helped with homework, never took me to a game, a concert, a show” (259). Ben also directly blames him in the case of divorce: “DO YOU EVER think about how things might have been different, how my life might have been if you didn’t get divorced?” (321). His wife is so annoyed by his behavior that has admitted Ben does not have a father, and she was a single mother who used a sperm donor (250). Rules and instrumental actions of financial mechanism of powerful systems such as markets, which not only promote profit and power but lead people to maximize the money and to administer power in American society, have kept Richard occupied for all the past years. Having a life with a servant, nutritionist, and masseur, without family and friends advocates an extremely entangling system of instrumental actions.

What has to be said about Richard’s pain is that it illuminates a turning point in his conducts. He begins to quit the non-essential rules, which have colonized his private daily life. For instance, feeling an acute pain in his body, he lies on the sofa, but it is his first time to behave differently, “something he’d never done before; it was against the *rules-the private, personal rules*” (emphasis added) (6). The second transformation happens when he goes to a donut shop on his way home the same night. Despite the fact that he has never eaten donuts, he orders the best donut (30). In addition, a more significant revolution takes place in Richard’s social sphere. Without intending to, he spills the story of his sudden intense pain to Anhil, donut shop owner, and it is the beginning of an intimate friendship, inspiring him to change his morality. Having arrived home, Richard violates another of his rules and drops on his bed (80). Inspired by friendly conversation with the owner of the donut shop, Richard calls his son, his brother, and then his astonished parents. He commences reconstructing his relationships, though he recognizes the difficulties of the path after his alarming encounters with interrogations of long-ago abandoned family members. In other words, Richard begins to develop his moral imagination, which is founded on interactions with others according to Habermasian communicative ethics. He gives priority to perspectives, feelings, thoughts and intentions of others as much as possible. As Habermas states, “we can put ourselves into another person’s consciousness and disengage interpretations of what he says from our hermeneutic situation as interpreters” (*Moral Consciousness* 28). Accordingly, the very first manifestation of moral imagination is the statement by which Richard realizes he could help other people by his wealth: “It’s not like I’m a loser. I did something. I made money. I made enough money to make a lot of people happy” (102). It is, indeed, the main purpose of this novel, a book about learning to save one’s life by acknowledging

and saving the lives of others. Richard aids Anhil financially to develop his shop and economic condition of his extended family. Besides, he purchases his servant a hip operation; and when he accidentally comes through Cynthia, an exhausted and unappreciated homemaker, weeping in the product department of a supermarket, helps her to survive. Richard befriends her, supports her by providing confidence and financial resource to enter a rehab, acquire a job, separate from her unthankful husband and sons, finally to rebuild relationships with her family, and yet establish herself with individual and social dignity. He also saves a girl taken hostage out of the trunk of a car. After the incident, many people call and appreciate his heroic action among whom his ex-wife calls to warn him that there is another Richard Novak in the town since she could not believe that he has done such actions: "I've gotten a dozen calls today from people who seem to think you've been doing things – rescuing animals, saving kidnapped women... I tried to tell them it couldn't be you, you're not the kind of person who does things like that, but I thought you should know, there's another Richard Novak out there on the loose. Be careful" (186). Furthermore, on a TV news, there is an investigation on his identity whether he is "a modern-day superhero, anonymously fighting crime, or is he just an old-fashioned Good Samaritan?" (187). A person who has been worried about the extra fare of the taxi while buying donuts at the beginning the novel, buys two cars, one for his son and the other for Cynthia. Upon his surprise, his son searches for the reason, "How do you buy a car for someone who is not your girlfriend?" and Richard's distinctive and persuasive response is the core of the novel's ethics: "You do for others what you can't do for yourself" (252).

Not only does he help other people, but also he protects animals. He saves a horse from a sinkhole. All the people gathering including the guards wonder if it is his daughter's horse, Richard says, "we're neighbors, we're all neighbors"; it is surprising for them to witness how a man endeavors to save a stranger's horse without any expectations or benefits. Once he was walking down the beach towards Santa Monica, a dog drops a ball at his feet. Richard gives him some leftovers and a bowl of water and they make friendship. Richard's communicative action both intensifies his social interaction with others, and makes him pursuing his goals. He attempts to succeed in a circumstance within which he tracks his individual plans in one or another direct action on the social or individual world. As Abdolreza Goudarzi and Morteza Lak proves in "Trilogy of Identity Transformation" (2021), "all alienated and limited individuals can have the role of active agents, communicators, and producers instead of being passive watchers, readers, and one-way communicators organized by the structures of the past eras"(143). The identical idea may well be exemplified in the group in which Richard, Nic, Cynthia, Anhil and his wife gather in order to found a donut shop.



Richard's practices of communicative actions result in family reunion. The first epitome of consensus happens when Richard creates a deep bond with his estranged son who has just started a road trip on a van with his cousin after being graduated from high school. He has not had any actual contact since he was a small boy. Both of them attempt to fulfil their father-son roles with going to Disneyland, playing laser tag, and barbecuing at the beach. Richard feels the real sense of being a parent by making breakfast, shopping groceries, cleaning up his vomit, and finally supporting him in the time of assault in the elevator on his job interview appointment: "Something has happened between them- a bond. Now Richard really is the father and Ben the son" (305). A further illustration is family feast in a hotel room. The moment is so rich in affection that "the room is filled with a warm, buttery glow" (320). The author accurately highlights in her narrative, "although there is a great and likely unbridgeable divide between the three of them, there is also a sense they are together [...] and though it might not be the fullness that one wants, and though it might not be enough, it is something, it is more than nothing" (321). In other words, it is the notion of meliorism, which is of the great importance in post-postmodern ethics. It is so enriching that Ben utters that "if this was the end of the world, right now, it would be OK with me" (321). It points out the fact that he gains absolute satisfaction and consensus with his family and world.

Regarding Johnson's conclusion in "Habermas on Strategic and Communicative Action" (1997), people can adjust their actions either to understanding or to success; "The resulting interactions will be coordinated by quite distinct 'mechanisms'- by 'consent' in the case of communicative action" (185). In the last part of the novel, Richard is portrayed alone in trouble, this time in the midst of flood waves, but he is not disappointed, nor does he feel lonely (333). Knowing how to communicate with the sea, dogs, neighbors, and even his family, he is hopeful and full of life and integrity. As a helicopter is coming to save him, he calls his son and his ex-wife while he is floating in the middle of the ocean. His last optimistic words "fantastic, never better" reveals how he is in agreement with all the phenomena in the world, and attempt to restore his relationship with his loved ones. As Fatemeh Pourjafari and Leila Baradaran Jamili advocate in "Ethical Telling and the Aesthetic Told" (2020), such characters are explorers "who redefine and rearticulate themselves constantly through an ethically dynamic process. They are in fact, aware that human identity is dialogical; and selfhood is defined only in the frames of reciprocal relations with others" (37). Last section is a redemptive passage showing that upon embedding communicative action and moral imagination, Richard has transformed the image that he has always envisioned in his mind: he does the good deeds to others that even he cannot do for himself. He also intensifies his imagination by telling Ben, "I'll always be here, even when you can't see me, I'm still here" (334).

#### 4.2. Everyman: Initiation of Communicative Ethics after September 11 Attacks

It is a brief funerary depiction of an anonymous man preoccupied with bodily decay. About one third of the novel is from 1942 to 2000, the record of the protagonist's illnesses and surgeries reinforcing the concept of death. This philandering male protagonist marries three times and is a successful man in commercial business until he retires. The story opens with the words of few attendants of Everyman's burial ceremony as they fling dirt on the coffin. The title of the book alludes to the medieval play *Everyman*, sharing the sheer focus on morality with this novel. However, the moral considerations beneath are not similar then.

Roth's *Everyman* is a prosperous commercial artist who knows himself as "reasonable and kindly, an amicable, moderate, industrious man" (24). Everyone who knows him admits his cordiality, except his wife and two boys, Randy and Lonny, middle-aged men from his unsettled first marriage whose "household he'd left and who, understandably, could not equate reasonableness and kindness with his finally giving up on a failed marriage" (24). His brother and his two sons describe him as an adulterer. Indeed, the initial epitome of his instrumental action could be traced in his behavior toward women whose accompany gives him the sense of immortality. He needs women as a sustaining resource, providing both love when he is well, and care in the time of illness. Whenever he is in hospital, there should be a woman to inspire him to get better. The first one is his mother for his hernia operation: "He was awakened early the next morning for the operation, and there was his mother, already at the hospital and smiling at him from the foot of the bed" (21). In the next operation, there is his second wife, Phoebe, along with his parents standing beside the bed (26); in his bypass surgery, his third wife is not very helpful. However, the presence of a private nurse, Maureen Mrazek, whom he conducts a sustained affair unknown to his wife, is very promoting. In his last surgery, conversely, the empty chair besides his bed makes him recollect how each of the women has been expecting him to rise out of anesthetic. Moreover, his attitude toward death reveals his instrumental action. As death is an obstacle on his way to seek more bodily pleasure, he has defended himself with the quasi belief that death never comes: "I had thought – secretly I was certain – that life goes on and on" (114). The best thing to do is to try to stay alive, to avoid dangers, to stay healthy, to keep a fit diet, and to abandon Manhattan when the terrorists attacked the World Trade Center. In addition, his armor against death, which overly fortifies him, is love affairs. There is always a woman beside his bed at the hospital to revitalize him as mentioned in the previous paragraph.

His departure from Manhattan and the events of 9/11 are a spark to show him the sense of mortality leading a turning point in his moral life. He moves to the Starfish Beach retirement village ten weeks after the 9/11 attacks while he feels “a deep-rooted fondness for survival” (47). However, the disaster addressing the commencement of his weakness, drives him into exile rather than the pastoral retirement he imagined. Living in a condominium at the seashore inspires him to take actions that are more communicative. In solitude, he keeps thinking about death, so he decides to teach a painting class to make more friends and maybe find a partner. He starts a painting class for the amateur painters among the other pensioners; but when his most talented pupil, Millicent Kramer, commits suicide to put an end to her excessive pain of malformed spine, he terminates the class. Although painting for him is an exorcism, he is not able to distinguish what type of malignancy he has to be expelled from; he contemplates on if his long-time self-delusions or the fear of death should be exorcised (71). Then he decides to sell the condominium and move to New York close to her daughter’s apartment. He plans to buy a big place enough for all of them live together. He thinks of his daughter and desires to pay the household expenses in order to let her reduce her working hours. In this way, she would have more time to spend with her children. Once in his life, he starts to consider other’s happiness as well. He begins to feel responsibility in his life, the notion that is modified based on social-ethical principles, similar to what Croitor explicates in “Ethics of Responsibility” as a “synthesis between ethics and pragmatic-utilitarian” (253).

More importantly, not long before he dies, the protagonist of *Everyman* realizes how much he has destroyed of what was good in his life, and how he has become someone he does not want to be, but he still manages to forgive himself. What inspires him recollect all his mistakes and seek morality in his life is nothing except mortality, he knows himself close to death. He envisions “he had lived close to three quarters of a century, and the productive, active way of life was gone. He neither possessed the productive man’s male allure nor was capable of germinating the masculine joys” (108); and worst of all is that he has to manage everything alone” (107). He is left alone with no one soothing him in the deathbed. He abandoned all his three wives. Nancy, the daughter he has with Phoebe, is the only one who adores him, but she has taken her mother because of her stroke, so that the possibility of Nancy’s care for him is eliminated. His brother, Howie, is traveling in Tibet with his own family, and the jogger whom he approaches to seduce her, does not keep in touch anymore. As David Brauner points out, “Just as Everyman finds himself gradually forsaken by all his worldly allies - Fellowship, Cousin, Kindred, Goods, Strength, Discretion, Five-Wits and Beauty- and has to face death armed only with his Good-Deeds, Roth’s modern-day everyman finds himself increasingly

isolated as he approaches the end” (220). He regrets his misconduct to other people, particularly his second wife and his two sons. He feels this loneliness as an act of atonement for all his faults, accepts what cannot be changed, and thereby reduces frustration and pain. He strongly goes to visit the graveyard to ensure himself of the existence of death and investigates about the process of burial from a gravedigger.

Everyman’s reaction against death is largely similar to that of pragmatists as John Lachs in “Pragmatism and Death” elucidates, “The wholesome message of finitude is that we do not have all day, that time will run out, and that we just cannot do everything we want” (381). Meanwhile, “pragmatists will not yield without a fight, to test if there might not be a way to avoid checkmate. They know that we need two sorts of wisdom in leading a good life. The first enables us to invent ways to attain our ends; the second helps us recognize dead ends” (381). First, he struggles to see if there is an escape, he assumes he could deny mortality through having affairs with different women and gaining the maximum bodily pleasure; being left alone makes him aware of the certainty of death, so he attempts to provide a way of assimilating the facts of death into meaningful lives. The premier suggestion of pragmatists toward death is conceptual task, referring to “the demand to develop forms of thinking to help us understand the complex relations between the process of living well and its termination” (382). Midst of ample conceptual resources about the end of life, Lachs introduces, “the most useful idea may well be that of the life cycle, depicting birth and death as natural termini of individual existence” (“Pragmatism and Death” 382). By visiting the cemetery and investigating about his parents’ flesh and bones, Everyman, indeed, endeavors to establish mortality as a natural circle of life for himself. By making it natural, he seeks to eliminate the degree of fear in his heart and embraces it in solitude. While rejecting any possibilities of Hereafter world, the very notion of recollecting his life and hearing the speeches of those who throw a clod of dirt into his grave, he offers a different viewpoint that implicitly moves beneath the novel. The last lines of the novel corroborating a permanent world and an infinite sense wandering all over the earth, is also another opposing scene against the explicit argument of Roth about the life after death: “He was no more, freed from being, entering into nowhere without even knowing it. Just as he’d feared from the start” (123). The novel’s nuance of morality is highly embedded with the sense of recognition, recovery, love, faithfulness and above all, moral quandaries. Eventually, as Tim Adams argues in “Forgive me, my sons, for I have sinned” published in April 2006 in *The Guardian*, “When the mourners have departed, Roth’s Everyman faces not his maker, but his readers, and makes his case for sympathy or absolution”, and it is the moral imagination of readers that determines his redemption and contentment.

## 5. Conclusion

The foremost concern of these works of fiction is communication, social relationships, assistance, and empathy, although these notions will not be attained by characters unless they gain moral consciousness and engage in proper conduct of community life. Researchers in the present study regard both Homes and Roth as the purveyors of pragmatic ethics since their novels explicate various situations in the process of judging other's conduct, in addition to providing new experiences, which will bring about a distinctive moral inquiry.

While all the instrumental actions of both protagonists, Richard and Everyman, toward other people have lead them to be isolated in both family and society, Richard revitalizes his moral life completely and Everyman renews his perspective toward death and his family, although for him, it is extremely late to revise his life based on his gained experience. Roth's protagonist, Everyman, confronts his death and all the flaws he has had in his life following the attacks of September 11 and his ensuing isolation. For him literally, and for all the Americans, this attack is a horrible experience, which obliges them to contemplate about death, past, and compensation. In his loneliness, he contemplates on mortality, thus recognizing the significance of family, union, integrity, and social interactions. By pragmatic consideration of means and goals as the consequences of one's action, it would be obvious that the actions leading to loneliness, disintegration and fear are not the proper alternatives in moral deliberation. Furthermore, the titles of both novels reveal a sensible truth about what might mean to be a human and to live with contentment. The anonymous protagonist of *Everyman* proves the possibility of generalization of such moral inquiry to everyone; similarly, *This Book* is of the pragmatic instruction of communicative ethics to direct a blissful life.

Likewise, certain novelists of the twenty- first century attempt to recommence the faith in the morality established by fiction. *This book* and *Everyman* are moral novels attempting to promote moral imagination based on helping people, being righteous and compassionate. Regardless of the religious beliefs of the authors, these novels do not intend to inquire traditional and religious issues; they rather establish applicable moral codes to revitalize pragmatic ethics among people so as to envision all the possibilities, and to consider other's situation, and feeling in their moral dilemmas. Such novels encourage renewing the values to bring about contentment, peace, and sanctuary for both individual and communal lives. Besides, these novels suggest the possibility of forgiveness and redemption even after the dark days of one's life such as experiencing the 9/11 by the virtue of communicative action and moral imagination. On the contrary to the postmodern narrative, which proposes no heal to the wounds of humanity, these novels furnish the fiction not only to rectify its characters, but also to offer a resolution to the readers' predicaments in the contemporary era.

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