Joseph Heller in his second novel *Something Happened* (1971) shows how an irrational institution can disrupt the psychological balance of an individual. The novel also throws light on how the institution can corrupt an individual and make him a puppet in its hands. Heller unlike his other novels which offer hope, presents this novel with a pessimistic message and a hero who has unheroic nature. The institutions he analyses and attacks in the novel are the institution of corporation and the spirit of competition in the corporation. The institution of corporation creates an irremediable emptiness and confusion in the life of the individual. The individuals fail to understand the process of life as the institution puts an immense stress on it. They take the help of culture, sophistication and false position to hide their inner suffering and fears. The novel is problematic with its extremely limited mode of narration and with the hero's unheroic nature and a pessimistic message. It begins in anxiety and ends in despair. Heller deals with the irremediable emptiness of modern life which the oppression by the institution of corporation creates. The institution of corporation puts a stress on the life-process, the meaning of which the individuals fail to understand and they take the help of culture, sophistication and false positions in the corporation to camouflage their inner fears and suffering. The way the combat group is the framework of the military bureaucracy in *CATCH-22*,
the corporation is the framework of the society in which the individual suffers in *Something Happened*. As in *CATCH-22*, here also the corporation makes people struggle and spend more energy for power and status than for the declared goals of winning the war and serving the customer. They grope for status in the dark labyrinths of a giant corporation. As the institution of military bureaucracy makes the officials engage themselves in power struggles instead of defeating the enemy, the corporation indulges its people in a struggle for a position and makes them jealous of each other. It is this jealousy and pure petty spite that makes Green obstruct Slocum from making his three minute speech at the company convention. The central principle of the corporation is 'Fear'- fear in every aspect of life, at world, at home and out on the town. Fear is seen as the necessary webbing of the corporate order. Fear becomes so much of the part of the day that people are sharply aware of fear as a set condition of every moment, and of human relationships, that when fear is absent they feel threatened and confused. The safety valve is a mockery in corporation as well as in individual's life. The company organisation charts show lines not of responsibility but of "envy, hope, fear, ambition, frustration, rivalry, hatred and disappointment". The corporation makes people afraid of each other and this inherent fear fills them with mutual revulsion and makes them hate one another. The corporation makes the men selfish and force them to compete for position and promotions.
They are always suspicious of each other as they consider that one is conspiring against the other:

I scare Green, and Green scares White, and White scares Black, and Black scares Brown and Green, and Brown scares me and Green and Andy Kagle, and all of this is absolutely true, because Horace White really is afraid of conversation with Jack Green, and Johnny Brown, who bulldozes everyone around him with his strong shoulders, practical mind, and tough, outspoken mouth, is afraid of Lester Black, who protects him.

The fear of losing their jobs and positions makes them hypocritical towards one another. They avoid quarrelling with each other openly but wage battles sneakily behind each other's back. The corporation with its cultural imposition on human personality and on human talent, robs men of human essence and makes them wear masks and indulge in double talk. The corporation robs the people of even a little warmth and caring they feel for the other with the prospect and temptation of higher position. For example, Arthur Baron tempts and convinces Bob Slocum that he is doing the right thing by replacing Andy Kagle:

"I like Andy Kagle."
"So do I."
"He's been very good to me."
"It isn't your fault. We'd move him out anyway. He'll probably be happier working for you on special projects. Will you think about it?"
"Of course."
The people in corporation are always on trial, always on the verge of failure either collectively or individually. Even the most secure and self-assured of them strain and struggle as they live and work under pressure that is extraordinary with their elation of success which is always brief. So there is crisis and alarm even in their triumphs. Each one of them can name atleast one superior in the company whom he feels has a grudge against him and is determined to wreck his career. The people are so immersed with their power struggles and petty positions in the corporation that they have neither time nor the spirit to think about their self-respect, dignity and freedom.

The corporation flourishes and grows every year but the pressure and the strain it imposes on the people who help it grow, make them either commit suicide or go crazy and nervous breakdown is a common occurrence. We average three suicides a year... Nervous breakdowns are more difficult to keep track of than suicides because they are harder to recognize and easier to hush up. But nervous breakdowns do occur regularly in all age and occupational groups and among all kinds of people3.

The corporate man through out his life works hard for the benefit and development of the corporation and collapses in the end, while the company like M & M enterprises in Catch-22 profits and grows more. The company, when it finds people inefficient or

3. ibid., p. 27.
not up to its standards, it does not even fire them and give them a chance to find something else to do, instead, it traps them with insignificant positions and make them rot there till they die

People in the company are almost never fired; if they grow inadequate or obsolete ahead of schedule, they are encouraged to retire early or are eased aside in hollow, insignificant, newly created positions with fake functions and no authority, where they are sheepish and unhappy for as long as they remain.

Even if they do not like the work they do in the company they still suffer under its subjugation. They are afraid of leaving the company and go as they come to feel that "there is no place left for me to go". The company's trapping the people in its web makes them inactive and they just pretend to be doing something and they are bored with their inaction for example, Slocum says

I am bored with my work very often now. Everything routine that comes in I pass along to somebody else. This makes my boredom worse. It's a real problem to decide whether it's more boring to do something boring than to pass along everything boring that comes into somebody else and then have nothing to do at all.

The corporation makes them shed all their higher ideals and force them to indulge in raising to petty positions, it robs them of their hope to attain freedom and integrity and makes them hate to accept any kind of challenges or responsibilities

4. ibid., p.48.
5. ibid., p.39.

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"I'm one of those many people, therefore, most whom are much older than I, who are without ambition already and I 've no hope". They 'goose-step in, goose step out and wander around for a pat on the head and promenade home till they all drop dead. As far as the corporation is concerned, it goes on itself. It does not need them, but it makes them need it. The only thing it is interested in is itself, its enrichment and its social distinction. It does not show any sympathy for the people who suffer mental disturbances, psychological trauma because of its victimization, instead it takes more ruthless action, Slocum fears that

(The company takes a strong view against psychotherapy for executives because it denotes unhappiness, and unhappiness is a disgraceful social disease for which there is no excuse or forgiveness... But unhappiness is fatal. If my daughter or son were to commit suicide, that would be overlooked, because children do things like that, and that's the way kids are. But if my wife were to jump to her death without a prior record of psychiatric disturbance, did it only because she was unhappy, my chances for further advancement would be over. I'd be ruined)7.

The corporation fills men with a sense of failure and forces them to remain always as its slaves. No matter whether they are efficient or inefficient, a sense of failure always tortures everyone as they are not sure what fate awaits them at the hands

6. ibid., p.40.
7. ibid., p.525-526.
of the corporation. Slocum's fear of the unexpected and sudden happenings shows the passive nature of the individual which dislikes any kind of action or hard work to be adopted inorder to achieve something. He fails to achieve his freedom as he lacks the fighting spirit. He allows himself cheated by everyone from a repair man to telephone companies, instead of complaining against them and bringing them to justice, he meekly accepts the humiliation and agony of discomfort and exploitation by the institution. The corporation, like the military institution in Catch-22, which uses one general against the other, in order to achieve its economic success, uses one person against the other and leaves them afraid, suspicious and worried. As the institution uses one individual against the other and makes him alone, the individual fails to understand the alienation and silence that surrounds him and he fails to have a check on the brutal oppression that weakens him to work for his freedom. The corporation crushes even the people who have confidence in themselves and faith in their principles and convictions. They become disasters and fall victims to the institution as they fail to devise hypocritic policies. For example, Holloway starts breaking down when he makes stress on truth, "("the point he missed is that it didn't matter whether it was true or not; what mattered was what people thought was true")" and an honest
8. ibid., P. 35.
person in the world of corporation is the one "who knows he is a liar". and Slocum sounds like General Peckem when he says that he is astonished by people in the company who do fall victims to their own (our own) propaganda. Those are so many now who actually believe that what we do is really important.

The corporation even decides and dictates the course of the personal life of the men through its favours and disfavours. It does not like to hire bachelors and neither it likes to keep the divorced and widowers and people who get divorced, or whose wives die, know they had better remarry or begin looking ahead towards a different job.

The corporation never minds its employees having immoral standards as long as they help it grow and in fact it tempts them to be immoral with its special allowances.

The company is in favor of getting laid if it is done with a dash or elan, humor, vulgarity, and skill, without emotion, with girls who are young and pretty or women who are older and foreign or glamorous in some other way, without too much noise and with at least some token gesture toward discretion, and without scandal, notoriety, or any of the other serious complications of romance.

The men like Slocum maintain sexual relations with as many

9. ibid., p. 36.
10. ibid., p. 34-35.
11. ibid., p. 33.
12. ibid., p. 71.
women as possible for the corporation gives credit to its employees on the basis of the degree of sexual ventures they enjoy. They use sex not as an end in itself, but as a means to rise professionally "This fiscal period, I'm flirting with Jane". The corporate spirit of success and competition victimizes innocent people through its heavy demands. The modern corporation victimizes the individual and oppresses the human personality. The dead weight of the institutions crushes the individual and makes him lose the vitality of his soul and brain in the routine of living and forces him live like a living corpse. Virtues like optimism, trust, openness are absent in the hypocritic corporate world as it is evident from Slocum's complementing Jane "She is cheerful, open, trusting, optimistic - and I don't meet many of those anymore".

As the names which Heller uses in Catch 22, Soldier-in-White and Soldier Who Saw Everything Twice show the utter unimportance and dehumanization of the individuals, the names he gives in Something Happened to the men of corporation, Jack Green, Horace White, Jhony Brown, Lester Black "there 're eleven Greens, eight Whites, four Browns and four Blacks" show the dehumanization and facelessness of the human beings. Bob Slocum is an exact example of what type of the characters the company transforms men into

a woefully lost figure with a profound emptiness, a sad, absurd, vicious,

13. ibid., p. 30.
And it is no wonder that Slocum represents the contemporary unhealthy system of the competition crushes the devient humane child, his boy who stands for individual honesty, happiness and freedom, whom he kills with his hugs and kisses. Snuffing out a child who represents man's future with his hope for integrity regained is a part of continuous symbolic action of life which is made mechanical and useless by the encroachment of institutions into man's personal life and freedom.

In his other three novels, Heller's protagonists though they are victimized, exploited and robbed of their freedom by the institutions, Heller's heroes rebel against them in order to achieve their freedom. But Bob Slocum, the narrator and Protagonist in this novel, not only fails to rebel against the institution of corporation in order to achieve his freedom, but on the other hand merges himself with the corporation. He becomes a sadistic figure and creates fear, insecurity and havoc in the lives of his members of the family. Slocum fails to achieve freedom from the institutional tyranny as he lacks potential freedom and misuses his freedom of choice. When he chooses a high position in the corporation and abandons his 'lost boy', he rejects the very life force of the individual that is freedom.

A fear of unknown 'something', closed doors, lack of certainty, lack of self-realisation, lack of self-perception, lack of self-determination, inaction and false values cloud Slocum's personality and obstruct him from striving for his freedom. He never feels certain about anything, though he does not know the reason. He is afraid of everything and everyone in his life either in the office or in the family. Though he can never define clearly what that 'something' is he always mourns that 'something' happened to his family to make them so unhappy and he still fears that 'something' might happen to make the situation more worse, change his life and topsy turvy his world. The irrationality of the world around him fills him with helplessness and inability. He tries to connect the missing links between the things and happenings. His opening comment

I get the willies when I see closed doors. Even at work, where I am doing so well now, the sight of a closed door is sometimes enough to make me dread that something horrible is happening behind it, something that is going to affect me adversely.\textsuperscript{15}

gives a flash of morbid consciousness that corporation with its false values forces men to possess. The incidents that occur in his childhood; his sister yelling at him when he accidentally stumbles on her while she was drying herself in the bathroom, his brother's hurling a lump of coal when he catches his brother and Billy Forster's skinny kid sister in the wooden coal shed and his

\textsuperscript{15} ibid., p. 9.
catching his mother and father in bed when he unexpectedly comes home from school with a fever and sore throat, make him afraid of the closed doors. The inconsistancy that takes place in positions in the corporation makes him afraid of the closed doors with a fear that people may be plotting against him behind those closed doors and something will happen behind the closed doors that will deprive him of everything. The awareness that something in life is missing, constantly haunts Slocum and even simple usual occurrences make him alarmed and frustrated, and create a sense of insecurity. He entertains a terrible aversion and nausea towards finding a small mouse which is a normal occurrence in every home. The hopelessness that is present in life makes him feel that he is leading an absurd life without any meaning. The oppression of the corporation forces Slocum to adopt the philosophy of Keats:

In the very temple of Delight
Veiled Melancholy's her sovran Shrine.16

He always dreads that something would happen to ruin his rare moments of elation. A sense of immediate despair and failure mars the happiness of success in life and puts a psychological stress on him. His lack of responsibility towards his children and his incapacity to love his wife make them victims of neglect and insecurity. While the corporation frustrates him, he frustrates and oppresses his family with

his tyrannical attitude which he acquires from the corporation.

He declares

Along with Green and Black and Horace White, I have played the part of tyrant myself at times with people in the company who are subordinate to me, and I play it often that at home with my wife and my daughter and my son and even at times with my idiot child, who also doesn't understand what's going on. 17

Slocum's sexual impulses and assaults on his wife shows the male selfishness, arrogance and domination on the female race which is docile and weak. He considers her as a mere object of enjoyment, "I didn't care whether she enjoyed it or not; just as long as I got 'mine'". He always tries to impose his supremacy over his wife in matters of sex. Irrespective of her likes, dislikes and fears he forces her to submit to his desire when ever he wants but he does not like his wife turning out to be like him. Her drinking during the day-time, flirting with other men, dragging him to bed without closing the door or switching off the lights, embarrass and disgust him though they were exactly the things he used to do earlier. He commits adultery but hates his wife doing the same. He is also obsessed with the fear of his wife committing adultery, that he keeps a close watch on her for some sign of her adultery. He is obsessed with divorce "("I want a divorce. I need a divorce. I long for it. I crave a divorce. I pray for divorce")". Though he hates it, he

17. ibid., p. 102.
18. ibid., p.122.
19. ibid., p.509.
hopes that his wife might commit adultery so that it will make things easier for him to get a divorce. Slocum wants to get rid of his wife before her health fails as he sees an ailing wife in future. He hates his wife when he is unable to sleep, he feels like beating her with his fists and he likes it when he is able to sleep where as his wife can not. His wife's being unable to sleep due to his nightmares, though they leave a terrible impact on him makes him feel comfortable and he sleeps blissfully. Though Slocum at times says that he feels sorry for his wife, he likes her that way most of the time "(My wife is afraid of me; I don't particularly want her that way, but it makes things easier)". He admits that it is not always easy to want to be kind and make his wife happy when he constantly keeps thinking of death, murder, adultery and divorce.

His authoritative nature, indifference and negligence oppress his children. He competes with his daughter and inhumanly crushes her with his arguments when he talks to her and brow beats his boy and tries to ignore Derek as completely as he can. He does not like to indulge himself with long conversations with the children and can enjoy them not more than for a couple of minutes. He is sadistic in his attitude towards his children and he has destructive instinct within himself. Though Slocum

20. ibid., P. 106.
wants to be better than the other parents in the society, the inner impulses which he can neither control nor admire forces him to be the person as he is. Slocum always treats and speaks to his daughter as if she were a grown up while she wants him to treat her as a kid. He always tries to outfox her and he makes her depressed and remorseful. He does not care about what she does, what her worries are and what her wishes are, instead he always wishes that he had disowned her. It is just a matter of supreme indifference to Slocum whether his daughter loves him or hates him. Though he knows that his daughter wants him to pay some attention to her, he never cares to do so. He does not care to know that whether his daughter really smokes. Instead of trying to change her and make her see reason, he advises her to be a good sneak so that his wife and he does not have to know about either her smoking or reading crappy sex novels. Though he does not like his daughter travelling in crowded cars, he does not try to do anything about it and it makes no difference to him he says

What difference does it make, really, what she is or isn't doing already with those boys I could so easily dislike, and even perhaps with girls?".

Whenever she tries to share something personal and her troubling things with him, Slocum always airily laughs away everything she says with a wise crack. At times he fails to

21. ibid., p. 178.
restrain himself from passing inhuman remarks even while they were having a quiet and pleasant talk. He never offers any love or kindness towards his daughter but he expects respect and continual kindness from her. Slocum says that he would not mind even if some atrocity is done to her, he tells her "No wonder they say dirty things to you when you walk past. You're asking for it. If you get raped you deserve it". He even hopes that his daughter would run away from home like many other girls of her age so that he will not have to face her displeasure and unhappiness. Though Slocum complains that he does not know why she blames his wife and himself, the reason for her spite is Slocum's inconsiderateness. Though once or twice the little honesty left in him makes Slocum confess that he has done something to wreck his daughter's happiness, since he does not know what that something is he does nothing to repair it instead, he oppresses her with his arguments. His outsmarting makes his daughter tense and depressed.

The only person for whom Slocum seems to care is his boy. But the fear of death always haunts him, he always thinks of his boy being in danger and his fears offer a premonition to what happens in the end.

(He is probably the only person in the world for whom I would do almost anything I could to shield from all torment and harm. Yet I

22.ibid., p. 450.

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fail continually; I can't seem to help him, I do seem to harm him. Things happen to him over which I have no power and of which I am often not even aware until the process has been completed and the damage to him done.23.

But the contemporary competitive spirit affects this relationship too. The boy's incompetence embarrasses Slocum and fills him with a killing rage. He wonders that what must have happened to him, and his boy to make them so subservient, what Slocum fails to understand is his lack of resistance and myopic goals force him to be a slave of the institution. The extreme goodness of the boy makes Slocum ashamed. While the boy does not take chances when he does not have to, the father hates to take any chances even if he has to, in case it is going to disturb even a little part in his so called well-settled life. The boy does not like to hit back even when he is hit, while Slocum believes in hitting hard and getting ahead. Slocum promises his boy that he will never let anything bad happen to him, ironically it is he who brings his boy's life to an end. He always fears that his boy might die before he does and his fear in fact proves to be true. The presence and the character of his boy reminds him of his own childhood. He often compares his present life with his childhood which makes him divided against himself and makes him long for the lost innocence. He was an artless boy whose strength was uncorrupted innocence, but now he is a part of the corrupt world. The oppression of the corporation, fear of death

23.ibid., p.160.
and loneliness depresses him and makes him long for the 'lost boy' in him. Slocum heroically tries to get over the haunting perplexities and anxieties by his intense aspiration for the lost innocence, the recovery of which he hopes will lead him beyond the need of soulless compromise. But the total flatness of living which is symbolic of contemporary American consciousness entraps Slocum as victim of a stale routine. His life is empty and miserable while his boy's life symbolises love, laughter and fun. The boy with his affectionate nature makes Slocum see his best self as a trapped, lost, little boy who some how receded inside as Slocum matured. He has the same instinctual values as his son, but in the process of his growing up he has lost them and he comes to inherit the vices of the society and the corporation he works for. He longs to become free, innocent, generous and loving again by recapturing the lost little boy inside him. Throughout the novel he laments the loss of the "lovely little me", and he moans

the little boy is missing. I don't know where he came from; I don't know where I went. I don't know all that's happened to me since. I miss him²⁴.

He sees his lost little boy (who is hiding inside himself) in his 'angelic' son

(I feel him inside of me some where, I like my son who wants to be his best friend and wishes he 'd come outside and play²⁵.

24.ibid., p. 206.
25.ibid., p. 215.
But the moral corruption of the corporation makes Slocum sacrifice the values both the boys stand for when he chooses to accept Kagle's job. Along with the death of his boy, Slocum's consciousness dies too, he is separated from the 'angelic child' within him for ever "Lost: one child, age unknown, goes by the name of me". He builds a better career at the cost of the child within him. Though he fits into the system and adapts himself to the requirements of the corporation, and achieves success in his profession by growing immune to both the happiness and unhappiness around him, his advancement in professional life which is an ironic descent in contemporary hell, closes all the doors to real happiness and freedom.

Slocum finds close relations suffocating. He does not want to take the responsibility of any one in the family. He wants to get rid of his wife, daughter, boy and does not even consider his third son as one of his children. He calls him a 'prick' and tries to use him to steal sympathy from others "(The kid comes in handy, afterall, doesn't he?)". He is insensitive in his attitude towards his third son and indifferent towards his very existence. He coldly informs his wife,

"an idiot is any person who lacks the capacity to develop beyond a mental age of three or four, even if he is my own flesh and blood."  

26. ibid., p. 305.  
27. ibid., p. 415.  
28. ibid., p. 102.
He sincerely wishes Derek and he always thinks of getting rid of him ("I have got to get rid of him. There is no getting away from him")\(^2\). When he is offered the job of Kagle instead of rejecting it and retain his dignity and human values, Slocum makes a wrong choice through accepting Kagle's job which leaves him empty and worthless not only in the eyes of his wife but also in his own eyes. He fails to grasp the consequences of his acceptance as it would shut all the doors to his personal and social freedom for he will be kept under the paws of the institution for ever. He hopes to secure the job of Jack Green but when Arthur Baron offers Kagle's job which is higher than Green's, instead of warning Kagle and supporting him who is his friend and who has been close and good to him, he not only accepts the job, but he also considers Kagle as an enemy and feels that Kagle is blocking his path so he wants Kagle out of his way. As days pass he hates Kagle more and more, he begins to loath him for his failure, his very presence embarrasses Slocum and he fires Kagle, saying

\[\text{I can't keep him around. I couldn't use him after he's been in charge. He's embarrassing. He's sloppy. He'll run my work down.}\]

His conversation with Arthur Baron shows that even though he is given an option to keep Kagle in the company, the corporate man in Slocum does not allow him to make a right choice. He

\[\text{29. ibid., p. 470.}\]
\[\text{30. ibid., p. 532.}\]
misuses his freedom of choice when he makes a wrong decision of accepting Kagle's job and firing him:

"What will you want to do about Andy Kagle?" Arthur Baron will ask.
"I think he'll do that well. He'll smile enough without being told."
"And afterward?"
"Would you want to keep him on as a consultant or use him on special projects?"
"No, Art."
"He could be useful."
"But not here. I think it might be a bad idea to have him around."
"I think you're right, Bob."
"Thanks, Art." 31.

The gap between Slocum's feelings, thoughts and actions shows his lack of psychological freedom. He completely loses himself in the process of imitation and dehumanization and he becomes one among the corporate magnitude. The oppressing competitive spirit makes him possess a split personality. He loses the capacity to be clear in his feelings and reactions. His contemplation about Kagle's job and saving his boy, shows his split personality. His statements always clash with his thoughts. His aloofness makes him uncertain in his feelings. He feels burdened when his children come flying at him and depressed with a feeling of neglect when they do not, he narrates

The children (thank heavens) have not come flying at me with grievances and demands. My daughter is in her room, on the telephone. My boy is in his room, watching television. (The set is on loud and I can hear it).

31. ibid., p. 453-454.
Neither has been much affected by the fact that I am there, that Daddy is home (and I am vaguely hurt by their neglect. A dog would have greeted me with more love).32.

His failure to make love to Virginia though he ardently wishes, shows his lack of self-realisation and psychological freedom. Throughout the novel he laments for not having rented a room and made love to Virginia as she has suggested. His corporate nature fails to fetch him friends in the office, love and caring in the family. He resembles the man who is transformed by the company, he questions,

Who am I? I think I'm beginning to find out. I am a stick: I am a broken waterlogged branch floating with my own crowd in this one nation of ours, indivisible (unfortunately), under God, with liberty and justice for all who are speedy enough to seize them first and hog them away from the rest.33

but he is honest enough to accept his dishonesty, hypocrisy, double standards and deceptiveness "(I am very good with these techniques of deception, although I am not always able anymore to deceive myself) for example he considers Jane to be very innocent for she thinks that he is a nice man. Slocum constantly speaks of his inner tensions, aversions and the happenings around him but never tries to rationalize them and he lacks the ability to understand the structure of the corporation and the American society that makes the human relations a mystery to him. Slocum

32. ibid., p. 104.
33. ibid., p. 303.
34. ibid., p. 34.
has different persons inside him, one who experiences and comments upon his life along with the other who watches everything, so he says:

And I am aware of still one more person whom I am not even aware of; and this one watches everything shrewdly, even me, from some secure hideout in my mind in which he remains invisible and anonymous, and makes stern, censorious judgments, about everything, even me. He hardly ever sleeps.

but Slocum hardly listens to him, and falls a victim to the oppression of the institution. As the world of *Catch-22* makes the life of the people devoid of love, security, understanding and caring for one another, the people fail to witness them in the world of Slocum in *Something Happened*. Till the end he oscillates between his lost boy and corporate adult but in the end he kills his inner self and becomes a perfect representative of the corporation. In the end he tries to gain command in life, he gets his daughter a new car, decides to keep Derek, buys a new convertible for his wife and for once he acts on his own in his office. Though he says that "Everyone seems pleased with the way I've taken command", he has nothing left in life, neither the honesty, nor the conscience, not even the boy who stands for eternal happiness. And Slocum remains a victim and agent of the institution as he fails to distangle himself from its tyranny and corruption to attain his individual

35. ibid., p. 137.
36. ibid., p. 551.

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Towards the end of the novel Slocum feels that he is free of fear from the corporation and the world that he can do anything in life but in fact he achieves success in his professional life but he fails to achieve his personal freedom as he is still afraid of the same things as he was before.

He fulfills his long cherished dream of making his speech at the convention but he fails to get much of happiness or sense of fulfilment out of it,

I get to make my speech, finally. It is a solid success (and nobody cares. Nobody, I learn, remembers shortly afterward what it was even about."

and he is a failure in matters of sex also as he fails to make either his women or himself interested and satisfied. Socially Derek's presence remains to be an embarrassment as he decides to keep him longer which enhances his inferiority complex in social relationships. He achieves what he longs and plots to attain throughout the novel but he does not enjoy his achievement "I feel I have lost" as he is still afraid of Green though he does not have to as he was before and he says he will always be afraid of him and he justifies his mother's last words to him "You are just no good".

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37. ibid., p. 555.
38. ibid., p. 534.
39. ibid., p. 534.
Though Slocum boasts that everyone is pleased with the way he has taken command both in the office and the family and though he thinks that he has freedom to do everything, what he achieves in life is a kind of pseudo freedom as he is still afraid of the same things - Green, closed doors, instability, uncertainty in the corporation and an unknown something. Though Slocum seems to have achieved external freedom, he fails to have either psychological, or social or internal freedom as he does not possess the potentiality to rebel against the tyranny and strive to achieve his individual freedom and human dignity.

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GOOD AS GOLD

Heller's third novel Good As Gold (1979) offers more of an optimistic tone which his second novel Something Happened fails to do. Heller presents the encroachment and exploitation of two institutions in the novel, the institution of family in the minor way and the institution of Government at the higher level. Heller, to add more light as to how the institution of Government victimizes the individual on the basis of their place, position and birth, brings in racial discrimination. The idea Heller presents here is that

the major American institutions are run by idiots and megalomaniacs, that nothing good can come of them, and that the individual caught in them is condemned to moral degeneration and other attendant miseries.'

Therefore Heller through the life and experiences of the protagonist in the novel suggests that the individual should resist the tyranny of the institutions which try to force him submit his freedom. The hero Bruce Gold in the novel, in order to escape the ridicule of his family, tries to attain a high position in the government with a hope to elevate himself in the eyes of his family with the help of the money and status he might secure from the position in the government. Like Yossarian in Catch-22, Gold also makes the wrong choice of surving the institution to attain his freedom but he soon comes out of that

illusion. When he procures an insight into the real working of the government, he rebels against its tyranny and frees himself. Three phases occur in the process of Gold's struggle for freedom - his ability to understand the real nature of institution, to realise his own potentiality, to elevate himself from the external forces to decide his course of action and to carry it out. Heller presents Bruce Gold as something of a cross between Slocum and Yossarian. Like Slocum Bruce Gold is also ambitious, through most part of the novel he is enthralled by the temptation of a high office in the Government and acts as a pawn in the hands of bureaucrats and is ready to sacrifice his values and humanity for a Government appointment, but when it comes to the cross roads and when his freedom is at stake, like Yossarian who also first tries to join the power elite he rejects the temptations of the Government and saves himself from the humiliation and oppression of the institutions. After having the bitter taste of the oppressing politics of the Government, he rejects the prospect of authority and high position to assert his self-respect and freedom. When he leaves Washington to attend his brother's funeral, he leaves behind him the world of false supermen, pseudo-fathers and gentile Jews. Gold unmasks the false idols and accepts his own responsibility towards his family and his own self and he visits his mother's Cemetery for the first time and places a pebble on her grave and settles down to begin his book about 'Jewish Experience'.
The constant ridicule of his father, his constant fights with his brother, the family's thrusting heaps of advice on him, torture Bruce Gold and he becomes a victim as a target of attack both in the family and outside world.

Gold's distaste for family dinners, his aversion, in fact, toward all forms of domestic sentiment, stretched back distantly at least until the time of his graduation from high school and his moving into Manhattan to attend Columbia College. He was pleased to be entering so prestigious a university and vastly relieved at escaping a large family of five sisters and one brother in which all his life he had felt both suffocated and unappreciated.

The inherited rules of the institutional oppression regulate the life of Gold and his family. Gold's reaction to his large family when his father insults him, his brother frustrates him, his sisters fuss over him inspite of his grief and strain creates a comic pathos in the novel. As Gold is the youngest member of the family, his family members flock around him, and flood him with their questions, answers, solicitudes and contradictory advice. His family's showering of both concern and mockery on him makes Gold feel frustrated and lonely.

Everyone else would enjoy it. Family parties had turned for him into grueling and monotonous tests of fealty to which he submitted with sorrow and anxiety whenever he was left with no civilized alternative.

There would be nobody there he wanted to see. Conversation, for him, would be impossible. He no longer liked his father or brother, if indeed he ever had. He did occasionally feel some gratitude and pity toward his four older sisters, but the locus and depth of these affections varied with his different memories of which had been kindest to him after the death of their mother and in the years before. All knew he had some fame as a writer and could not figure out why.3

At the family parties his sisters pet him, both his father and brother tease him as the family’s sole intellectual. His teaching at the University and his skill of writing books, his fame as a writer and the reputation he enjoys for his academic achievements are nothing to his family, instead, his writing skills amuse his family. His sisters’ well intended defending of his books

there is no need to be ashamed of him just because he writes things nobody understands4 irritates him and confuses him how to take their pride and love which takes the form of comic mockery. His family is interested not in the substance of his books but how much money they might fetch him. He always fulfills the expectations of his family but they still bother him and their showering of love and advice makes him uncomfortable. The oppression of his father and family makes him long for an escape and for freedom and the idea of getting admitted to the Columbia College pleases him and offers him a relief.

3. ibid., p.21.
4. ibid., p.108.
The 'demanding autocratic, old four-flusher of a father' never wastes an opportunity to criticise Gold and he always considers Gold as 'Schmuck'. He always takes delight in goading Gold to gain appreciation from his elder son Sid and his goading leaves Gold miserable. He is money-minded, hen-pecked and though a failure himself, he always scolds Gold for his insufficiency even when Gold is successful. He ridicules Gold for not being able to make more money. He is always displeased with Gold and he outrightly declares that nothing Gold does will ever please him, he says

'Hey, stupid - why don't you put on some weight? You look like a string bean.'

Gold, reacquainted with his destiny, heaved a fatalistic sigh. 'It's the style now. Ain't you heard?'

'People will think I ain't got what to feed you.'

'Ain't there anything I can do to please you?'

'No.'

He even introduces Gold to his friends "This is my son's brother. The one that never amounts to much". The antagonism and ridicule Gold faces at the hands of his father makes even the food bitter for him and he mourns that since his childhood till now his father always held him in contempt.

5.ibid., p. 94.
6.ibid., p. 34.
He always irritates Gold to the point of screaming. Though his children want him to buy a condominium in Florida for his wife and himself, he discovers new Jewish holidays which no one heard about, to prolong his stay in his son's house and increases Gold's discomfort. His enjoyment from the inhuman treatment of Gold when his step mother presents him with a single sock makes Gold mad with fury:

'It's yours. I finished. Take it, my son.'

'What is it?' Instinctively Gold put his hand behind his back.

'A sock.'

'One sock? You knit me one sock?'

'I only have two hands. Last May I saw a hole in your sock. If I'd seen a hole in both socks I would have knitted you two.'

'What'll I do with one sock?'

'Maybe you'll lose a foot,' said the old man and clucked appreciatively. 'Take it, go on, bigshot, take it."

Gold's step mother since their first meeting treats Gold with animosity. She usually makes things difficult for him at the family gatherings. Her reaction to Gold's articles and books is "another screw has come loose". The antagonism his father and step mother show towards Gold oppresses him to the root. Gold always feels ruined by the baiting of his brother Sid. He always traps Gold in helpless situations with his imbecile theories. Sid is an expert in irritating Gold with

8. Ibid., p. 186.
9. Ibid., p. 102.
senseless conversations about blind vultures and why rivers flow down hill. He always founds new theories about the things of science. His family's siding with Sid's theories makes Gold lose his temper. His family considers Gold pedantic whenever he tries to contradict or correct the foolish and false theories of Sid, his knowledge and an advanced degree in English Literature do not count in the standards of the family,

Gold was trapped two, three, four, may be five or six ways. If he mentioned Alexander Pope, he would be parading his knowledge. If he didn't, Sid would, unmasking him as an ignoramus. If he corrected the prepositional errors, he would appear pedantic, quarrelsome, jealous. If he gave no answer at all, he would be insulting to Ida, who, with the others, was awaiting some reply. It was no fair way, he sulked, to treat a middle-aged, Phi Beta Kappa, cum laude graduate of Columbia who was a doctor of philosophy and had recently been honored with praise from the White House and the promise of consideration for a high-level position.10

Gold feels so uncomfortable in the presence of Sid that he hopes that his brother will be absent so that he will have a quiet and peaceful time. His wife Belle always warns him not to pick a fight with Sid, she advises

Try not to look like you wish you were somewhere else, she advised without turning her head. 'Try not to start any fights with Sid'.

Gold detests to attend the family parties and he hopes for

10. ibid., p. 37-38.
11. ibid., p. 21.
a 'blast of arctic air to come howling down for the weekend' so that he can fail to attend the party and escape from his brother. The family parties always leave Gold with heart burn and headache. Neither his fury nor his restraint help Gold much during the family gatherings. The family parties fill Gold with blind fury, a sense of impotence and sullen restraint and they always wreck his nerve. Gold fails to do anything about his position in the family. Gold's outpouring to Pomoroy about the troubles which his family creates for him in his life, speaks of the boredom, loneliness and lovelessness which the oppression of the family causes, he tells Pomoroy

I have got lots of relatives and I have no one I can talk to either, said Gold. 'My father's eighty-two now and won't go back to Florida. I don't want him to get sick here. I've been holding my breath now for fifteen years waiting for something to happen to him. I'm afraid it will and I'm afraid it won't. He picks on me, and I'm still afraid of him. He's picked on me all my life. Everyone in my family babies me. They treat me like a jerk. There's nothing I can do about it without being mean. Shit, I'm indebted to all of them, but guilt doesn't change anything. My older brother went to work while I went to college and gets more and more jealous of me. I can't shut him up unless I lose control of myself, and that's what he wants... I don't feel close to anyone in the world. Everything I do now is boring. I want to marry money.'

As he fails to make himself important in the family, he tries to get more freedom and respect from the outside world.

12.ibid., p. 164.
The oppression of his family makes him long for an escape and as
money and position are the only scale to measure a man's ability
and importance both in the world of his family and society, he
tries for a job in the Government to earn both monetary and
political status so that he might gain respect in the eyes of his
family and escape their ridicule and oppression.

That opportunity comes to him when his review of the
President's book 'My year in the White House' attracts the
attention of some high officials of the White House which
promises him a high position in the Government. The lure of
power makes Gold abandon his present job, his family, his
assignment of writing a book on 'Jewish Experience' and he
becomes a pawn in the never ending game played by the institution
of Government which frustrates and oppresses him with its false
promise of political and social freedom. The Government traps
the men with false hopes of freedom but in truth it rules them in
every aspect. As the military institution in Catch-22, the
institution of corporation in Something Happened, in Good As Gold
the institution of Government favours aggressive people who can
push their way in, as Ralph tells Gold

There is no limit to how high you will go.
Bruce, this administration is made up almost
entirely of people who pushed their way in.\textsuperscript{3}

Knowledge, efficiency and experience are unimportant in

\textsuperscript{13}ibid., p. 81.
Government, what people need is the ability to bully and grab every opportunity that comes in their way. The government favours not people with integrity and principles but people who can switch positions overnight on any issue the government wants them to. Like the corporate people in *Something Happened*, the government people in *Good As Gold* care not for the welfare of the people but hanging on to their jobs:

'Suppose my policy fails.'
'Then it fails. Nobody's perfect.'
'lt fails?'
'And there's no harm done,' said Ralph. 'It's happened before. But there was no harm done.
'No harm done?'
'We're still here, aren't we?' said Ralph.  

and this ghastly indifference terrifies Gold,

The bland insouciance of the reply fell upon Gold with a nasty jar and evoked in him the first faint beginnings of repugnance and an inclination to withdraw 'Ralph,' he began after a moment of inhibition, 'there's a kind of cynicism and selfishness there that I'm not sure I can be comfortable with.'

The Government listens to P.B. Conover for his ability to lie under oath. The Government which Gold wants to serve is hypocritic, corrupt and partial. The president who is the head of the country and Government, instead of attending to his duties as he is supposed to, delegates his responsibilities to his aides

14. ibid., p. 362.
15. ibid., p. 362.
and engages himself in writing a book about his first year in the White House. It is not efficiency that wins Ralph favours with the president but his idea of writing a book, he admits

That was my idea,' he admitted. 'This way he has a crack at more than just one best seller. He might do one every year. That boosted my stock way up with him too.'

Ralph's being glad, though he assures Gold that this president welcomes criticism that Gold did not touch the point that where did the president get the time for both writing the book and attending to the duties of his office, speaks of the double talk and double standards which the administration of the Government elevates to new depths.

Gold aspires for a Government job, to earn money though he has neither the knowledge nor the interest in Government. His strongest surviving political sentiment lay in his wish for the good government position that Ralph has hinted might be found for him. The rule of his society "Got no money, stay home and cry" and Ralph's assurances "As much as you want, Bruce. No one comes to Washington to lose money" prompt Gold for a Government job though Gold claims that his desire to get a job in the Government is for 'performing a useful service to society', infact it is out of his desire to earn more money and rise high in social status and gain respect in the eyes of his family and

16. ibid., p. 50.
17. ibid., p. 338.
18. ibid., p. 81.
friends, makes him aspire for a government position. The fact that it is not the desire to serve the country that makes people to aspire for a Government job, but because "it's fun, ... There are lots of parties and you get lots of girls. Even actresses" is seen in Gold's striving for a high office despite the humiliation he suffers at the hands of the Government staff. Gold's temptation for money, honours, and high office make him lose his taste for mankind and principles,

Gold had a growing list of principles, causes, methods, and ideals in which he no longer believed, and near the top it contained a swelling subdivision of freedom that included such sacrosanct issues as academic freedom, sexual freedom, and even political freedom.

Gold's phrases like 'boggling my mind' and 'Nothing Succeeds as Planned' win him favours with the Government and provide the president with an excellent excuse for his inaction, Ralph praises

God, Bruce,' Ralph began. 'I can't tell you how you're boggling our minds. If nothing succeeds as planned - and you really present such a strong argument - then the President has just the excuse he needs for not doing anything'.

Therefore to the people in the Government Gold becomes an 'independent voice' in 'their' control. Gold achieves continuous

19. ibid., p. 51.
20. ibid., p. 77.
21. ibid., p. 80.
hypothetical promotions not for his efficiency but for his ability to supply and lend phrases to the staff and president in the White House. He understands the awkward nature of politics through Ralph's words, when he gets appointed as a member of the presidential commission, Ralph tells him

Now those commission meetings tomorrow morning can be of great importance to you, Bruce, because they're of no importance to anyone else. Do whatever you want as long as you do whatever we want\textsuperscript{22}.

His first commission as a delegate of the presidential commission, simply crushes his individuality and leaves him with mixed feelings of despair, envy and depression. The useless conversations which his colleagues indulge themselves in, instead of making progressive policies dispel Gold's hopes of doing something constructive in the Government but he still sticks to it,

Gold was stung again by their indifference. He would either have to forge the society of such people or get used to stinging.\textsuperscript{23}

Gold is the only one that tries to show any interest in the policy making or registering protest while all his colleagues discuss nothing but agree to everything that the former Governor of Texas says. But he too very soon falls the victim of the oppression of the authority and does the same as there is no

\textsuperscript{22} ibid., p. 201.
\textsuperscript{23} ibid., p. 203.
alternative if he wants to come up in Government. Though the high-handed behaviour of his superiors makes him feel lost and inferior, his myopic desire of achieving a high position in the Government makes him a slave of the latter. His repeated attempts to meet the president fail though he nearly comes to meet him once, the meeting is cancelled as the latter is taking a nap. Like Hungry Joe in *Catch-22*, Gold becomes a victim of constant waiting, which depresses him and makes him fear his success.

All his life he had hated trouble. All his life he had been afraid of failing. Now, it seemed, he was distressed he might succeed.  

Gold gets an insight into the working of the Government which is well described in the words of the former Governor of Texas, when he says

Understand that no body in this room ever wants to read our report. That's another reason you must make it too long to be published in total in that damned New York Times. Otherwise, some of these nosy journalists might be pestering us for years with questions we don't know the answers to about matters we have no interest in.

reminds one of Colonel Korn's plan which he uses to abandon the educational sessions in *Catch-22*.

Under Colonel Korn's rule, the only people permitted to ask questions were those who

never did. Soon the only people attending were those who never asked questions, and the sessions were discontinued altogether, since Clevinger, the corporal and Colonel Korn agreed that it was neither possible nor necessary to educate people who never questioned anything.

The meetings he attends as a delegate of the presidential commission shatters his hopes to enjoy social status and respect of his friends and family as he understands the hypocrisy, inertia and the indifference of the Government staff. The Government empowers its staff to victimize people for example Gold threatens Conover

Power, Raw power. Brute, illegal power. I'll misuse it to ruin him and make his life miserable. I'll tap his telephones. I'll have the FBI ask insinuating questions about him.

Though his nature and his love for his principles and freedom make him disgusted with the existing order of things, the prospect of financial, political and social progress subjugates him and makes him compromise with the Government

Gold's ambivalent feelings were easily sedated when his disgust with the voracious materialism of his society was quickly overcome by the consideration that, when his government service was concluded, he too might be more important to Solomon Brothers.

The institution of Government encroaches and corrupts not

29. ibid., p. 257.
30. ibid., p. 237.
only their political ideals but also the personal lives of the people. While discussing a variety of possible cabinet posts, Ralph says that in order to rise high in the Government status, Gold needs to marry a woman of higher social status and Ralph declares that "Belle 'd be okay for Labour or Agriculture. But not for Secretary of State or Defence"31. So deeply affected and corrupted by the strategies of the existing situation, Gold readily proposes to Andrea, the daughter of P.B. Conover, a 'dying career diplomat with tons of money and the best connections' in the Government, so that he can use' Conover's influence in rising high in the White House. His political necessity to have an influential wife, and Ralph's constant marriages and divorces arouse Gold's sexual fantasies, corrupt Gold even in the matters of sex also and encourages him to divorce his wife and in order to get his divorce Gold like Slocum tries to find fault with his wife for an excuse to divorce her. But unlike Slocum's wife, Belle, Gold's wife, with her balanced, composed, perceptive obedience and passive resistance makes his attempts fail.

Obedience and acceptance were cruel weapons with which she persecuted him, total surrender was her strategy of attack, and he was hard put to withstand her32.

But Belle's possessing the very qualities of a wife - perception, caring and love that are needed for a successful

31.ibid., p. 126.
32.ibid., p. 172.
marriage, irritates Gold as he can not have divorce without much commotion. But Gold fails to announce his decision to quit Belle as his family considers divorce as unthinkable and this dilemma frustrates him. Andrea's understanding of Gold's real intentions behind his proposal makes him disappointed and frustrated:

'Why would I marry you,' asked Gold, 'if I didn't want to see you again?' 'To help you get the government appointment,' she answered. 'That's why I want to wait until after you have it before we decide.'

It is like the circular logic of "Catch-22" which Doc Daneeka cites when he is requested to ground people. Andrea does not want to marry Gold unless he secures a Government job and he can not ensure a Government job unless Andrea marries him as Ralph concludes

I'm not sure you have that appointment quickly, Bruce, until she does marry you,' Ralph answered frankly. 'The Conover connection is crucial.'

Andrea and Gold beat each other in what they think as sexual freedom. Andrea regards sex as nothing more than a biological phenomenon. She offers not to have sex with others after their marriage, if it makes Gold jealous. His fantasy of trying to please both Andrea and Lindabook, his daughter's teacher, keeping them in the adjoining hotel rooms with him in the middle,

33. ibid., p. 265.
34. ibid., p. 363.
proves so exhausting that Gold collapses and gets hospitalized for nearly two weeks during which time no one misses him and does not even notice his absence and this neglect makes him feel depressed and though Gold feels that

Not for this, he told himself, was he leaving his wife, provoking the enmity of his children, offending his family, and forsaking for the time all other erotic relationships, but for money, beauty, social position, political preference, and a stupendous magnification of sexual prestige,

he still bears with Andrea as he can not rise high politically without Andrea's father's help despite his humiliating him for being a jew.

Gold does not know what is Jewish experience when he is first asked to write a book on it but his experiences at the hands of the anti-Semites like the Governor of Texas, Conover and others provide him with the material for the book. Gold's assurance to Pomoroy about the effect of his Government job will have on his book about Jewish experience illustrates how hard it is for a Jew to hold any responsible office in the American Government

Enrich it immeasurably,' Gold answered none too comfortably. 'How often does a Jew from a poor immigrant family find himself in an important position in the federal government?

35. ibid., p. 240.
36. ibid., p. 163.
Ralph who declares that he is not an anti-Semite puts the predicament of Jews in American society when he tells Gold. Jews don't really make it in America. They never did. I hope you're not offended by my frankness.

His father's jeering "What kind of job 'd they give a Jew like you? and his step mother's sneering

If you ever forget you're a Jew,' said Gussie Gold in a tone of stately rebuke, 'you can rest assured that a gentile like Conover will remind you.

speaks of the racial discrimination that is inherent in the institution of government. Through out the novel, Gold feels uncomfortable being a Jew and tries to escape and forget his Jewishness so that he can escape the discrimination and achieve social status. But the government officials constantly remind him of his heritage. Even before he leaves for Washington, Ralph reminds him of his Jewish heritage when he tells him that 'they' in the Government want to appoint Gold not because he is efficient but it will be easy to get rid of him later, Ralph says 'That will make it easier at both ends, Bruce,' Ralph explained with no change of tone. 'Jews are popular now and people don't like to object to them. And a Jew is always good to get rid of whenever the right wing wants us to'.

The Governor of Texas's ridiculing makes Gold helpless and

37. Ibid., p. 138.
38. Ibid., p. 399.
39. Ibid., p. 55.

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he enlightens Gold about the fact that "a Jew always needs friends in Washington because he doesn't really belong here"40 and he offers to be his friend if Gold is willing to submit his freedom to him, he says

Every Jew should have a big gentile for a friend, and every successful American should own a Jew. I'm big, Gold, and I'm willing to be your friend41.

Conover who Gold hopes will help him politically and to whose daughter he is secretly engaged is anti-Semite. He despises Gold not because he is trying to use him through his daughter but because he is a Jew:

There was little room left for circumlocution. 'Are you saying that,' he asked with sickly feeling, 'because I'm Jewish?'
'I'm saying it,' said Conover 'because you seem pushy. But since you raise the point, I don't like Jews and I never have.'42

He takes inhuman delight in calling Gold each time with a different caricature of his name. He states that he will not stand in the way of Gold's career although he does not understand what a Jew will do in the Government, he says

I won't object to the marriage since it would do no good, and I won't stand in the way of your career, although I can't for the life of me see what business a Jew has in government except to gain social recognition43.

40.ibid., p. 208.
41.ibid., p. 447.
42.ibid., p. 247.
43.ibid., p. 250.
Though Gold tries to forget and escape his Jewishness, he instinctively defends his race when the Former Governor of Texas mocks that Jews in general lack originality and when he doubts that whether all Jews are submissive like Kissinger, Gold immediately replies 'No sir, They do not'.

From this moment onwards Gold longs to distangle himself from the institution which considers Jews as an inferior race.

Even while the mad pursuit of power captivates him, Gold does not lose his individuality and spirit of freedom. In the beginning of the novel when Ralph rings up to invite him to accept a position in the Government, Gold enquires whether he will have freedom to act independently, the reply he receives from Ralph is,

("Anything you want, as long as it's everything we tell you to say and do in support of our policies, whether you agree with them or not. You'll have complete freedom")

makes him understand the wicked standards of the political institutions and how the Government oppresses the initiative of the individual and he tries to maintain his integrity by reminding Ralph that he can not be bought. Though he makes himself submissive to the power elite he never hesitates to contradict them when they try to inflict insults to his integrity.

44. ibid., p. 447-48.
45. ibid., p. 54.
and heritage. He contradicts to Ralph's mocking of Kissinger's praying habits and questions him "Whether you say that because he's Kissinger or because he's Jewish". His refusing to be addressed as a doctor shows his spirit of freedom and resistance against any kind of domination over his character, he tells Ralph:

Ralph I would look ridiculous and pompous. Kissinger was called doctor, and you know what people thought of him. No, Ralph, I can't allow it.'
'I'm afraid I have to insist.'
'It's my nature to resist insistance.'

He acts in the same way with Andrea despite his need of her support for his job, he tersely protests against being indecently addressed and her criticism of his character, he reminds her,

When we first met at the Senator Russell B. Long Foundation,' he reminded her, 'I was Dr Gold. When we had coffee or lunch together, or occasionally cocktails and dinner, I was always Dr Gold. When we made love together the first time not long ago, I was still Dr Gold. Even when I telephoned you the next day to tell you how happy I was and how much I wanted to see you again, I was Dr Gold. Now that we're secretly engaged to be married, I'm fussy and silly and ridiculous and old-fashioned. When did I stop being Dr Gold and become small-minded and narrow minded? Why didn't you notice it before?'

As their acquaintance grows stronger he comes to dislike

46. ibid., p. 274.
47. ibid., p. 155.
48. ibid., p. 240-241.
Andrea and the stupidity of Andrea makes him miss Belle. Even before he gets disgusted with Andrea though he strongly wishes the post of Secretary of State and he has to marry Andrea for that, he still feels unjust to leave Belle for the fulfilment of 'his' desire, unlike Slocum who wants to leave his wife for no reason at all, Gold hates to do so even when his situation forces him, he tells 'In a way I hate to do this to her.' 30.

He also hates to break the news of divorce to Belle instead he asks his lawyer to do it after he is gone. He does not spare even Conover, though he is pretty well aware of the latter's importance in getting him a Government position. He even uses bad language to refute Conover's ridicule, he tells Conover

There's no such fucking word, Gold responded quietly, deciding there was nothing to forfeit by reacting with anything less than true emotion to the persistent goading of his skilled tormentor. 'She does look Jewish, if that's what you mean' 31

and when he can no longer bear the indecency with which Conover treats him, he curtly reminds him of a code of behaviour,

The name is Gold, sir. Bruce Gold Whether you approve of that or not. And I'd be oh so grateful if you would make some effort to keep that in mind. After all, at least a minimum of civility is prescribed even between people who dislike each other' 32.

50.ibid., p. 364.
51.ibid., P. 385.
52.ibid., p. 388.
The humiliation and insults that were thrust upon him by Conover and others in the government make him loath his myopic desire and submission.

Gold chose the Volkswagen over the camel and headed toward Washington in a dazed state of moral collapse. How much lower would he crawl to rise to the top? he asked himself with wretched self-reproach.

Though he comes very close to the fulfilment of his desire, the hypocrisy, oppression and tyranny of the bureaucracy makes him analyse his inner self, motives and action and he becomes skeptical of his choice. As a result while his long cherished dream comes close to reality Gold loses heart to act.

Gold found himself with an immense unwillingness to admit that the closer he drew to marrying Andrea and serving as Secretary of State, the deeper he fell into doubt that he wanted to do either.

for he realises that if he accepts the help of Andrea and joins in the government, he will remain a slave both to Andrea and the institution as they both treat him in a tyrannical way even before he accepts to serve them. When he finally goes to meet the president, he receives the news of his brother's death. Faced with two alternatives, the promise of high office in the White House, his filial responsibility, he, without a second thought leaves for his brother's funeral though he watches the

53. ibid., p. 394.
54. ibid., p. 407.
President's car coming in while his car pulls out of the Embassy ball. He conducts his brother's funeral, takes the place of his brother in accepting the responsibility of his father and step mother and makes a reunion with Belle which she richly deserves for her forbearance. As he realises his own sad and helpless situation, trapped by the institution of Government without supporters and friends, he decides to regain his individuality and freedom, he contemplates Ralph would not hide him, the ex-Governor of Texas owned him. Who would teach him to defend himself? When Ralph phoned an hour later, he decided that he did not want the government appointment33.

His realization that he lacks identity among the people who hate his being a Jew and that the high office in the White House promises him a kind of false freedom, makes him reject Ralph's offer despite the dangers he might have to face for his no to the President:

'You have to, Bruce. You can't say no to the President.'
'Why not?'
'Because nobody does. You have to say yes when your President asks.'
'Who does?'
'Everybody, Bruce. You can't say no when your President asks.'
'Ralph, I feel shitty tonight. My brother's dead and my father's old36.'

55. ibid., p. 457.
56. ibid., p. 456.
He finally recognises his Jewishness when he scolds Kissinger in Yiddish and

The passionate flow of Yiddish is one indication that his own insecurity and self-doubt have finally been transcended.

He abandons his book on Kissinger and settles down to write his book on 'Jewish Experience' as the humiliation he experiences at the hands of Washington people, not only provides him with sufficient material but also makes him know thoroughly what consists of Jewish experience. His life in Washington makes him miss his mother and he constantly thinks of her. At the end of the novel according to the custom of his religion which preaches that one should place a pebble on the grave as a sign that somebody has been there and the dead are still remembered he goes to the cemetery and places a pebble on his mother's grave which makes him feel warm and close to his mother. He changes his former undefined and unimportant self with his struggle to expose and express his own self without any outward restrictions and he achieves his true self and asserts it. When he rejects the Government job he stops to be the slave of the bureaucracy, insecurity and inauthenticity. He evolves his consciousness and elevates himself from bondage to freedom. Though he falls a victim of the temptations of the Government, he becomes a hero of reality with his spiritual regeneration and distangling himself.

from the mad crowd of power mongers.

Gold using the three requisites of freedom - self-realisation, self-perception and self-determination achieves his freedom - he determines his course of life on his own not allowing either his family or the government to interfere or influence, he carries it out and thus achieving a harmony between his motives and actions. He attains his potential and personal freedom as he with his resistance frees himself from the restraint of external forces. Of all Heller heros Gold appears to be the best representative of Heller's idea of individuality and freedom.

Heller in Good As Gold makes the protagonist use the three requisites of freedom - self-realization, self-perception and self-determination and achieve his freedom. He provides the hero with the ability to choose his tenor of life on his own and he also enables him determined not to allow either his family or the Government to interfere or influence his decision. Heller also endows him with a potential to carry his decision out and achieve a balance between his motives, choices and actions. Heller in Good As Gold creates such an individual who is armed to attain his personal and potential freedom through freeing himself from the restraint of external forces. Good As Gold with its presentation of the conflict between the individual and the institutions and the consequent freedom of the individual is the
best representative of all Heller's novels which present his idea of individual freedom.