CHAPTER THREE

RACIAL PREDICAMENTS

Almost any generalization about Americans will be true of some group in the country, and as surely not true of many others. Few Americans are aware of the variety of peoples or subcultures that make up the country; nor are they aware of its important political, geographical, and social subdivisions. . . . [Raymond D. Gastil, "Cultural Regions of America" in *Making America: The Society and Culture of the United States*, 1988, p. 121):

Today, besides the states, America is divided into cities and counties. However, most formal divisions of the United States into states and smaller units are creations of a political system as a whole for the convenience of governing. The boundaries of most states reflect the arbitrary extension of the federal system more than the extension of preexisting historical or geographical distinctions. The country has always divided the country into larger, more natural, but generally unofficial, regions. In one way or other regions are recognized by the people of the areas concerned, and are bounded but discontinuities in physical geography, historical experience, or the background of the citizens.

And the United States is commonly divided into four major regions: Northeast, South, Midwest [North Central], and West. This subdivision is used by journalists, the United States Census Bureau, and polling organizations searching for variations in attitudes and opinions. The Northeast has its capital in New York City, but includes New England and the Middle Atlantic States. The South extends from Virginia to Texas,
but excludes Missouri. The Midwest centres on Chicago, while everything West of the
Great Plains, including Hawaii and Alaska becomes the West. Clearly these are regions
of convenience, as are their further subdivisions into categories such as “Far West” or
“Southeast”.

Historically, historian Frederick Jackson Turner, who studied the struggle
between the “sections” of America in the nineteenth century, conceived one of the most
important scholarly approaches to the subdivision of the country. According to his
thesis, as the country developed, each section formed interests and traits fitting its
particular geography or stage of evolution, and much of the history of the Republic
could be seen as struggles of “South” with “North”, or “East” with “West”.

Frederick Jackson Turner pointed out that these designations changed as the
country grew, so that “west” continually referred to an area further and further from the
Atlantic coastline. The distinctions between “region” as an area defined by its internal
characteristic political interactions with other areas is a distinction that should be kept in
mind. Sections need constantly to be redefined according to changing growth patterns
and needs, but there are surely still sectional struggles. According to Raymond D. Gastil
[“Cultural Regions of America” in Making America: The Society and Culture of the
United States, 1988, p. 123]:

The cultural regions that emerged beyond the Atlantic Coast can be seen as
developments westward of the original regional organization of the country.
Historically the United States was divided at the time of its founding by a
broad division into three groups of states: New England, Middle Atlantic,
and Southern. The majority of people in each area had come from the
United Kingdom, although in different proportions from its subdivisions. However, the histories of each area were quite different.

To elaborate on this point, the New England region is stamped with the particular culture of the immigrants into the New England region. Originally defined by its intense Protestant Christianity, the majority of the people are now Roman Catholics, except in certain rural areas. However, as the immigrant groups came into the region, they were, in a cultural sense, often “converted”. Today all the East Coast regional cultures have a more European or English class system than the other parts of the country.

The New York Metropolitan region is characteristically a society of recent immigrants, as generations of newcomers continue to use New York as the gateway to America. Because of the density of their numbers religious and ethnic groups, such as the orthodox Jews, Puerto Ricans, and Italians, continue to follow their life styles with relatively little notice of the general American patterns, unless of course members of such groups wish to “melt” into the larger society. The result of this demographic or ethnic situation is that New York City is in many ways “more European”, more varied, and for many Americans more exciting than other regions of America.

And immigration into the Pennsylvania region has been slow for a long time. While upstate New York was overrun by New Englanders after the Revolutionary War, the regional patterns of large proprietorships were preserved in Pennsylvania. In religion while New England was characteristically Congregationalist, and later Baptist and Unitarian, the Pennsylvania region was Presbyterian and Quaker.
Pennsylvania was founded as a Quaker colony in the 1680s and other similar groups such as the Amish soon established settlements.

As a cultural region, the South is the most distinctive of all the cultural regions in America. Its dialects are more widely recognized and more different than other regional dialects. This is particularly true when one remembers that Black English is a Southern dialect. The South has produced not only a variety of Black song styles, such as the Blues and the Jazz, but also the best-known and presently influential popular White styles of music. The "mountain" or "hillbilly" music of a previous generation is now better known as "country". The cowboy music of the frontier was in large part derived from the South. Today the two have been integrated as "country western". The music capital of this development is Nashville, Tennessee. Nashville is also a centre of the development of popular religion. However, the capital of the Southern Baptist denomination, the fastest growing of the major Protestant sects in America, is Dallas, Texas, in the Western south division of the region. In many ways the borders of the South can be determined by noting the boundaries of Southern Baptist predominance in religious affiliation. Incidentally, the South is the only major region in America without a large Catholic presence.

From a political and social viewpoint the Midwest is centred on Chicago. The section maintains the continuing and special viewpoint of the interior. However, culturally the area varies so greatly from north to south that it is necessary to distinguish between Upper Midwest and Central Midwest regions. Yet again, the attitude toward politics in the region has been called "moralistic". Here politics is regarded as equally the concern of all. Ideas and ideals should determine policies, it is felt, not the balance of interests common to the professional politics of the South.
The Rocky Mountain region is the least well defined of the cultural regions in America. The people here are more interested in their own identity than in the development of a regional sense. The mixture of the peoples that make up the region is as representative of the nation as a whole as that of the central Midwest.

The attitudes of the people in the Rocky Mountain region have always reflected its extreme topography and climate. The attention of the area is focused on its mineral and environmental resources and their exploitation. It is a frontier area, the true home of the cowboy and the sheepherder, of the skier, the hiker, and the climber.

The Mormon region of southeast Idaho and Utah illustrates most vividly the difference between defining regions by physical geography or economic criteria, and defining them in cultural terms Utah was established in the middle of the nineteenth century in the New England tradition as a model state based on a particular religious vision. The Mormon community that developed around the Mormon religion, and as such was driven out of several areas because of its religious beliefs and practices.

The Interior Southwest region is confined largely to the states of Arizona and New Mexico. For a long formative period the basic pattern here was one of coexistence among Spanish-Americans, Texans, tourists and several persistent American Indian peoples. Although the inflow has been heavy in recent years from all parts the original patterns are still important. And much of the region remains in the hands of Indian groups that are also rapidly growing in numbers.

The Pacific Southwest region is primarily California; indeed, for many people “the West” is California. In the peopling of the state settles from the Northeast tended to settle in the San Francisco area and those from Midwest in Southern California.
especially desirable climate of California’s coastal areas, however, has continued a pull in people from the entire country for over a hundred years, including many of America's most progressive and best educated. The attitude and faith of the people have been highly democratic and optimistic, and its wealth had made it possible to meet the needs of its general citizenry more adequately than elsewhere.

The Pacific Northwest has a sparse population and has developed slowly. Compared to neighbouring regions its population has received a larger contribution from the people of the Upper Midwest and New England as well as from Scandinavia, Germany, and Great Britain. It is a Protestant area and one with few recent immigrants.

The Alaskan region comprises Alaska, which is both a state and a region, or group of proto regions. It is still a frontier area with a low percentage of native-born -- aside from the Indians and Eskimos. That latter have profited recently from a settlement in the courts concerning their mineral and oil rights. They now have enough wealth to become a permanent force in the area. The Hawaiian region is a particularly desirable place for most Americans. Aside from extreme southern Florida it is the only tropical part of the United States. It is also the only region group where non-Whites dominate life. The largest single ethnic group in Hawaii is of Japanese background, but Filipinos, Chinese, Samoans, people of native Hawaiian ancestry, and mainland Americans join in the mixture. Thus these broad divisions in America serve to study the diverse cultural patterns that commingle in America.

The major cultural patterns are the contributions of the Jews and the Blacks. One cannot ignore the politics of difference among the various peoples of differing racial origins. The Chinese American never gives up his Chinese identity. But he enters
the Mainstream American culture. The same is the case with the Asian American, Russian American, Jewish American, and African American. It is an un-hyphenated state of racial identity and American identity. The earlier system of total assimilation - - melting pot theory - - is replaced by the salad bowl pattern - - - the immigrants retain their separate racial identity, and at the same time maintain their American identity. Culturally there is the basis of ethnic and religious difference in America. In fact, cultural diversity and religious toleration are American success stories. Michael Walzer makes a pointed observation, in this context, and it is worth quoting here [What It Means to Be an American: Essays on the American Experience, 1994, p. 9]:

• . . immigrants to the United States came one by one, or family by family, and though they sought out (and were sometimes locked into) segregated neighbourhoods, they avoided any larger segregation, moving freely around the country and creating radically mixed states and cities. Hence, no one group was able to determine for long the character even of local governments. In some general way, the particular culture of the country [America] as a whole was English and Protestant, but this culture was never firmly established either in the symbols or the substance of law and policy. Nor did the immigrant groups assimilate entirely into the dominant culture. To varying degrees, they resisted it, sustaining separate cultural identities; so that the United States took shape as a “nation of nationalities” (the phrase comes from a pluralism by the American Jewish political theorist Horace Kallen, writing in the 1910s). At the same time, most of the immigrants became citizens and in this very
important sense “Americans” The United States is a political nation of cultural identities. . . .

Incidentally, American intellectuals argue that man is naturally social, and emotionally inclined to find such concepts as justice, and mercy personally satisfying, and hence beautiful. A virtuous life achieves a balance between natural affections (the inclination toward public good), and self-reflections (the inclination toward private good), and so produces happiness. Personal pleasure and public welfare are thus interdependent in the ordered, harmonious balance of the universe; the good and the beautiful are ultimately one.

With such a perspective the perceptive and critically oriented reader examines the Oeuvres of Bellow, Malamud, and Roth to identify their characters as suffering cultural divide in America. The characters of Bellow and Malamud and Roth turn into so many psychic case studies, because of the Jewry overwhelmingly control them in the face of the American identity, which they cannot disregard, if they are to remain in America. In fact, the fictions of Bellow and Malamud and Roth lend themselves to an admirable and adequate psychoanalytical study. Their heroes are examined from the point of view of how human psychology operates in them. Moreover, some of them project themselves as psychic case studies. They embody the principle of crescendo, because it parallels certain psychic and physical processes, which are at the roots of their experience.

Systematic, objective observations of overt behaviour, including verbal behaviour serve as the sources to infer the mental processes of the principal characters, introduced by Bellow and Malamud, the two Jewish American geniuses. From the
psychoanalytical angle there is a careful study of their feelings, thoughts, and experiences, conduct, and the many variables, such as biological, sociological, and personal features. Encyclopaedia Britannica defines it thus [XIX, 1979, p. 470]:

Psychology is the scientific study of the behaviour of humans . . .the term, behaviour, refers both to covert observable (internal) mental processes and states such as perception, thought, reasoning, problem-solving, emotions, and feelings. . . .

If psychology is concerned with the processes of mental activity, art gives verbal expression to those mental processes. In the social fabric of America the original system open to the immigrants was to accept total assimilation at the cost of the erosion of their racial cultural heritage. For instance a Jew had to lose his distinct Jewish identity and merge with the Americans by entering into the Mainstream American culture totally. It was, in fine, a merging of the races for the evolution of what it is to be an American. The policy then was that America stood as the Melting Pot of races [popularized by Israel Zangwill as the metaphor of the Melting Pot].

After the founding of the American Republic, America turned into a multi-ethnic country mainly because of the massive infusion of immigrants from almost everywhere. Incidentally, the population of America exceeds the combined populations of Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Ireland, Israel, Austria, and Czechoslovakia. More relevant to the point at hand, the volume of immigration to the United States thus far has surpassed that of all other major immigrant-receiving countries taken together. At issue is what it has meant to be an American in a nation whose history has denied its people the bond of a common paternity. Arthur Mann quoting the pertinent question raised by J. Hector St.
John de Crevecoeur argues the point thus ["From Immigration to Acculturation", in Luther S. Luedtke’s Making of America, 1988, p. 68]: J. Hector St. John de Crevecoeur had such considerations in mind when he asked in 1782:

“What then I the American, this new man?” The War of Independence was drawing to a close, and Crevecoeur - - a French immigrant married to a native New Yorker of English descent - - perceived that his adopted country, peopled by diverse stocks from across the Atlantic, contained a strange mixture of blood, which you will find in no other country. . . .

Seven decades after Crevecoeur called attention to the varied roots of his contemporaries, the novelist Herman Melville exclaimed [Quoted in “From Immigration to Acculturation”, in Luther S. Luedtke’s Making of America, 1988, p. 70]: “You cannot spill a drop of American blood without spilling the blood of the whole world”. Many migrations later, according to Government statisticians prior to World War I, some sixty different ethnic groups lived all over the United States. There are at present over a hundred of them.

The Founding Fathers of the American republic, with foresight, devised a law regarding the means to absorb the immigrants and acculturate them. A uniform naturalization procedure was authorized by the American Constitution and written into law by the first Congress in 1790. A revised version of that statute passed in 1802 still remains in force. On this point Arthur Mann analytically observes thus [“From Immigration to Acculturation”, in Luther S. Luedtke’s Making of America, 1988, p. 71]:

This law defines the terms by which newcomers with a bewildering variety of backgrounds are able to join the host people as citizens of a republic. Over the objections of a minority of lawmakers who wanted a long probationary period, the 1802 act set a five-year residence requirement, which was judged sufficient for immigrants to familiarize themselves with American life, to show intent to remain here, and to demonstrate good moral character. . . .
The lawmakers of 1802 were governed by ideals, not only by reasons of state, in prescribing that the foreign-born merge with the host people in a common citizenship. To refer to J. Hector St. John de Crevecoeur again, for it is significant and relevant in the present context. Crevecoeur is mentioned by Luther S. Luedtke [Quoted in *Making of America*, 1988, p. 8]:

What then is the American, this new man? He is either a European or a descendent or a European, hence that strange mixture of blood, which you will find in no other country. I could point out to you a family whose grandfather was an Englishman, whose wife was Dutch, whose son married a French woman, and whose present four sons have now four wives of different nations. *He* is a American, who leaving behind him all his ancient prejudices and manners, receives new ones from the new mode of life he has embraced, the new government he obeys, and the new rank he holds. . . . He becomes an American by being received in the broad lap of our *Alma Mater*. Here individuals of all nations are melted into a new race of men, whose labours and prosperity will one day cause great changes in the world [Italics as in the Original]. . . .

It ought to be stressed that the United States of America does not offer legal recognition to ethnic groups; none lives in an historic homeland of his own; and with few exceptions they have lost their original languages.

In this context, the pointed observation of George Santayana is worth recording here [Quoted in Luther S. Luedtke’s *Making of America*, 1988, p. 7]:
As it happens, the symbolic American can be made largely adequate to the facts; because, if there are immense differences between individual Americans . . . yet there is a great uniformity in their environment, customs, temper, and thoughts. They have all been uprooted from their several soils and ancestries and plunged together into one vortex, whirling irresistibly in a space otherwise quite empty. To be an American is of itself almost a moral condition, an education, and a career . . . .

It is of immediate interest to make a note of the assertion of Luther S. Luedtke and read it in conjunction with that of George Santayana quoted above [Making of America, 1988, p. 10]:

While Americans may hyphenate their identities for particular or communal reasons -- as Irish-Americans, Afro-Americans, Asian-Americans -- they unite under higher principles to endorse their common citizenship. Merely to remind ourselves of its ideological core, of course, hardly does justice to the colourful skein of American life today or the complex and manifold way in which an American identity has evolved . . . .

And the present trend is to advocate the salad bowl philosophy, where the ethnic groups such as the Jewish Americans, or the African Americans remain un-hyphenated. In other words they do not remain on the periphery of the Mainstream American culture but enter into the centre stream. But at the same intellectuals such as Saul Bellow, Malamud, and Roth argue for a separate ethnic identity.
Broadly speaking, ethnicity is concerned with a group of people distinguished by common, cultural, and frequently racial characteristics. The members of most ethnic groups have a sense of group identity, and the larger culture within which they live recognizes them as a distinct aggregation. Ethnic groups are usually numerous in America inhabited by people of many different national origins.

A number of internal and external forces tend to keep ethnic groups united and reinforce their cultural distinctiveness. Prejudicial treatment of members of an ethnic group by members of the larger culture of the majority group restricts interaction between the groups. Restrictions, codified or unwritten are laced by the major group on smaller ethnic groups. This leaves the ethnic groups at a great disadvantage when compared with what is enjoyed by the majority group. Feelings of racial and cultural superiority sometimes work toward preserving ethnic groups. Members of an ethnic group take up residence in special areas and attempt to exclude members of other groups.

Linguistic, religious, and moral differences between an ethnic group, such as the Jewish American ethnic group or the African American ethnic group, the majority and larger culture group persists. But then, prolonged mingling of ethnic groups almost inevitably results in an eventual combination of groups into a new group that is a cultural and racial composite of previously separate ethnic groups. At this juncture a brief review of ethnocentrism becomes necessary. Ethnocentrism is the tendency of human groups to judge external phenomena with reference to attitudes and values that are specific to the group. The American sociologist William Graham Sumner argues that one’s own group is the centre of everything, and all others are scaled and rated with reference to it.
Ethnocentrism usually takes the form of wariness and distrust of outside groups and a belief in the unquestioned superiority of one’s own people. Ethnocentrism, then, is characteristically a human and ubiquitous attitude influencing judgments about outside ethnic groups and the members of those outside ethnic groups.

Cultural differences especially tend to intensify ethnocentric ideas. This is probably one reason why conflict between ethnic groups is frequently and exceptionally bitter and extensive when racial distinctions are concerned. This accounts for the conflicting attitudes between the Americans and the Jewish Americans on one side, and between the Americans and the African Americans on the other side, in the American social fabric.

Ethical dualism is one remarkable characteristic of ethnocentric beliefs. For instance, destruction of property or lives of others is almost always considered criminal within a group, but it is applauded when it occurs in the course of inter ethnic group conflicts. Also remarkable is the tendency to endow whole groups with characteristics usually ascribed to individuals. Thus, the other ethnic group characterizes one ethnic group as slovenly and slow-witted.

Furthermore, ethnocentrism helps justify actions thought to be in the group’s best interests. Sometimes these actions take the form of armed conflict or the systematic persecution of other ethnic groups, such as the persecution of Jews, Poles, and others by the Nazis, who tried to justify themselves by using ethnocentric -- pro-German and anti-Semitic -- arguments. Individuals of different ethnic origins and in fact different ethnic groups act in their own self-interest.
The attitudes and beliefs that are part of ethnocentrism facilitate that particular ethnic group’s coordination, and help justify activities that benefit that particular ethnic group, and ensure that particular ethnic group’s long range stability.

Ethnocentric attitudes are an integral part of cultures and subcultures and are a direct result of the fact that the individual’s experience is limited to only one culture, nation, or region. Some reduction in the intensity of ethnocentrism accompanies more extensive communication between groups. But as long as cultural and regional differences exist, ethnocentric attitudes and beliefs will prevail. This is the case with ethnic groups, the Jewish American and African Americans. Both these ethnic groups, the Jewish Americans and the African Americans, have experienced similar racial predicaments.

Both the ethnic groups have suffered displacement, disorientation, resettlement and reorientation -- Diaspora. They have experienced nostalgia, and cultural divide. The Jewish Americans have passed through several displacements and the consequent readjustment to new surroundings.

On the religious score they suffer persecution at the hands of other races of the Christian faith. It is because the Jews accept Jesus Christ only as a prophet and not as a Messiah. They maintain that they are still waiting for the coming of the Messiah. On the other hand, Christians all over the world accept Jesus Christ as the Son of God and the Messiah and they are waiting for the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. This sharp religious difference apart, the Jews are looked down upon for their usury and for their group mentality.
The Jews in many respects are unique among the peoples of the world. After some twelve centuries in their own country, during which they created and developed universal ethical monotheism, which became the foundation of Christianity and Islam, they were scattered throughout the world.

In this condition, known as the Diaspora, they maintained everywhere their own identity. Throughout the Diaspora the Jews maintained emotional and religious ties to their Holy Land and, beginning in the late nineteenth century, organized politically for a return to their homeland. Despite losing six million -- or 40% of their total number -- to the Nazi holocaust during World War II, the Jews fulfilled their dream of two millennia with the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948.

It is interesting to record, that the English term, Jew, derived by way of Greek Ioudaios and the Latin Judacus from the Hebrew Yehudi, originally applied to members of the tribe of Judah and in late Biblical times to Jews in general [Esther, 2:5]. In early Biblical times the ancestors of the Jews called themselves Children of Israel, from the name that Jacob was given after his encounter with the angel [Genesis 32:29]. In contact with foreigners they called themselves Ivrin -- people from beyond the river -- from which came the Latin Hebraeus, the Old French Hebreu or Ebreu, and the English Hebrew used as an alternative for Jew. From the name Children of Israel is derived the English term Israelite, which from the nineteenth century, was also used in the sense of Jew. Although the Jews were spread throughout the world, they considered themselves a nation, or rather a people -- Hebrew, am yehudi -- Jewish people -- or am Yisrael -- people of Israel. The historical consciousness of being a people of God sustained the Jews during their long history.
The only generally accepted definition of a Jew is the one based on the
*Halakhah*, the traditional Jewish religious law, according to which a Jew is a person
who either was born to a Jewish mother or converted to Judaism. Legend like accounts
in the Biblical book of *Genesis* is the only direct source for the origins of the
Hebrews and the lives of their first ancestors, Patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

The survival of the Jews of the *Diaspora* as a people after the destruction of the
Temple and the State of Judea was due primarily to the development of the synagogue
as the centre of their religious life. Replacing the loyalty of the Jews to the land of Israel
and its religious authorities was the messianic hope of a future redemption and the
reestablishment of the throne of David in Jerusalem.

Concerning the Jewish culture, it ought to be stressed that Jewish popular beliefs
and customs often go hand in hand. Folk custom is perhaps the richest branch of Jewish
culture. Much of it goes back to Biblical or *Talmudic* sources, although its bulk derives
from post-talmudic times, often under the influence of the Gentile environment. For
example, Jews in many countries visit the tombs of saintly rabbis, revealing belief in
their miraculous powers. The belief in the evil eye and the measures against it were
widespread among the Jews of many lands, as were magical folk remedies.

The major categories of Jewish customs relate to religious life and the religious
calendar -- prayers, festivals, feasts, and fasts -- and to the human life cycle -- birth,
coming of age, marriage, death. Occasionally, Jewish folk custom harboured elements
that contravened the ritual rules of the *Halakhah*. In such cases custom usually prevailed
and the rabbis gave it their tacit approval.
The Holy Bible and post-Biblical literature [Talmud, Midrash] have preserved much folklore, which in turn influenced and was elaborated by subsequent generations. The most original of all the genres of Jewish literature are the legends, which often have a religious or national character. Among these, tales of the Ten Lost Tribes of Israel, Elijah, the Messianic era, the Holy Land, blood libels, miracle-working rabbis, proselytes, ghosts, and spirits, and the Golem are the most notable.

An important consideration in the study of the Jewish culture is the extent to which it has absorbed foreign motifs. Jewish merchants brought tales from the East to the West. Jewish culture is expressed in the decorations and ceremonial objects in the synagogue, such as the Holy Ark and the Torah ornaments, and in the home, such as the candlesticks for the Sabbath and festivals, the Hanukkah menorah, the Passover seder plate, and the menuzuzah for the door post. Some books, such as the Scroll of Esther, and the Passover Haggadah usually were illustrated.

The Jewish music that qualified Jewish culture and is a major aspect of the Jewish cultural heritage is both vocal and instrumental. The musical scale and the melodies used in Jewish music, as well as the musical instruments, closely resemble those of the countries in which the Jews live. All the same the Jews suffer from nostalgic memories of their homeland. It is interesting to record the definition of the term, nostalgia, as given in Everyman's Encyclopaedia [III Ed., Vol. IX, 1949, p. 781]:

[Nostalgia] return home, or homesickness. It is sometimes a early phase of melancholia, but is usually a psychic manifestation merely. It varies in intensity from a sentimental inclination to think fondly of the homeland
to an uncontrollable desire to return and a settled dislike of one’s present surroundings. . . .

Thus, the cultural heritage and racial characteristics of the Jews are unique and the Jews maintain their own separate identity wherever they live. As such, the Jewish Americans are Americans in the true spirit of the term.

But the Jews in America do not lose their separate Jewish identity. Only with such a background one better appreciates the fictions of Bellow, Malamud and Roth. One studies the fictions of Saul Bellow to appreciate his viewpoints on racism in America. Saul Bellow projects the Jewish Americans as symbols of suffering because of racial discrimination. The Jewish Americans represent the existential loners in the modern world experiencing Angst, anguish, the Sturm-und-Drang - - stresses and strains - - nausea, regrets, fears and sufferings and struggles. The dominant predicaments that the protagonist of Saul Bellow experience are that life is one of struggle, and that in struggle is existence, and that life is marked by endless suffering because of the anti-Semitic attitudes of the majority group in America. In this context, a significant poem of Edward Estlin Cummings argues to the point and it is worth quoting here [Complete Poems: 1913-1962, 1972, p. 644]:

    a kike is the most dangerous
    machine as yet invented
    by every yankee ingenu
    ity(out of a jew a few
    dead dollars and some twisted laws)
    it comes both prigged and cunted. . . .
And the *Angst* and anguish that the heroes of Saul Bellow experience are particularly Jewish in character. John Jacob Clayton qualifies the Jewish tradition of suffering thus [*Saul Bellow: In Defense of Man*, 1979, pp. 50 and 53]:

[Bellow’s protagonists] are pathological social masochists filled with guilt and self-hatred; needing to suffer and to fall . . . these masochists attempt to exercise their guilt by self-punishing suffering. . . .

On the view of suffering in Bellow’s fiction Allan Chavkin’s observation is worthy of consideration in conjunction with that of John Jacob Clayton. Allan Chavkin argues thus [“The Problem of Suffering in the Fiction of Saul Bellow”, *C L S*, xxiv (Summer 1984), 162]:

To understand his [Bellow’s] Canon one must take into account his sophisticated attitude towards suffering and consider influences, which have contributed to that attitude. Of these, four can be isolated as the most important: Dostoevskian humanism, English romanticism, Jewish comedy, and anti-modernism - - or, to be more precise Bellow’s interpretations of these traditions. According to Bellow, in contrast to modernism’s denigration of man and his suffering is the faith of these traditions in the potential nobility of man and the concomitant belief in the importance of his suffering [My Emphasis]. . . .

In the manner of Fyodor Dostoevsky, Saul Bellow maintains that suffering is an unavoidable act of human experience, and it is condition of freedom and mature awareness. Dostoevsky’s definition of suffering is referred to by Saul Bellow [“The Sealed Creature”, in *The Open Form: Essays for Our Time*, 1965, p. 19]:
Like it or not, it is our nature to be free and under the sting of suffering to choose between good and evil.

The romantic attitude is based on the concept of the inextricability of suffering, maturity, and freedom. To quote Allan Chavkin again ["The Problem of Suffering in the Fiction of Saul Bellow", CL S, xxi (Summer 1984), 162]:

To be human is to make decisions and to act in a world full of misery and heartbreak. Maturity comes about only as a result of experience, and experience always involves suffering.

But Saul Bellow is not prepared to subscribe to the victim literature related by the modernists in which the individual is defeated by forces beyond his control. But he contends that the sufferings of the Jewish Americans are because of their racial predicaments in America.

Therefore, Saul Bellow bases his art on the power of imagination to create order notwithstanding the depressing conditions for the Jewish Americans because of the racial predicaments in America.

In this context, Saul Bellow strongly recommends that life must be based on certain values. He wants the protagonists to transcend their environment so as to feel redeemed of their suffering and be freed of the racial predicaments, and racial discrimination. In this context, Earl Rovit makes a pointed statement, which is worth recoding here [Saul Bellow, 1967, p. 97]:

Bellow attacks racism for its rejection of the concept of the individual self and human values. But Bellow maintains that life can go on
notwithstanding the depressing and frustrating and dehumanizing conditions in the modern Kafkan Wasteland world.

Saul Bellow invites men and women to transcend their environment and overcome the harsh actualities arising out of racial discrimination in America. He wants them to read the nobility and greatness of man by exercising the power of their imagination.

As such the hero of Saul Bellow faces the worst racial discrimination in life and tries to cast it off and become human. But then Bellow does not ignore the conditions of alienation, loneness, despair, Angst, and anguish and suffering experienced by the Jew because of racial discrimination in America.

Joseph of *Dangling Man* finds his existence one of suffering and struggle in America. Because he is a Canadian born Jew he suffers racial discrimination. His draft call is delayed. It causes him harassment and mental anguish. He feels that the world is a closed, hopeless prison. He stores bitterness, and spite, and mentally suffers. He struggles against the harsh racial realities. He decides to give himself up, not that he has finally pitched upon the right path, but that it is the inevitable one. He experiences a release from the sure cyclical distress of certain thoughts. Joseph tentatively speculates about his future thus [*Dangling Man*, 1944, p. 158]:

... perhaps that war could teach me, by violence, what I had been unable to learn during those months in the room. Perhaps I [Joseph] could sound certain through other means. Perhaps, the next move was the world's....
Joseph, then, with the realism open to mortality of flesh, makes a conscious decision to remain a man keenly intent on knowing what is existentially happening to him.

Asa Leventhal is the protagonist of Bellow’s fiction, *The Victim*. Leventhal’s racial predicaments revolve around his nausea over his past actions that trouble him and his sense of threat, the pressures exercised by Elena and Albee and the spectre of insanity that draws nearer.

Human affinities contingent upon love and guilt focus for Leventhal the uncertainties of his circumstances. He struggles to free himself from his uneasiness without disavowing those human affinities. This defines his struggle in the face of racial discrimination.

Leventhal’s racial predicament surfaces in the form of the cognitive dilemma that he confronts. To Leventhal things and people “appeared”, “seemed”, “looked”, “sounded”, thus and so; they “may be”, “probably”. “perhaps”, “possibly” were; “must have”, “might have”, “may have”, been; he Leventhal “sensed”, “felt”, “thought”, “guessed”, “suspected”, “imagined”, what “could be the case” *.

Moreover, life for Leventhal has always been a push, a violent struggle to get and then to maintain a precarious position. His racial predicaments lie in his suffering to push his way forward against other people and against all the obstacles, and in his struggling against the American Society and the Establishment, that rebound on him for

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deviating from their prescriptive, rules, and regulations. Being a Jewish American he, struggles against the officials who push him from pillar to post because of his Jewish race. The dream that he has epitomizes his racial predicaments [The Victim, 1947, pp. 168-169]:

He [Asa Leventhal] was in a railroad station, carrying a heavy suitcase, forcing his way with it through a crowd . . . . There was a recoil of the crowd - - the guards must have been pushing it back and he found himself in a corridor, which was freshly paved and plastered. It seemed to lead down to the tacks. “May be they’ve just opened this and I am the first to find it”, he thought. He began to run and suddenly came to a barrier, a moveable frame, resembling a saw-horse. Holding the suitcase before him. He pushed it aside. Two men stopped him. “You can’t go through. I’ve got people working here”, one of them said. He wore a business suit and a fedora, and he looked like a contractor . . . Leventhal turned and a push on the shoulder sent him into an alley. His face was covered with tears. A few people noticed this, but he did not care about them [My Emphasis] . . . .

The dream suggestively implies to Leventhal that life is one of cutthroat competition and a crowded race where the one who belongs to a racial minority such as a Jew has to struggle and suffer.

The racial predicament revolves around one of suffering being pushed about and the same person struggling to push others out of the race. It turns out to be one pushing others and the same one being pushed about by others.
Augie March of *The Adventures of Augie March* passes through suffering because of racial discrimination. His racial predicament primarily lies in his centre-less existence. He struggles and suffers to seek a fixed centre of stillness. But he experiences distances, discrimination and racial predicaments. He is a travelling man travelling by himself, and going everywhere sounding fake notes of euphoria.

Daniel B. Martin's observation throws further light on the point that is made, and it is worth quoting here ["Saul Bellow" in *Dictionary of Literary Biography*, 1978, p. 43]:

Augie remains in the bondage of strangeness for a time still trapped in the paradoxical motion of getting to be still. His declaration of freedom becomes the revelation of his bondage. And his final self-irony defines rather than resolves his dilemma. . . .

As stated earlier Augie March believes that there are two ways of approaching life. One can accept the reality of everyday occurrences and thus submit to drudgery and commonplace, or one can rise above normalcy and seek a more triumphant life. Notwithstanding his attempts to remain innocent, optimistic, adventurous, and unbeaten, Augie March encounters a number of devastating occurrences, which finally shatters his idealism.

Augie March's experiences pressures from all quarters because of his being a Jew. He experiences suffering that come to him in the form of Minie Villars, and an incompetent Doctor, and his friend, and Lucy Magnus, and Simon. After these traumas Augie March loses much of his innocence and he bemoans thus [*The Adventures of Augie March*, 1953, p. 318]:
... [He] was no child now, neither in age nor in protectedness, and [he] was thrown for fair on the free spinning of the world...

Augie March fully comprehends that his initial innocence is lost. He feels that he has to seek a new Eden in which he can retrieve his innocence that he has lost. That is precisely why he travels to Mexico. He defines his racial predicament thus [The Adventures of Augie March, 1953, p. 318]:

That in any true life you must go and be exposed outside the small circle that encompasses two or three heads in the same history of love. Try and stay, though, inside. See how long you can...

Because of his Jewish race, in Mexico everything turns out to be frustrating, disappointing, and depressing. Not only does he suffer an accident in which his skull is cracked, but also drifts apart, fight, and end their relationship. Instead of having his lost innocence retrieved he sinks deeper into states of despair and frustration. He is not able to escape from his racial predicaments, aloneness, suffering, Angst, and anguish. He discloses his mind thus [The Adventures of Augie March, 1953, p. 447]:

... suddenly my [Augie March’s] heartfelt ugly. I was sick of myself. I thought that my aim of being simple was just a fraud, that I wasn’t a bit good-hearted or affectionate, and I began to wish that Mexico from beyond the walls would come in and kill one, and that I would be thrown in the bone dust, and twisted spiky crosses of the cemetery, for the insects and lizards...

Influenced by Dostoevskian humanism and Wordsworthian romanticism, Saul Bellow examines the theme of racism and the consequent suffering in Herzog. In
Herzog, Saul Bellow indulges in the most punishing attack on the nightmares of racism thus [Herzog, 1962, p. 384]:

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Saul Bellow maintains that suffering because of racism in America is redemptive. Saul Bellow, like Dr. Tamkin of Seize the Day, presents himself in Herzog, through his alter-ego, Herzog, as a healer whose mission is to release men from the guilt ridden burdens of their past mistakes, relieve the pressures of anxieties and tensions - - Angst - - and stresses and strains - - Sturm-und-Drang - - stemming from racism, and restore their capacity for love, affirmation, and fulfilment. Saul Bellow makes Herzog realize the monstrousness of human suffering, but at the same time to positive value of redeeming the sufferer. In fact, Herzog continually meditates upon his great schooling in grief. He remembers his pitiful childhood suffering at the hands of the vicious hordes of Reality Instructors. He desperately seeks for redeeming truth that will justify a life full of anguish.

Herzog experiences racial predicaments. As a result he suffers from Angst, anguish, and nausea. He finds life to be a continual struggle. He suffers both in body and
mind. Notwithstanding these racial predicaments he reads affirmation. It ought to be noted that Herzog pursues truth as a secular humanist and as a racial sufferer.

Herzog comes close to madness because of the intensity of his own psychological suffering. He identifies very strongly in a Whitmanesque manner with the sufferings of others. Herzog's suffering borders occasionally on self-punishing masochism. Herzog understands that suffering breaks people and crushes them. But he believes that suffering is illuminating. That is why Herzog in his important letter to Professor Mermeistein expresses his vehement repudiation of the nihilistic consequences of the Wasteland outlook. In that letter he argues for a more realistic attitude thus [Herzog, 1962, p. 317]:

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Thus, Saul Bellow offers his perspectives on suffering stemming from racism and sexism and violence.

Saul Bellow concentrates on the experiences of the immigrant Jew in America. It is a fact of the fictional world that Saul Bellow's response to Jewish-ness is complete, striking, and realistic. As the representative Jewish American fictionist Saul Bellow is
mainly preoccupied with the complex fate of being a Jew in America and he realistically renders the Jews experience of acculturation in America.

It ought to be noted that Saul Bellow does not project Jewish-ness as an eminently marketable commodity among perceptive and critically oriented readers in America. Neither does Saul Bellow place the emphasis on the secular trans-ethnic values or the vaunted alienation of the Jew in America as his passport to enter into the heart of the Gentile American culture.

On the other hand, Saul Bellow, the creative genius, purveys the Jewish ethnic ideas realistically. He asserts with candour that he is a Jew fully conscious of his Jewish heritage, and Diaspora and suffering. He sustainably projects his Jewish characters governed by their deep sense of humanism, though they pass through their racial predicaments of suffering, struggle, Angst, the Sturm-und-Drang of life, pain and misery.

In the context of the humanistic concerns of his heroes, Saul Bellow’s statement that every man is a Jew is so valid, relevant, and is of consequence. He argues that the Jew is not a creature of a particular race but the Jew is a paradigm of human values and Saul Bellow’s Jewish-ness is a type of metaphor for anyone’s life.

In fact, Saul Bellow uses the idiom and colour of Jewish life not as mere folklore but to express, in a context that he feels as his, the general human predicament. Therefore, he moves from Jewish experience to non-Jewish experience, and thereby invests his fictions with that lasting quality.
Saul Bellow projects the Jew in America as the type of the suffering self. And the Jew's sufferings are due to his alienation, a constant struggle, mental and physical anguish, Jewish heritage, which he refuses to shed, and his Angst, and his acute poverty.

Incidentally, Saul Bellow maintains that the suffering Jew does not surrender to despair. He does not allow himself to be crushed by suffering, which is a racial inevitability. He uses this experience of suffering to gain nobility of character and turn humanistic. To escape from suffering, stemming from racism, sexism, and violence in America, is impossible. In fact, one learns to be a compassionating soul embracing humanistic concerns of love, kindness, goodness, and mercy.

Saul Bellow's world often proposes a kind of hard-won eked-out saintliness: suffering and spiritual goodness are somehow linked. For Saul Bellow all Jews are Jobs and all Jobs are good men.

Saul Bellow's heroes suffer deeply because of racial predicaments, but they are also secular men whose suffering is not always voluntary, undertaken wholly for exacted reasons, or blessed by great rewards. His real concern is for the social and moral aspects of suffering as they impinge upon personality.

Saul Bellow has a view of man, which perceives the property of conscience, the seeking to be better, not as a divine mystery but as natural to humans as skin, hair, voice. Yet this basically optimistic concept of human nature is checked by an almost equally persistent view of man as greedy, treacherous, lustful, and often vicious.

Cheerful idealist and hard-eyed realist peer through the same bifocals. Consequently Saul Bellow's depictions of suffering as a result of racial predicaments
are ambivalent; in each of his major characters altruism and materialism combine as motives for self-sacrifice.

Through his fictions Saul Bellow strikes an affirmative note by arguing that man can redefine his life in the face of racial discrimination, denials, deprivations, exploitation, and dehumanization. The greatness of his fictions lies in his ability to treat the racial predicament of suffering comprehensively.

Moreover, Saul Bellow marries the imaginatively born unreal with the factually real. Though his fiction is compassionate and profound in its wry humour, it vividly captures the poetry of human relationships. More significant than their ethnic classification is the resonance of life that his fictions create.

Saul Bellow’s fiction as a whole tends to be an affirmation of man’s ability to realize himself even in the face of racial discrimination, denials, deprivations, exploitation, and dehumanization. The point that is made here is that suffering stemming from racial discrimination promotes humanism in the sufferer. After all what is against the credit of the individual is how he gives credit to the other as a human being.

Saul Bellow argues that the Jew serves to represent the Jew’s racial predicament as an isolated, displaced loner, who has the potential for achieving moral transcendence through suffering that engenders insight and a commitment to love.

Saul Bellow maintains that goodness is its own reward and evil inflicts its own punishments. Saul Bellow projects these hard realities concerning one’s Jewish existence in his fictions.
Furthermore, Saul Bellow argues that no suffering can be redeemed by any act of God or the State. The only "solution" [according to Saul Bellow] possible for the problem of evil is for people to respect and nourish each other, now during this life. And only a Schlemiel would choose the intangible spiritual rewards of goodness over the material benefits of narrow self-interest. And, Saul Bellow's association of suffering with Jewry is not merely sentimental. It also contains a hardened realism.

Saul Bellow projects his protagonist as the sufferer, who passes through his racial predicaments with patience and endurance. He is painfully, and even with pride is aware of the tragic undercurrents of human existence. He demonstrates that suffering is the expression of true goodness.

It must be admitted that Bellow himself is essentially depressive and his imagination is horrified by the emptiness of modern life in a culturally divided America. That is why it is precisely argued that Bellow is a psychological novelist before he is a social fictionist, or moral spokesman.

Bellow finds himself in a self-imposed prison. This condition damages his sense of reality and fills him with delusions, and turns him into a paranoid. And his life gets devalued through stagnation. And in the end he summarily abandons the values with which he has tussled all along. Joseph expresses his sense of defeat thus [Dangling Man, 1944, p. 191]:

I [Joseph] am no longer to be held accountable for myself; I am grateful for that. I am in other hands, relied on self-determination, freedom cancelled. Hurray for regular hours! And for the supervision of the spirits! Long live regimentation! . . .
But then Bellow maintains that the individual can move out of his depressive mania by casting off his burdens and thereby redeem himself. He can demonstrate to the world that the life of the individual is not one of dusty irrelevancy and that dignity can be salvaged from the wreckage. As such Bellow recommends a culture that is essentially affirmative.

Therefore, Bellow persistently tries to find the solution to the contradiction to individuality from the point of view of a psychologist. Understandably, his heroes aim at becoming worthy of unburdening their guilty selves, and by entering the shared condition of all. And the struggle to escape the darkness describes the psychic condition of Bellow’s heroes. Tony Tanner makes a pointed observation, which is worth quoting here [Saul Bellow, 1978, pp. 18-19]:

The American hero has, indeed, habitually been thrown back upon himself, enduring a state of sombre aloneness, which survives all surface changes of mood. No matter what relish of life he evinces he gives the air of brooding apart, though the apartness is not a state of supine self-pity. Usually he is questing, searching, speculating, either for some superior form of truth, or some richer reality, or some affirmative mode of true reconciliation with the world he inclines to renounce. But Joseph’s America has fallen under the shadow of Hitler’s Europe and instead of Thoreau’s pastoral self-communing, his diary aches with the exacerbated self-probing of a man up to his neck in modern history. Joseph oscillates between corrosive inertia and compulsive self-inquiry, wrestling with irresolvable paradoxes of world and spirit, which have a
drastically deleterious effect on his character and bring him to the point of futility and exhaustion. . . .

Like every Bellowean hero, Tommy Wilhelm of the fiction *Seize the Day*, lives in a world of Machiavellians, who exert a real and sinister power over him and reduce him to the position of the psychological cripple. He suffers unable to cope with the terrible and ubiquitous power of money, in the dollar spinning and dollar conscious American society. He understands that in this world the dominant values are money values. The profit motive is uppermost in many. Money has become ultimately involved in man's destructive instincts.

Tommy Wilhelm is a complete victim, and the money conscious world has driven him to the wall, and he finds no way of fleeing from it. He is helpless to remove himself from this money world, and he finds everywhere suspicion, cynicism, and exploitation dominating the lives of people. Tommy Wilhelm learns some of the harsh facts of freedom, which he expresses thus [*Seize the Day*, 1956, p. 67]:

Won't talk to me about being free. A rich man may be free on a income of a million net. A poor man may be free because nobody cares what he does. But a fellow in my [Tommy Wilhelm's] position has to sweat it out until he drops dead. . . .

Paradoxically, Herzog is a defender of his father's faith and at the same time he is a backslider from his father's image. In fact, Herzog feels that he has to defend tradition precisely because he has none himself. In this context he gets identified as the culture hero. He is the sum total of all Western civilization since the Renaissance. The
relevant textual passage makes interesting reading, and it is worth quoting here [Herzog, 1965, p. 3]:

His [Moses Herzog’s] life was, as the phrase goes, ruined. But since it had not been much to begin with, ether was not much to grieve about. Thinking on the malodorous sofa, of the centuries, the nineteenth, the sixteenth, the eighteenth, he turned up, from the last saying that he liked. . . .

John Jacob Clayton conclusively argues the point thus and finally maintains that Herzog is a classic victim of paranoia [Saul Bellow: In Defense of Man, 1979, p. 206]:

Herzog, a marginal figure - - a Jew, Canadian - - born of the Russian immigrant parents, a neurotic whose problems derive not from a modern American family situation but from an unstable, rigid, Victorian-Jewish family situation - - is equated by Bellow with the culture. . . .

All the same, Herzog is a representative modern Jewish American suffering from paranoia, and neurosis, and fighting for survival in a multi cultural American society in which the Jewish American is not able to be a full mixer because of his Jewry and because of the anti-Semitic feeling persistent in America. Saul Bellow’s hero suffers because of his racial predicaments proves true James Hastings religious definition of suffering [Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics, xii, 1970, p. 22]:

Suffering, it will be urged, is a splendid moral discipline. God is present in all pain. He suffers in all suffering. He is the chief sufferer in the world. . . .

The Jewish sufferer’s dominant experiences have been to confront life’s harsh actualities, and struggle with them and suffer. He becomes a powerful example of a
sufferer encountering racial discrimination, who redeems himself. He is a classic illustration of a human being’s ability to grow spiritually in the face of injustice, insults, and indignities.

Saul Bellow projects the Jews as symbols of suffering, experiencing all the sufferings of life because of racial predicaments and offers his perspectives on suffering stemming from racism and sexism and violence. To begin with one studies the fictions of Saul Bellow to appreciate his viewpoints on racism in America. Bellow projects the Jews as symbols of suffering because of racial discrimination. They represent the existential loners in the modern world experiencing Angst, anguish, the Sturm-und-Drang -- stresses and strains -- nausea, regrets, fears and sufferings and struggles. The dominant predicaments that the protagonist of Bellow experience are that life is one of struggle, and that in struggle is existence, and that life is marked by endless suffering because of the anti-Semitic attitudes of the majority group in America. Once again a significant poem of Edward Estlin Cummings argues to the point and it is worth quoting here [Complete Poems: 1913-1962, 1972, p. 644]

a kike is the most dangerous

machine as yet invented

by every yankee ingenu

ity(out of a jew a few

dead dollars and some twisted laws)

it comes both prigged and cunted. . . .

And the Angst and anguish that the heroes of Bellow experience are particularly Jewish in character. John Jacob Clayton qualifies the Jewish tradition of suffering thus [Saul Bellow: In Defense of Man, 1979, pp. 50 and 53]:
Bellow’s protagonists are pathological social masochists filled with guilt and self-hatred, needing to suffer and to fall . . . these masochists attempt to exorcise their guilt by self-punishing suffering.

On the view of suffering in Bellow’s fiction Allan Chavkin’s observation is worthy of consideration in conjunction with that of John Jacob Clayton [“The Problem of Suffering in the Fiction of Saul Bellow”, CLS, xxi (Summer 1984), 162]:

To understand his [Bellow’s] Canon one must take into account his sophisticated attitude towards suffering and consider influences, which have contributed to that attitude. Of these, four can be isolated as the most important: Dostoevskian humanism, English romanticism, Jewish comedy, and anti-modernism - - or, to be more precise Bellow’s interpretations of these traditions. According to Bellow, in contrast to modernism’s denigration of man and his suffering is the faith of these traditions in the potential nobility of man and the concomitant belief in the importance of his suffering [My Emphasis]. . . .

In the manner of Fyodor Dostoevsky, Bellow maintains that suffering is an unavoidable state of human experience. Dostoevsky’s definition of suffering is referred to by Bellow [“The Sealed Creature”, in The Open Form: Essays for Our Time, 1965, p. 19]:

Like it or not, it is our nature to be free and under the sting of suffering to choose between good and evil. . . .

The romantic attitude is based on the concept of the inextricability of suffering, maturity, and freedom. To quote Allan Chavkin again [“The Problem of Suffering in the Fiction of Saul Bellow”, CLS, xxi (Summer 1984), 162]:
To be human is to make decisions and to act in a world full of misery and heartbreak. Maturity comes about only as a result of experience, and experience always involves suffering. . . .

But Bellow is not prepared to subscribe to the victim literature related by the modernists in which the individual is defeated by forces beyond his control. Therefore, Bellow bases his art on the power of imagination to create order notwithstanding the depressing conditions in modern age. In this context, Bellow strongly recommends that life must be based on certain values. He wants the protagonists to transcend their environment so as to feel redeemed of their suffering and be freed of the racial predicaments, and racial discrimination.

Bellow attacks racism for its rejection of the concept of the individual self and human values. But Bellow maintains that life can go on notwithstanding the depressing and frustrating and dehumanizing conditions in the modern Kafkan Wasteland world.

Bellow invites men and women to transcend their environment and to overcome the harsh actualities arising out of racial discrimination in America. He wants them to read the nobility and greatness of man by exercising the power of their imagination. As such the hero of Bellow faces the worst racial discrimination in life and tries to cast it off and become human. Bellow does not ignore the conditions of alienation, loneliness, despair, Angst, anguish and suffering experienced by the Jew because of racial discrimination in America. Joseph of *Dangling Man* finds his existence one of suffering and struggle in America. Because he is a Canadian born Jew he suffers racial
discrimination. His draft call is delayed. It causes him harassment and mental anguish. He feels that the world is a closed, hopeless prison.

He stores bitterness, and spite, and mentally suffers. He struggles against the harsh racial realities. He decides to give himself up, not that he has finally pitched upon the right path, but that it is the inevitable one. He experiences a release from the sure cyclical distress of certain thoughts. He tentatively speculates about his future thus [Dangling Man, 1944, p. 158]:

... perhaps that war could teach me, by violence, what I had been unable to learn during those months in the room. Perhaps I could sound certain through other means. Perhaps, the next move was the world’s. ...

Joseph, then, with the realism open to the mortality of flesh, makes a conscious decision to remain a man keenly intent on knowing what is existentially happening to him.

Leventhal is the protagonist of Bellow’s fiction, The Victim. Leventhal’s racial predicaments revolve around his nausea over his past actions that trouble him and his sense of threat, the pressures exercised by Elena and Albee and the spectre of insanity that draws nearer.

Human affinities contingent upon love and guilt focus for Leventhal the uncertainties of his circumstances. He struggles to free himself from his uneasiness without disavowing those human affinities. This defines his struggle in the face of racial discrimination. Yet again his racial predicament surfaces in the form of the cognitive dilemma that he confronts. To Leventhal things and people “appeared”, “seemed”, “looked”, “sounded”, thus and so; they “may be”, “probably”. “perhaps”, “possibly”
were; "must have", "might have", "may have", been; Leventhal "sensed", "felt", "thought", "guessed", "suspected", "imagined", what "could be the case.

Moreover, life for Leventhal has always been a push, a violent struggle to get and then to maintain a precarious position. His racial predicaments lie in his suffering to push his way forward against other people and against all the obstacles, and in his struggling against the American Society and the Establishment, that rebound on him for deviating from their prescriptive rules, and regulations. He struggles against the officials who push him from pillar to post because of his race. The dream that he has epitomizes his racial predicaments [The Victim, 1947, pp. 168-169]:

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*May be they've just opened this and I am the first to find it*, he thought. He began to run and suddenly came to a barrier, a moveable frame, resembling a sawhorse. Holding the suitcase before him. He pushed it aside. Two men stopped him. *You can't go through. I've got people working here,* one of them said. He wore a business suit and a fedora, and he looked like a contractor . . . Leventhal turned and a push on the shoulder sent him into an alley. His face was covered with tears. A few people noticed this, but he did not care about them [My Emphasis] . . .
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Thus Bellow offers his perspectives on suffering stemming from racism and sexism and violence.

More than Bellow, Malamud concentrates on the experiences of the immigrant Jew in America. It is a fact of the fictional world that Malamud’s response to Jewishness is complete, striking, and realistic. As the representative Jewish American fictionist he is mainly preoccupied with the complex fate of being a Jew in America and he realistically renders the Jews experience of acculturation in America.

It ought to be noted that Malamud does not project Jewish-ness as an eminently marketable commodity among perceptive and critically oriented readers in America. Neither does Malamud place the emphasis on the secular trans-ethnic values or the vaunted alienation of the Jew in America as his passport to enter into the heart of the Gentile American culture.

On the other hand, Malamud, the creative genius, purveys the Jewish ethnic ideas realistically. Malamud asserts with candour that he is a Jew fully conscious of his Jewish heritage, and Diaspora and suffering. He sustainably projects his Jewish characters governed by their deep sense of humanism, though they pass through their racial predicaments of suffering, struggle, Angst, the Sturm-und-Drang of life, pain and misery.

In the context of the humanistic concerns of his heroes, Malamud’s statement that every man is a Jew is so valid, relevant, and is of consequence. He argues that the Jew is not a creature of a particular race but the Jew is a paradigm of human values and Malamud’s Jewish-ness is a type of metaphor for anyone’s life. Norman Podhoretz
argues to the point thus ["The New Nihilism and the Novel", in Doings and Undoings: The Fifties and After in American Writing, 1954, p. 177]:

Malamud refuses to be content with a mere sociological study of the Jews. To Malamud, therefore, the Jew is humanity seen under the twin aspects of suffering and moral aspiration. . . .

In fact, Malamud uses the idiom and colour of Jewish life not as mere folklore but to express, in a context that he feels as his, the general human predicament. Therefore, he moves from Jewish experience to non-Jewish experience, and thereby invests his fictions with that lasting quality.

Malamud projects the Jew in America as the type of the suffering self. And the Jew's sufferings are due to his alienation, a constant struggle, mental and physical anguish, Jewish heritage, which he refuses to shed, and his Angst, and his acute poverty. On this aspect of poverty aggravating the Jewish predicaments and plights in America, Alfred Kazin comments thus [Bright Book of Life: American Storytellers from Hemingway to Mailer, 1973, p. 142]:

The all-dominating in the Malamud world and of any Malamud character reduces everything to the simplicity of a single tabletop, chair, carrot. No matter where the Malamud characters are - Brooklyn, Rome or a collapsible hall bed room in the next world -- they are luftmenschen -- so poor that they live on air, in the air, and are certainly not rooted in the earth. . . . Poverty as a total human style is so all dominating an aesthetic medium in Malamud colouring everything with its woe-be gone utensils, its stubborn immigrant English, its all circulating despair, that one is not
surprised that several of Malamud’s characters seem to travel by levitation.

Incidentally, Malamud maintains that the suffering Jew does not surrender to despair. He does not allow himself to be crushed by suffering, which is a racial inevitability. He uses this experience of suffering to gain nobility of character and turn humanistic. Malamud argues through his heroes like Morris Bober, Roy Hobbs, Harry Lesser, and Lexo Finkle and his prostitute Lily Hirschorn that suffering is the human lot. To escape from suffering stemming from racism, sexism, and violence in America is impossible. In fact, one learns to be a compassionate soul embracing humanistic concerns of love, kindness, goodness, and mercy.

Malamud’s world often proposes a kind of hard-won eked-out saintliness: suffering and spiritual goodness are somehow linked. For Malamud all Jews are Jobs and all Jobs are good men. In this context, Sheldon Norman Grebstein’s remarks throw further light on this point of racial suffering as depicted in the fictions of Malamud, and it is worth quoting here [“Bernard Malamud and the Jewish Movement”, in Contemporary American Jewish Literature, 1973, p. 27]:

His [Malamud’s] heroes suffer deeply, but they are also secular men whose suffering is not always voluntary, undertaken wholly for exacted reasons, or blessed by great rewards. Malamud’s real concern is for the social and moral aspects of suffering as they impinge upon personality. He [Malamud] has a view of man, which perceives the property of conscience, the seeking to be better, not as a divine mystery but as natural to humans as skin, hair, voice. Yet this basically optimistic
concept of human nature is checked by an almost equally persistent view
of man as greedy, treacherous, lustful, and often vicious. Cheerful
idealistic and hard-eyed realist peer through the same bifocals.
Consequently Malamud’s depictions of suffering is ambivalent; in each
of his major characters altruism and materialism combine as motives for
self-sacrifice.

Through the collection of short fictions, entitled, The Magic Barrel, Malamud
strikes an affirmative note by arguing that man can redefine his life in the face of racial
discrimination, denials, deprivations, exploitation, and dehumanization. The greatness of
The Magic Barrel lies in Malamud’s ability to treat the racial predicament of suffering
comprehensively. Moreover, he marries the imaginatively born unreal with the factually
real. Though The Magic Barrel is compassionate and profound in its wry humour, it
vividly captures the poetry of human relationships. More significant than their ethnic
classification is the resonance of life that the short fictions create.

Malamud’s The Magic Barrel as a whole tends to be an affirmation of man’s
ability to realize him even in the face of racial discrimination, denials, deprivations,
exploitation, and dehumanization. When Malamud describes the anguish of the
disinherited and the injured bakers, shoemakers, tailors, and grocers, and matchmakers,
he presents them suffering acutely the racial predicaments from which stem Angst,
suffering, and struggle.

Jeffrey Heltsman comments thus [“Bernard Malamud”, in Dictionary of Literary
Biography, 1978, p. 296]:
Many of his heroes [in *The Magic Barrel*] are trapped in the airless, part-tormented lives that open to a breath of life for those who dare to seize the moment, or else close with the terrifying stillness for those who do not. Except for three Italian stories, the settings are bleak ghetto shops, tenements, and stores where most human relationships depend on a humanistic notion of credit. . . .

The point that is made here is that suffering stemming from racial discrimination promotes humanism in the sufferer. After all what is important in life is how the individual gives credit to the other as a human being.

Malamud argues that the Jew serves to represent the Jew’s racial predicament as an isolated, displaced loner, who has the potential for achieving moral transcendence through suffering that engenders insight and a commitment to love.

Malamud maintains that goodness is its own reward and evil inflicts its own punishments. These hard realities concerning one’s Jewish existence, Malamud projects through Morris Bober and Yakov Bok, the Jewish sufferers. In this context, the comment of Sheldon J. Hershinov is worth quoting here [Quoted in *Bright Book of Life: American Storytellers from Hemingway to Mailer*, 1973, p. 148]:

No suffering can be redeemed by any act of God or the State. The only “solution” [according to Malamud] possible for the problem of evil is for people to respect and nourish each other, now during this life. And only a Schlemiel would choose the intangible spiritual rewards of goodness over the material benefits of narrow self interest. Thus,
Malamud's association of suffering with Jewishness is not merely sentimental. It also contains a hardened realism. . . .

Malamud projects Morris Bober and Yakov Bok as heroes passing through sufferings caused by racial discrimination. Morris Bober and Yakov Bok are loners. They suffer alienation because they are Jews. They choose and regret. They painfully experience Angst and anguish. The freedom that they enjoy is incompatible with the kind of freedom, which they wish to enjoy. They experience nausea. Their life turns out to be one of unending struggle and suffering. Their world is one, which lends hope with despair, pain with possibility, and suffering with moral growth. Thus, through Morris Bober and Yakov Bok, Malamud captures the joy as well as the pain of life.

Moreover, Malamud defines the dignity of the human spirit searching for freedom and moral growth, in the face of hardship, injustice and anguish arising out of racial discrimination. Morris Bober, like Santiago of The Old Man and the Sea experiences unmitigated pain. If the South China Sea proves to be a naturalistic and deterministic force against which Santiago struggles the store is the final horror of Morris Bober's racial predicament. He is locked within the prison of his own suffering. He proclaims the efficacy of suffering. It teaches to want the right things.

Thus, Morris Bober projects himself as the sufferer who passes through his racial predicaments with patience and endurance. He is painfully, and even with pride is aware of the tragic undercurrents of human existence. He demonstrates that suffering is the expression of true goodness. He proves true James Hastings' religious definition of suffering [Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics, xii, 1970, p. 22]:
Suffering, it will be urged, is a splendid moral discipline. God is present in all pain. He suffers in all suffering. He is the chief sufferer in the world. . . .

Like Morris Bober, Yakov Bok is a Jewish sufferer. His dominant experiences have been to confront life’s harsh actualities, and struggle with them and suffer. He becomes a powerful example of a sufferer encountering racial discrimination who redeems himself. He is classic illustration of a human being’s ability to grow spiritually in the face of injustice, insults, and indignities. Thus Malamud projects the Jews as symbols of suffering, because of racial predicaments.

Moreover, the protagonists of Malamud lend themselves to psychoanalytic scrutiny. Malamud’s principal character Morris Bober, Helen, Ida, Alpine, and Bruce Gold experience ego consciousness primarily because of their racial predicaments. It is their egoistic bondage to their religion and cultural heritage that govern their thinking, feeling, and living. These distinguish and separate them from others.

Morris Bober, the ageing and ailing storekeeper is the ethical centre of The Assistant. His extreme consciousness of Jewry satisfies his ego. It is the ego consciousness of his Torah, synagogue, and in fine, all aspects of Judaism, that cultures him to be an adherent of principles. His principled life is subjected to periodical tests and trials in a world so complex and so redolent with reversal and pain.

And true to his Jewish religion Morris Bober humbles himself so that he shall be exalted. Like one of the thirty-six Just Men in the Jewish legend of the Lamed - - saints who are unaware of their station but whose number is ceaselessly replenished by ritual replacement - - Morris Bober suffers for all. The point that is made here is that
Morris Bober suffers because of his Jewish culture which runs tangential to the Mainstream American culture.

Malamud’s God’s Grace is the most self-consciously Jewish book. The hero, Calvin Cohn, the son of the rabbi, and himself a rabbinic student, carries his dog-eared copy of the Pentateuch, into the island where he finds himself alone. Cohn raises the theological questions why God should permit man to cause annihilation ingeniously.

If God is superego why does He allow the id in man to reign supreme, and cause the incarceration of the Jews in the Concentration Camps, and the holocaust in Nagasaki and Hiroshima. Yet again, why should God require the slaughter of his human sons?

The Christian tradition identifies the sacrifice of Isaac that typologically intimates the Crucifixion of Christ. Cohn being a Jew is not prepared to subscribe to such a viewpoint. Cohn then argues that mankind identifies God as the embodiment of Mercy, Kindness, and Love, but mankind chooses the path of cruelty, uncharitable nature and hatred. It becomes a futile exercise on the part of the superego - - God - - sacrificing the ego - - Son of God - - that fails to drive away the id from mankind.

Thus, Malamud concentrates on the Jewish culture that weighs down heavily on the Jewish Americans and stands in their way of entering into the Mainstream of American culture, and how racial predicaments cause their sufferings, and how they confront the odds of life that they have to face because of their Jewishness, whether they are in America or elsewhere. While taking into account the discussion of Roth and how he views Jewishness one records the interesting statement of Alan Berger [Quoted in Steven Milowitz, “Holocaust Writing”, in Philip Roth Considered: The Concentrationary Universe of the American Writer, 2000, p. 157]:
Jews are either authentic or unauthentic. Authenticity lies in a willingness to confront the Holocaust, to renew, in however modified a form. Though his [Roth's] reworking of the terms, authenticity allows to the post-Holocaust generation it still maintains a strict differentiation, now not between survivor and progeny but between secular Jews and those who turn towards conventional Judaism, Secular does not know what they are living for...

The pointed observation found in Roth's *The Professor of Desire* is worth recording here [The Professor of Desire, 1977, p. 197]:

Why come to the battered heart of Europe if not to examine just this? Why come into the world at all? Students of literature, you must conquer your squeamishness once and for all! You must come off your high horse? There, there is your final exam. . . .

*Black milk* enters our consciousness as one of the most remarked upon and treasured metaphors of the Holocaust, encapsulating of the reversal of normalcy and the metamorphosis of what once nourished into that, which sickens. Milk, the breast’s incorruptible source of life, is transformed into the poison the [Jewish] prisoners drink as they dig their own graves in Paul Celan’s “Fugue of Death”.

“Fugue of Death” is a poem about retaining autonomy while under the command of an avaricious destroyer and about the disintegration of values and civilizing concepts that once sustained the speakers it is also a poem about poetry and music, about the rhymes and verses that are sustained even after the catastrophe.
The Holocaust in literary imagination is an art of atrocity. The world of Auschwitz lies outside speech or reason. The immediate, clear, danger of speech is the danger of making horror palatable, making a fetish of extermination. One reads about horror, confronting disaster, and yet one is protected and distanced, a part of and apart from at once. The textual passage in Roth’s *Deception* reads thus [1990, p. 134]:

You’re of the little pocket of Jews born in this century who miraculously escaped the horror, who somehow have lived unharmed in an amazing moment of affluence and security. So those who didn’t escape Jewish or not, have this fascination for you. . . .

Fascination connotes not merely curiosity or morbid wonder but excitement, the thrill of investigating an event beyond the realm of understanding, an inexhaustible and unique subject. It is the fascination that both moves Roth and his protagonists, and which cements a sense of shame, a twentieth-century Original Sin. [Steven Milowitz, “Holocaust Writing”, in *Philip Roth Considered: The Concentrationary Universe of the American Writer*, 2000, p. 215]:

Roth invites the arrows of calumny upon himself and his surrogate selves. His is an art not of self-love but of self-challenge, self-rebuttal, and self-questioning. What is often characterized as solipsism is with his own culpability, a culpability that begins with a fascination with the Holocaust, Holocaust writing entails self-immolation.

Roth’s characters are not like Narcissus in love with their own perfect image, but rather they are disappointed, remorseful, almost sickened at their increased features, features they envision alongside the mirror-image of the others, the victims.
The "real" Jews, many feel, are the survivors, those who have tasted the black milk: In Roth they are Tsuref, his eighteen children, and the greenie in the black hat ("Eli, the Fanatic"), Solly, the diner owner (Letting Go), Barbatnik (The Professor of Desire), the imagined Amy Bellette (The Ghost Writer), Dr. Kotler (The Anatomy Lesson), Sisovsky (The Prague Orgy), Aaron Applefield (Deception & Operation Shylock), the imagined Kafka ("Looking at Kafka"), Wenner ("The contest of Aaron Gold"), Primo Levi (Patrimony), Cousin Apter, Rosenberg and Smiles burger (Operation Shylock).

Solly's concentration camp number on his forearm gives him stature beyond his position: the Herzes expected him fiercely. When Mr. Kepesh introduces his friend Barbatnik to David and Claire he says "Dramatically, and yes with pride – He's a victim of the Nazis." [The Professor of Desire, 1977, p.236]. The authentic pain of the survivors be little the unauthentic pain of the spared. Eli, the character in Epstein, makes the distance between the survivor and the American Jew clear when he sits in Turf's chair and finds himself unaccustomed to the sharp bones of his seat.

The comfort Eli takes for granted is impossibility for the schoolmaster. It is felt by Eli and by the protagonists who follow in his path as an elemental distance that must be respected and remembered. It is recorded in The Counter life thus [1986,p.58]

I was not a Jewish survivor of a Nazi death camp in search of a safe and welcoming refuge....

Another quote from The Counter life makes interesting reading: [1986,p.59.]

The American born grandson of simple Galician tradesmen cannot know what the survivor knows cannot feel the scars he feels....
The American Jew and the camp Jew must know each other, as a kind of deformation of themselves. They are counterparts, living counter lives, separated by time and luck. By way of conclusion it is interesting to record the cryptic statement in *Operation Shylock* [1999.p.68]

I am not just a Jew, I’m not also a Jew – I am a Jew as deep as those Jews, as deep as the victims....

Thus Bellow, Malamud, and Roth deal with racial predicaments faced by Jews.