CHAPTER IV

- HUMBOLDT'S GIFT
- THE DEAN'S DECEMBER
Humboldt's Gift is a tale of two romantic questors - Von Humboldt Fleisher and his protegé, Charlie Citrine, the protagonist of the novel. Both are the victims of an aggressively naturalistic environment wherein there is a total collapse of the poetic sensibility and the philosophy of western humanism. What constitutes the centrality of the book is how to make human existence purposive. The novelist shows the two grappling with this grave moral problem pertaining to man's predicament in wider context. Charlie is both a separate and inseparable manifestation of the tradition that Humboldt represents in art and life. In Humboldt's failure Bellow seeks to explain that man cannot be wholly governed by the romantic intuition in the investigation of the material world. Reality and realism have to stay for everyone in life including Bellow and the two protagonists, Humboldt and Charlie. Humboldt refused to play reality and thus during the process was destroyed. But without his ruination there is no art, there is no illumination for Charlie to bring to his mind the truth that he, like his benefactor, has not to espouse the romantic ideals and serve a metaphor signifying failure. But, being drugged by the illusion of the success myth as embodied in Humboldt, Charlie develops wrong notions about his self and destiny that they are characteristically distinct, which ironically speaking, shuts him out from reality and the joys of a harmonious growth of life in the community. However a moment comes when Charlie gains a realization that life is to be
accepted not in the terms that it is distinctive but in all its ordinariness and finitude. The fanciful quixotic idea about the uniqueness of one's identity is to be discarded to accommodate the socio-economic interests of one's own self with those of the others. The fact is illustrated by Charlie's growth of moral and social outlook on life upon the debris of Humboldt's failure.

Charlie Citrine looks back to reconsider, in his own moral framework, the gains and losses of his friend Humboldt which he achieved during his life and underlines those moral imperfections which brought his fall. He takes stock of those truths also which shot Humboldt into prominence. Charlie is the narrator, the moral reflector of the novel. While he was studying at the University of Wisconsin, he developed infallible love for Humboldt and thought about literature day and night. Once in the dream, he narrates, he had a meeting with Humboldt and his utterance "Now I understand everything" made Charlie weep "with happiness," because in it he envisaged the appraisal and the recognition of his literary capabilities. One simple implication of this romantic valuation of Charlie's intellectual flavour by a literary giant in the dream is sufficient to stuff his mind with the idea of the extension of the 'ego' which is the very centre of life activities and one has to comprehend the nature of its upward drives, outward compulsions and the resultant weight of selfhood to transcend this problematic
earthly human sphere: "I have a hunch that in life you look outward from the ego, your center. In death you are at the periphery looking inward."  

Bellow concentrates on Humboldt's literary achievement: to make Charlie feel drawn to his philosophy of art and life: the first book of ballads of Humboldt, published at the age of twenty two and which secured his place in the avante-garde writings, not only impressed the young students but also found favour with the standard critics and poets like Conrad Aiken, T.S. Eliot, Yvor Winters. But the particular fascination which appealed to Charlie's sensibility was its Platonic strain by which he meant "an original perfection to which all human beings long to return." In Humboldt, Charlie has a vision of Fisher King and the Holy Grail, out to redeem the contemporary wasteland, of the cultural and moral chaos. The two leading magazines - The Time and News Week printed Humboldt's pictures and the papers published favourable reviews which made Charlie envious of his literary accomplishment and prominence. In the heat of romantic egotism, Charlie writes a letter to Humboldt to seek an appointment and get the maximum out of the opportunity. Even so simplistic words concerning the metaphysics of success - myth evoke the vision of ecstasy that "poets ought to figure out how to get around pragmatic America."  

2. Ibid., p. 11  
3. Idem
And thus, it is the romantic attitude to literature and life and the commonness of interest that bring Humboldt and Charlie into closer friendly contact. Bellow employs the expressionistic technique to dramatize Charlie's evolution of consciousness under Humboldt's umbrella: the action moves backward and this mobility in time creates the impression of verisimilitude. Humboldt introduces him to literary circle of the Greenwich Village & helps in getting him books for favour of reviews which is an ample warrant of the upstart graph of Charlie's imaginative power and intellect. Charlie is conscious of his modest literary accomplishments and thus, on one night, he seeks an opportunity to be at a literary symposium which was to be attended by intellectual giants such as Schapiro, Hook, Rahv, Huggins and Gumbein in New York, where he "sat like a cat in a recital hall. But Humboldt was the best of them all. He was simply the Mozart of conversation."¹ He had a flavour for Soviet Russia and Marxism to the point that he compared himself to Lenin: the Marxist writers like Trotsky and Lenin were the potent influence on his poetic philosophies. The important topics of discussion between Humboldt and Charlie ranged from Freud, Heine, Wagner, Goethe, Calvinism, Horatio Alger dream, the success-myth and Spinoza. And one day, when the two were travelling in Humboldt's second hand Buick, the range of their talk was enormously widening, it centred on:

1. Ibid., p. 13
"- the Napoleonic disease, Julien Sorel, Balzac's 
jeune ambitieux, Marx's portrait of Louis Bonaparte, 
Hegel's World Historical Individual. Humboldt was 
especially attached to the World Historical Individual 
the interpreter of the Spirit, the mysterious leader 
who imposed on Mankind the task of understanding him.'

As such, the intricate nature of Humboldt's scale of 
conversation appears to be seemingly swept away by the 
spirit of world history. The suggestion is implicit: can 
man have a harvest of thought unless he has had a seed-time 
of character? His mind is full of the idea that man, being an 
atom of the current of 'World Historical Spirit' as enunciate 
by Hegel, can be a 'World Historical Individual' provided 
this universal force opens up possibilities for him to 
arrive at some resolution of metaphysical significance. But 
the act of harbouring the illusion of becoming the World 
Historical Individual is different from the act of fooling 
one self into this wishful thinking that he alone can create 
values in isolation ignoring the claims of others. The 
spirit of the individual carries with it the quality of 
civilization that it has to create in historical context. 
Hegel rightly explains the upward thrust of the spirit in 
the reference of Scott F. Fitzgerald. "It may be that world 
history is the exhibition of spirit striving to attain 
knowledge of its own nature. As the germ bears within 
itself the whole nature of the tree, the shape and taste of 
it's fruit, so also the first traces of spirit virtually

1. Ibid., p. 18
contain the whole of history."¹ That is, the striving of the spirit for human perfection involves a process, the mind looks back at the vast hidden treasures of knowledge of the World History for its enlightenment as Humboldt's mind is shown sweeping from ancient Greece to the present scenario through Fitzgerald's failure in the Depression period. "If Scott Fitzgerald had been a Protestant success wouldn't have damaged him so much."² Fitzgerald's failure is the failure of romanticism of the Jazz culture and the American dream of success and Humboldt's inference that Protestantism would have saved him is a sort of prognostication for Charlie goes the Fitzgerald way and if he does not exercise the Puritanist self-restraint in morals, he is sure to meet the inevitable doom. But Charlie grows hysteric to take the full course of Humboldt's gift and what seemingly appears to intrigue him into Humboldtism is the choice of the representative texts from the ancient Greek, Roman and Renaissance literature. This is essential for him to have a closer understanding of these texts in order to fully appreciate Humboldt's backward imaginative glances:

"To follow his intricate conversation you had to know his basic texts. I knew what they were: Plato's Timaeus, Proust on Combray, Virgil on farming, Marvell on gardens, Wallace Stevens' Caribbean poetry, and so on."³

². Humboldt's Gift, p. 13
³. Ibid., p. 17
But what exactly Bellow has in mind is the creation of moral consciousness which will make Charlie to assess romanticism in right perspective and overcome its evils as generated by the contact of the material world in a bid to comprehend its nature and assign a moral to its version of reality that could be metaphysically significant to promote human interest and the value of social relationship. The individual then is converted, in the real Hegelian sense, into a "World Historical Individual". What frustrates man's vision of an ideal being is the lack of moral awareness of the paradox that the worldly success, if not properly appropriated, runs unwieldy and romantic and will destroy the peace both of the individual and the society. If success means power, money, fame, love can it bring real happiness in life and create a moral climate of peace, psychic harmony and understanding? Mere desire for individual fame verges on romantic egotism and anarchic affirmation of self. The value of social concern can be promoted through the transcendence of the personal because the individual desire for fame in man fosters what Whitehead calls an "inversion of the social impulse". When the individual impulse which is the foundation of the creation of civilization becomes self-centred and egotistic because the individual is so, then the impulse itself turns against and frustrates the impersonal higher aims of civilization. Each human act of experience constitutes its own centrality and seeks self-satisfaction
by claiming that it carries all things within. But such false claims end in despair because they suffer from finitud or 'finiteness'. And thus the vision of self and social reality is to be rooted in "an appeal beyond boundaries."¹

What does Bellow dig at in his portrayal of Humboldt as a contemporary current in the cultural history and human consciousness in the post-modernistic period? Humboldt's writings are rooted in the romantic traditions as his book on ballads substantiates the view point. It is written in the imitation of the old tradition of the ballads when romanticism was to sweep over man's imagination since it, being tired of the stock cliches of neoclassicism at the end of eighteenth century, was looking for a change. One can ask that since all of Humboldt's basic texts have been drawn upon the romantic theories, can they make one, with the power of fancy and imagination, develop an ultimate view of reality in the material world? Humboldt is a failure in life which is thus a failure of the romantic tradition because it was the very thesis of his worldly success that destroyed it. Humboldt, in the words of Charlie, was a pathological case, "a classic case of manic depression."² Charlie's own words describing the catastrophic ending of a poet of such worldly success are revealing in the sense that it is out of the debris of Humboldt's failure that Charlie will arrive at moral truths of life:

¹. Adventures of Ideas, New York, 1961, p. 371
². Humboldt's Gift, p. 7
"Humboldt, that grand erratic handsome person with his wide blond face, that charming fluent deeply worried man to whom I was so attached, passionately lived out the theme of Success. Naturally he died a Failure. What else can result from the capitalization of such nouns?"¹

Humboldt was unaware of the social context of art, which, of Charlie feels, was his moral flaw. Desertion of art for achieving worldly success or thriving on the size of the audience of which the artist is also a part will destroy both the art and the artist. The irony is that Humboldt's romantic idiom of art was in itself an indictment of the success - myth which in the preparatory period made even Charlie feel "madly excited" and with this he "hoped to knock everyone dead."² But later his confrontation with and experiences of physical reality of success as Humboldt attempted to achieve brings illumination. Charlie will not succumb to this temptation which bowled over Humboldt as he recalls:

"The subject that afternoon was Success. I was from the sticks and he was giving me the low-down. Could I imagine, he said, what it meant to knock the Village flat with your poems and then follow up with critical essays in the Partisan and the Southern Review? He had much to tell me about Modernism, Symbolism, Yeats, Rilke, Eliot... I have vertigo from success, Charlie. My ideas won't let me sleep. I go to bed without a drink and the room is whirling. It'll happen to you, too. I tell you this to prepare you."³

¹. Ibid., p.6
². Ibid., p. 12
³. Idem
As a matter of fact, what brought Humboldt's failings as a character-figure is the failure of effecting a synthesis of emotion and intellect: on the one hand he is seized over by the urge to be "magically and cosmically expressive and articulate, able to say anything". He wants to explore that the imagination is the common ground in poetry and science and it is as potent a power "as machinery, to free and to bless humankind."¹ Such are the subjects of serious talks but on the other hand, when they talk about the actual life as they live and experience around, Humboldt's outlook on life is essentially rooted in romanticism leaving out the role of the free scientific and rationalistic enquiry of the ancient world in life. He tells Charlie:

"If life is not intoxicating, it's nothing. Here it's burn or rot. The USA is a romantic country. If you want to be sober. Charlie, it's only because you're a maverick and you'll try anything."²

Thus, America is a country wherein a romantic like Humboldt will prefer 'to burn' rather than 'to rot', and the notion of 'to burn' implies to have an overdose of money, fame, success and women. These are the worldly prizes man chases so feverishly and crazily taking them as the ultimate beatitudes of life. But there comes a stage in life when Humboldt realises the futility of such illusory pursuits and develops a nihilistic altitude to life that he is on verge

¹. Ibid., p. 119
². Ibid., pp. 28-29
of sinking. Humboldt perhaps could never anticipate the financial crisis which broke down his spirits and thus he turned to Charlie for help so that he could spend some amount on his niece and do something concrete for the good of humanity as a university teacher. This urge of 'doing good' even in the state of emotional decay is one cherished goal of Humboldt, no doubt, which is the foundation of the philosophy of social concern and which Charlie has to subsume in life. This gets reflected in what transpires between the two which ironically shows Humboldt's withdrawal from romanticism and turning to the 'suburb of reality' with the belief that this change of vision will make him retrieve the enchanting power of his spirit and be of himself.

"I am one of the leading literary men of this country."
"Sure you are, at your best."
"Something should be done for me. Especially in this Ike moment, as darkness falls on the land."
"But why this?"
"Well, frankly, Charlie, I'm out of kilter, temporarily. I have to get back to a state in which I can write poetry again. But where's my equilibrium? There are too many anxieties. They dry me out. The world keeps interfering. I have to get the enchantment back. I feel as if I've been living in a suburb of reality, and commuting back and forth. That's got to stop. I have to locate myself. I'm here" (here on earth, he meant) "to do something, something good."¹

One tragic aspect of Humboldt's character is self-love which, if remains unrealised, will generate feelings of brooding melancholy and cheerlessness. It is this moral imperfection that destroys Humboldt's dream of growing into an exceptional personality with the force of world history. He

¹. Ibid., p. 128
has power, intellect, imagination and therefore he naturally develops a notion that he has also a special destiny and a significant role to perform in life. Bellow writes

"Intellectuals took this as their job. From, say, Machiavelli's time to our own this arranging has been the one great gorgeous tantalizing misleading disastrous project. A man like Humboldt, inspired, shrewd, nutty, was brimming over with the discovery that the human enterprise, so grand and infinitely varied, had now to be managed by exceptional persons. He was an exceptional person, therefore he was an eligible candidate for power."1

And thus being drugged by the idea that intellect is power, Humboldt makes efforts to arrange life but is swept away from its mainstream because he has not been able to abdicate the idea of being an 'exceptional person' which is a variant of romantic egotism and proud subjectivity. He feels like "one of the big time solitaries" when the idea of self becomes an obsession. It is this that keeps Humboldt's entity as a poet separate from his human 'identity'. 'Entity' can be a subjective affair but 'identity' has its social implications to be characterized by one's social outlook on life. As a victim of romantic egotism and self-love, he develops imaginary fears that he might lose his 'identity' any time, which gets revealed in Charlie's discussion later with Renata:

"Gertrude Stein used to distinguish between a person who is an 'entity' and one who has an 'identity'. A significant man is an entity. Identity is what they give you socially. Your little dog recognizes you

1. Ibid., p. 29
and therefore you have an identity. An entity, by contrast, an impersonal power, can be a frightening thing. It's as T.S. Eliot said of William Blake. A man like Tennyson was merged into his environment or encrusted with parasitic opinion, but Blake was naked and saw man naked, and from the center of his own crystal. There was nothing of the 'superior person' about him, and this made him terrifying. That is an entity. An identity is easier on itself. An identity pours a drink, lights a cigarette, seeks its human pleasures, and shuns rigorous conditions. The temptation to lie down is very great. Humboldt was a weakening entity."

It is this illusory notion of power that drew curtain upon Humboldt's moral sense and turned him into a "weakening entity". Humboldt as a poet failed to attain the poetic vision in regard to the attainment of social realities and thus little was left in life that could make him look so distinct from the ordinary human beings. For a man of ordinary imagination, power originates in material resources, but for the poet its genesis is imagination that enables him to create a vision of beauty and truth when the object is seen in its wholeness. It is the power of the poet's soul that can enable the poet to transcend the fever and fret of life and all sorts of distractions, look into the essence of things and give shape to whatever his soul comprehends. But Humboldt in later life turned alcoholic, he resorted to drugs to make himself an interesting personality. This craziness and alcoholism and addiction to drugs wronged his own self and the society, the assault of insanity made him the hero of wretchedness and he died sitting on the bed in a

1. Ibid., pp. 311-12
'decayed place' which symbolically reflects the decaying of the age of romanticism gone by. Charlie tells, "At the morgue there were no readers of modern poetry. The name Von Humboldt Fleisher meant nothing. So he lay there, another derelict."¹

But it would be unjust to ignore the implications of Humboldt's gift which is symbolic of the realisation of moral responsibility towards those whom he had wronged during the phase of eccentricity and wretched existence. Even in moments of insanity, Humboldt showed sense of obligation towards humanity and thus his debt to humanity as a whole was much more material to Charlie in particular than Kathleen and Uncle Waldemar. It is significant that during the period when he was conscious of his being an 'entity' the big step that he took towards imaginative fulfilment of his moral contract cannot be undermined.

Inspite of fact that Humboldt introduces Charlie to the literary circle of the Greenwich village and helps him in getting books for review to sharpen his critical acumen, and Charlie, being a romantic quester in the beginning and a victim of romantic concept of self love, craves to be an exceptionally extraordinary personality, there are certain similarities and dissimilarities between the two. The lives of these two intellectuals take different turn to traverse different paths. In Humboldt's fall, there is Charlie's

¹. Ibid., p. 16
ascendancy to success which shows that he is in the process of 'becoming' rooted partly in Humboldt's legacy. The books strategy is clear to warn Charlie that he has to cherish those humanistic ideals of social concern which made Humboldt popular and to discard those moral inadequacies which were responsible for his fall. Charlie is, thus, one aspect of Bellow's 'culture point man' coming to fruition in the present. If Humboldt was a poet of eminence, Charlie is also a playwright of no ordinary recognition: the film scripts brought royalty - the plays made fortune on the Broadways and the books ensure prizes, money and fame - the Pulitzer prize for his book on Wilson and Tumulti, for example, was one. The evolution of moral urge to do something good in the larger interest of community culminates in Charlie, the seeds of which were already planted in Sammler, Herzog and Henderson. Charlie has gained realization how he can keep his moral sense intact in dealings with the society with so much success, money and fame. He can now see through the "painted veils of Maya" the truth and reality of the physical and the spiritual:

"And money wasn't what I had in mind. Oh God, no, what I wanted was to do good. I was dying to do something good. And this feeling for good went back to my early and peculiar sense of existence - sunk in the glassy depths of life and groping, thrillingly and desperately, for sense, a person keenly aware of painted veils, of Maya, of domes of many-colored glass staining the white radiance of eternity, quivering in the intense inane and so on."\(^1\)

\(^1\) Ibid., p. 3
Charlie fully comprehends the illusory nature of the world and its power of destructiveness in regard to his quest to go beyond the ephemeral and the shadow lines of human reality to translate one's ideals into action for the good of humanity. He will not therefore, like Humboldt, let worldly success and material prosperity overshadow the moral illumination in him. He explains the reason why Humboldt failed, but he has escaped to arrive at his ideal: Humboldt "consented to the monopoly of power and interest held by money, politics, law, rationality, technology."¹ In Humboldt's failure the book mirrors the evil effect of a life of opulence and sufficiency on human soul. Another romantic trait of Humboldt's legacy which Charlie in the wake of overenthusiasm developed but overcomes at the end is the narcissistic tendency of self-love which destroyed the dream to be a 'World Historical Individual'. It is an indication that the novelist intends to describe through Humboldt's failure in art, a wider human condition than that existing only in art. Charlie fully endorses the view which gets revealed while he explains Humboldt's failure in context of its relation to cultural history. If art is a reflection of culture, should the artist surrender its philosophy and truth to cater to the taste of the class that rules?

Charlie's feet too are swept away by the power of intellect, he looks upon himself as a marvellous creature who can create miracle by the power of his intellect as he

¹. Ibid., 155
tells Demmie Vonghel, his second woman: "I had a funny feeling sometimes, as if I had been stamped and posted and they were waiting for me to be delivered at an important address. I may contain unusual information. But that's just ordinary silliness." However, Charlie has to disengage himself from a number of ideological and emotional ties to escape those contradictions born of the romantic notion of art and life that destroyed Humboldt's identity as an artist. He develops relations with a number of characters during the process who act upon his psyche as destiny moulders: the women and one Cantabile, the gangster. His relations with the women - Naomi Lutz, Demmie Vonghal, Denise, his ex-wife and Renata - have been interpreted in metaphorical terms to recount man's spiritual progress from his early state of existence to the final development of moral impulses through the discovery of the power of intellect. Naomi, Demmie, Denise and Renata are metaphorical representatives of various zones of human consciousness and the progress of man's physical self. Charlie is another Herzog in the sense that his family life has not been a happy one, partly because he failed to come to Denise's idea of a successful husband in an era of so much moral filth, horror and sexual promiscuity. Or it could be the fundamental intellectual desparateness between the two that held them apart in marriage. Denise represents the fallen ideal of love. She is highly critical of Charlie's scholarly accomplishments.

1. Ibid., p.19
and her denunciation of him as a case of wasted intellectual opportunity speaks of her peevishness and belligerent temper.

"I just can't believe the way you are. The man who's had all those wonderful insights, the author of all these books, respected by scholars and intellectuals all over the world. I sometimes have to ask myself, 'Is that my husband? The man I know? You've lectured at the great Eastern universities and had grants and fellowships and honors. De Gaulle made you a knight of the Legion of Honor and Kennedy invited us to the White House. You had a successful play on Broadway. Now what the hell do you think you're doing? Chiacago! You hang around with your old Chicago school chums, with freaks. It's a kind of mental suicide, death wish. You'll have nothing to do with really interesting people, with architects or psychiatrists or university professors. I tried to make a life for you when you insisted on moving back here. I put myself out. You wouldn't have London or Paris or New York, you had to come back to this - this deadly, ugly, vulgar, dangerous place. Because at heart you're a kid from the slums. Your heart belongs to the old West Side gutters. I wore myself out being a hostess...."  

Denise's history of parentage gets revealed during the discussion between Charlie and his friend George Swiebel: her mother married the son of a crooked politician whom she later straightened out, to cure "him of his vulgarities", which bears sufficient testimony to the fact that the paternal inheritance is more predominant than the maternal in her. This trait of moral irresponsibility comes on the fore in a shameless free expression of her feelings of dislike for George. She instructs Charlie in a tone of militancy not to bring George to her house. She is critical of his bohemianism and moral laxity but what of her own

1. Ibid., pp. 44-45
"Don't bring him to the house," she said. "I can't bear to see his ass on my sofa, his feet on my rug."... "You're like one of those overbred race horses that must have a goat in his stall to calm his nerves. George Swiebel is your billy goat."

"He's a good friend to me, an old friend."

"Your weakness for your school chums isn't to be believed. You have the nostalgie de la boue. Does he take you around to the whores?"

Such caustic and insulting remarks of Denise about both Charlie and his friend George create an impression that she is an infernal creation with a twisted and distorted mind believing little in biological evolutionism and instinctive collective existence in a community. George feels pained to see Charlie in such an unpleasant situation resulting from the uncatholic and impudent behaviour of his life:

"I don't want to interfere in your marriage, but I notice you've stopped breathing."..."You're not getting enough air with that woman. You look as if you're suffocating. Your tissues aren't getting any oxygen. She'll give you cancer."

And to this, Charlie's reply is equally disheartening but otherwise illuminating to dig at the real character of marriage and the conjugal bliss in American society.

"She may think she's offering me the blessings of an American marriage. Real Americans are supposed to suffer with their wives and wives with husbands. Like Mr. and Mrs. Abraham Lincoln. It's the classic US grief..."

The marriage, being a case of hypergamy proves a misalliance. Denise's perpetual assault of abuses and

1. Ibid., p. 41
2. Ibid., pp. 42-43
questioning Charlie's moral life and his relations with Renata assume prophetic proposition.

"Your mental life is going to dry out. You're sacrificing it to your erotic needs (if that's the term for what you have). After sex, what can you two talk about...?"  

Denise's indictment of Charlie's power of intellect and creativity has its own comicality in the sense that without ever looking into its level of excellence she explains that one reason of the loss of its imaginative appeal is the adherence to the cult of eroticism, and therefore, whatever he writes makes no sense to anyone. And thus, he is wasting his mental life without arriving at any concrete promising return:

"And what you really want is to get rid of everybody, to tune out and be a law unto yourself. Just you and your misunderstood heart, Charlie. You couldn't bear a serious relationship, that's why you got rid of me and the children. Now you've got this tramp with the fat figure who wears no bra and shows her big nipples to the world. You've got ignorant kikes and hoodlums around you. You're crazy with your own brand of pride and snobbery. There's nobody good enough for you.... I could have helped you. Now it's too late!"

As such, no other viable alternative is in sight but to seek divorce and thus when this phase of 'the classic US grief', a bane of American marriage is over, the divorce proceedings start which turn rather hard for Charlie but his moral self is now capable to bear with the ultimate impact of such scenes of feverish strife on human soul. Denise's self-

1. Ibid., p. 41
2. Ibid., p. 43
centredness and greed for petty materialistic gains of life out of a collapsing marriage grows to dehumanising proportion the more he offers, the more she demands. Feeling convinced that the judge would favour her in the case, she grows more vocal in her assault on Charlie. The judge says:

"Mr. Citrine, you've led a more or less bohemian life. Now you've had a taste of marriage, the family, middle-class institutions, and you want to drop out. But we can't allow you to dabble like that." 

The observations of the judge show that perhaps Denise has already briefed the judge and convinced him about Charlie's wantonness and bohemian ways of living.

The pressure of divorce terms is too heavy on Charlie's mind and the dwindling graph of income and the declining power of intellect make it rather more exacting. He is caught in moral dilemma when the publisher shows reluctance to publish his book *Some American: The Sense of Being in USA*, whereas his one successful play *Von Trenck* has already brought him literary recognition. It brought him about eight thousand dollars per week. They even offer to condone the amount Charlie owes to them if the publication proposal is dropped. But Charlie never vacillates in his interest and the ideal is kept intact which is a clear indication of the rise of a new consciousness which is moral: "I was however loyal to something. I had an idea." And the 'idea' is rooted in moral consciousness founded on living a life of

1. Ibid., pp. 231-32
harmony, peace and understanding with his own self and the outer world.

If knowledge brings illumination, it may put man wide of the cosmic harmony, if it runs riot and incomprehensible. During this period of crisis born of marital discord Charlie's mind, is always preoccupied with higher things such as human destiny, the problem of self, the soul, death. A mysterious voice rising within the depth of the soul is symbolic of Charlie's consciousness having its own social and moral significance. That is, he is aware of the fact that the acceptance of life implies the idea of moral responsibilities and commitment that man has to fulfil towards self and society. And keeping this fact in view to live life of commitment and value, he begins to take regular exercises in religious intuitions for the spiritual purification of soul and to bring it in communion with the Oversoul. This urge of taking exercises in contemplation or 'Spirit-recollection' drives Charlie to Professor Scheldt to have long mysterious conversation on anthroposophy and then to Rudolf Steiner's system of belief founded on the perception of immortality of human soul and the material world being an illusion. Charlie sometimes feels these metaphysical formulations and discussions pertaining to spiritual systems of belief rather too philosophical, yet the purpose behind the study of such higher stuff which is "to penetrate into the depths of the soul and to recognize the connection
between the self and the divine powers keep his interest alive. The exercise is symbolic of the initiation of self into a new awareness that man is capable of coming close to the spirit of the dead and make communion with them possible with the power commensurate to such religious intuitions:

"I do not believe my birth began my first existence. Nor Humboldt's. Nor anyone's. On esthetic grounds, if on no others, I cannot accept the view of death taken by most of us, and taken by me during most of my life — on esthetic grounds therefore I am obliged to deny that so extraordinary a thing as a human soul can be wiped out forever. No, the dead are about us, shut out by our metaphysical denial of them. As we lie nightly in our hemispheres asleep by the billions, our dead approach us. Our ideas should be their nourishment. We are their grainfields. But we are barren and we starve them. Don't kid yourself, though, we are watched by the dead, watched on this earth, which is our school of freedom. In the next realm, where things are clearer, clarity eats into freedom. We are free on earth because of cloudiness, because of error, because of marvelous limitation, and as much because of beauty as of blindness and evil. These always go with the blessing of freedom. But this is all I have to say about the matter now, because I'm in a hurry, under pressure — all this unfinished business!"

Denise is a case of split-up image of ambivalent complexes having no consideration for such stuff of higher contemplatio
Rather she sees in Steiner's studies in anthroposophy and religious intuitions symptoms of Charlie's mental and physical decay. She makes a proposal of reunion which Charlie rejects, not because he can relish any act of moral irresponsibility which will incriminate his social life in the community but because his affairs with Renata have gone

1. Ibid., p. 143
2. Ibid., p. 141
too far and thus he dispenses with her date of re-energising the disunited marital harmony. During the whole episode, Charlie's moral sense and the view that life is holy and needs to be preserved is never eclipsed. He rejects the two proposals of Cantabile, a mafia don of the underworld, to get out of the divorce imbroglio: first, to get Denise killed, second, to enact the fake kidnap of one of the kids and the ransom-money thus collected to keep in the Cymen Islands for the use later in life. Charlie is alive to the demoralising impact of such shady criminal acts on human minds and thus Cantabile's suggestion evokes little response in him. The gangster at once represents the image of a mafia don of the underworld and evils associated with it, like moral filth, perversity and horror. He carries bats and other weapons of assault in the back seat of his showy auto - he calls it the 'Thunder bird' and the red-colour of the leather bucket seats, as red as 'split blood' - speaks of his murderous designs and the failure of some ideal in life. Cantabile is a case of caricature of physical distortion and looks comic with his mouth wide and the nose ending "in a sort of white bulb".

Cantabile, like Denise, offers himself to act as procurer. He has 'big' plans to make Charlie's fortune provided he acts upon his advice. Humboldt left the copyright of his script to Charlie which is hitherto an

1. Ibid., p. 87
unknown fact to him. And the script has been successfully 
filmized, as Cantabile unravels and prepares papers in the 
light of the contractual arrangements for Charlie to sign 
which would bring him money as interest on the earned 
capital. The whole proposal smells ghoulish and thus 
Charlie flatly refuses to sign because the plan is outrageous 
and offending to the spirit of Humboldt. Charlie is now on 
the other side of the line - the materialistic considerations 
of life now no longer hypnotise him as he declares to 
Kathleen, one time mistress of Humboldt, "My own romance 
with wealth is over." 1

Charlie's encounters with the evils of beastly 
sexuality and craziness which are fast changing the modern 
America into a jungle make him look into the psychology of 
evil and violence in all their reality, and Cantabile is one 
such reality. Charlie meets him one day at his friend, 
George's house, where a party of the characters of the 
underworld is in progress. He loses four hundred and fifty 
bucks to Cantabile in the game of poker but refuses to make 
payment when George reveals the trickery which Cantabile and 
his man played on him when he was drunk by flashing cards to 
each other. Cantabile takes it to be an act of moral 
defiance since he judges human acts according to the laws of 
his own world, and damages his Mercedes Coupe car with bats 
which to Charlie is an assault on his self as the car is an

1. Ibid., 478
extension of his vanity and love. He purchased it in a romantic moment when his lady love Renata had "put her hand on the silver hood and said, "This one - the coupe". The touch of he palm was sensual. Even what she did to the car I felt in my own person."1 The hammering and the sight of the damaged car does not cool down Cantabile's temper. He phones Charlie to meet him at the Russian Bath on Division Street for clearing the debt and the irony is that when Charlie reaches there with money, the gangster refuses to accept the amount in such an unceremonious manner. Cantabile has his own ways to deal with the victims of his gangsterism: he takes Charlie to a toilet, makes him stand in a corner to ease himself showing his parts as the Negro pickpocket did to Sammler. Charlie is made to apologise to his friends for the delay and is taken to a skyscraper under construction from where Cantabile throws into the air the new fifty dollar bills like the children's paper gliders to show how much his dough means to him and also partly to create scare.

On another occasion Cantabile makes a vulgar show of sexuality which shows that he himself being a product of sexually disturbed century likes to initiate Charlie into the same obnoxious, nasty and lecherous pursuits. Cantabile has come to Charlie with a pretty girl named Polly. He sends the girl to the kitchen and asks Charlie if he would like to cohabit with the girl which he rejects saying that

1. Ibid., p. 44
"Nothing abstract. You do things for me, I do things for you.... "You'd better not reject me."
"Why not?"
His face, the colorless-intense type, filled with pale heat. But he said, "There's a thing the three of us can do together. You lie on your back. She gets on top of you and at the same time goes down on me."
"Let's not have any more filth. Stop it. I can't even visualize this."
"Don't put on with me. Don't be superior." He explained again. "I'm at the head of the bed, standing. You lie down. Polly straddles you, leaning forward to me."
"Stop these disgusting propositions. I want no part of your sexual circuses."1

Why Cantabile comes to Charlie with such morally-defiled proposals has its own psychological implications and truth: Charlie always keeps company of one or the other woman, consults sex experts to keep his sexual powers steady, and reads with interest Ellenbogen's books on sex wherein the author, advocates, the intensive sexual gratification to compensate the short span of life. His sexual ideas have distorted the mind of the people like the priests who virtually are under oath to live a life of celibacy. Demmie by virtue and beauty has drawn ample evidence from the environment to support this view how a strange demonition of sexuality is eating into the vitality of life. He tells about a morally-perverted dentist who while working on her fillings "took her hand and placed it on what she assumed to

1. Ibid., pp. 183-84
be the armrest of the chair. It was no such thing. It was his excited member. Her physician concluded an examination by kissing her violently wherever he could reach."¹ Even Renata outruns everybody in this game of beastly sexuality - she brings herself to orgasm by using Charlie's foot from under the table in a party at the Palm Court of the Plaza. The projection of such scenes of vulgar sexuality and bohemianism have little to fascinate a man like Charlie who is well aware of the truth that they degenerate the ideals of love and pervert the feelings of brotherhood.

However, Charlie-Renata relationship is an episode introduced to show Charlie's rise to a higher concept of man-woman relationship, a sort of platonic ladder toward a more cosmic attachment than the ties of this mundane world. Renata is an embodiment of love and beauty of the earthly existence, the "pulsating power and energy of Aphrodite", that disenchanted Humboldt's imagination and weakened his faculties. But such things will not disorient Charlie's outlook on life. He breaks away from her, which is symbolic of his disengagement from the earth-bound definitions of the romantic concept of beauty and love. The process is moral but painful in that it destroys man's incorrigible commitment to romantic beauty and illusion. The accident medical reports about Charlie's "amazingly youthful prostrate and ¹. Ibid., p. 165
super normal EKG," creates illusion and misconceptions in his mind. Inspite of the fact that Renata claims to keep his 'sex powers' alive and the assurance that he can make money "plenty of it especially if you team up with me," his mind is assailed by phantom notions of futurity. But are there no rewards outside what Renata promises to procure?, he ruminates. Renata represents a life of pure sensuality the mystery of which he has already comprehended. The perilous waves of naked, primitivistic moral anarchy, and the illusory notion of the physical self now no longer enchant him, he can well visualise Renata's role in old age when on border of senility, with back hooked and feeble he needs someone to push his wheelchair. He wonders if Renata will do it then.

"Was it Renata - the Renata I had taken in the wars of Happiness by a quick Patton-thrust of armor? No, Renata was a grand girl, but I couldn't see her behind my wheelchair. Renata? Not Renata. Certainly not."  

Such insights into man's predicament, while in bed with Renata, are symbolic of Charlie's acceptance of the vision of reality growing out of the 'twilight zone' of consciousness when man has partly transcended nature. Even the escape from the dusky zone of finite is clear as Charlie has learnt that it has moral sanctity only when the escape is connected with the cosmic significance of the infinite: "Now I begin

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1. Ibid., p. 349
2. Ibid., p. 9
to understand what Tolstoi was getting at when he called on mankind to cease the false and unnecessary comedy of history and begin simply to live.\textsuperscript{1} Charlie's final withdrawal from Renata's world of sensuousness is, no doubt, a failure of the ideal of beauty she represents, but it brings Charlie closer to the truth existing beyond nature and the material world, offering mankind a timeless human significance.

When Renata deserts him to marry a rich undertaker Flonzaley and leaves her son Roger in Spain with Charlie saying, "It's him you need now, not me,"\textsuperscript{2} Charlie does not feel so wretched and defeated. He looks after her son while Renata is on a honeymoon trip with her new husband. Her mother soon snatches away the child leaving Charlie alone, perhaps to make him reflect that he must find his own way with a guide but of course not turning frigid to human ties binding the individual within the society. He does not feel miserable at such a callous treatment of the old woman since Renata's propinquity has taught him how to bear with the shots of life in distress and in so unpleasant a situation as he finds himself in. He has learnt to respect and recognise the otherness of the individuals to do away with the instinct of overpossessiveness. The individual within a civilized society is both an individual, having his own

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1. Ibid., p. 477
2. Ibid., p. 432
moral life to live even in state of alienation and a part of the 'greater hierarchy' of the civilization in the state of flux and continuum provided his consciousness is not dulled and moral sense is not blunted. The religious intuitions and the resultant peace and harmony which Charlie experience become articulate at times during the process. Once to Katheen he says, "The question is this: why should we assume that the series ends with us? The fact is, I suspect, that we occupy a point within a great hierarchy that goes far far beyond ourselves." ¹

And thus, Charlie objectively reflects upon the birth of a new light in his consciousness, there has come a change in his attitude to human relationships. He wishes to rent a house for his daughters Mary and Lisa so that they can spend the summer holidays with him. Even his desire to share the money he has earned out of one of his scripts with his uncle Waldemar speaks of the rise of new awareness and the value of the principle of inter-depence in time of need. The purpose of life is not only to make self-survival a physical reality but to fulfil the individual's moral contract of making it a purposive living so as to avert the assault of negativistic whinnings. He becomes conscious of the social relevance of the individual's struggle against his self to overcome its inadequacies and against the society

¹. Ibid., p.479
as a whole to assert the value of social concern because if it does not promote human interest it will result in moral nihilism and passivity. When Kathleen asks what he would do when life becomes calmer and settled, he talks of fulfilling a number of social obligations which metaphorically shows that he has freed himself from the notion of social destiny first by creating the ideals of social harmony in his own life and then have it filtered down into the life of community around him.

"I've got a houseful of things in Chicago to dispose of. Children to see, and I've got to talk to Mr. Fleisher's uncle. When I've taken care of these necessary items and tied up a few loose ends I'm coming back to Europe. To take up a different kind of life."1

Charlie has thus shed away the idea of special destiny or the desire of becoming a 'World Historical Individual'. He has risen above such stuffs of romantic day-dreamings which brings order into his life.

THE DEAN'S DECEMBER (1982)

The Dean's December is an extension of the themes of Saul Bellow's earlier novels, the one being most crucial that haunted American imagination in the "forties" - 'how to be human?' The protagonist's moral awakening to the contemporary reality is rooted in the socio-historical reality - its one fixture of apocalyptic dismay is being represented

1. Ibid., p. 483
by Chicago, the native city of Albert Corde, riven by violence and gangsterism, rapes and murder, crimes and moral degeneration against which a struggle is misconstrued as treachery, racism and buffoonary, the other is the oppressive environment of Rumanian metropolis, Bucharest, reeling under the wheel of a totalitarian communist order. Of these two phases of civilization if one prospers on the invidious distinction of racism, economic status and class consciousness and has the support of the media and the academics to provide any version of reality or its distortion to maintain its hegemony, the other is represented by the power structure which exerts force upon the individual and destroy initiation, will, sense of freedom and human dignity. Thus the moral question - how a man is to remain human in such a new order - which Asa Leventhal confronted on verge of nihilism and absurdity, is to be resolved within the existing socio-historical realities, not in abstraction or by being blind to its tragic implications.

The tales of the two cities - Chicago and Bucharest - are fused together to act as a gigantic metaphor of human suffering experienced by man under the two sets of value system - communism and capitalism. The Chicagoan universe, which in the words of the novelist is "the contempt centre of the USA,"¹ is an enigma for the protagonist for its

collapse of moral standards of life, coldness and extinction of what is good and human as suggested by the word 'December' in the title. December heralds the end of the year but in the two far-flung cities, Bucharest and Chicago, the month signifies more than the ending of the year: it is the culture itself dying, replaced by the mechanical forms of organisation which are hostile and retrograde to the highest ideals and achievements of humanity. The cultural chaos is suggested by the freezing weather - whereas the institutionalised life in Bucharest is symbolic of repressions, destructions, blockades and surveillance that man highly resists, but they exist as encroachments to bulldoze human perception. Life under such crucial circumstances becomes a tragic experience, an ordeal to test the moral quality of the 'being' which while investigating into the fundamental human question in larger context to transcend the vulgar, debased and the beastly, arrives at the moral options on the plea that human fulfillment is to be achieved in sharing responsibilities with the life of the community rather than turning blind to its social realities.

The novel opens in Bucharest with the comment: "Corde, who led the life of an executive in America - wasn't a college dean, a kind of executive?"¹ which is rather disturbing but revealing: the interrogative tone is a clear indication that Corde's deanship has already been in jeopardy.

¹. Ibid., p. 7
Albert Corde, the Dean of Colleges in the University of Chicago has come to Bucharest with his astronomer Romanian wife, Minna, to attend on his ailing mother-in-law, Valeria, who is kept in the intensive care unit of the Party hospital which she herself built when she was the minister of health. The first sign of the tyranny of the communist system is suggested by Valeria’s helplessness when she accepted the offer of the ministerial berth because her refusal “might be dangerous”. Minna was educated in Rumania, a communist country, and is presently working as a professor of astronomy in Mount Palomar Observatory. She comes back home with her husband after twenty years when her mother is struggling for life.

The treatment meted out to Valeria’s husband, Dr. Raresh, characteristically speaks of inhumanities of a communist regime. The doctor was an ardent party activist, threw roses on Russian soldiers on their reaching Bucharest, he brushed aside the charges levelled against the regime in the world as bourgeois propaganda about “the Great Terror, Stalin’s labor camps, the Communists in Spain, the pact with Hitler”¹, a symbol of Fascist evil. But his austerity and ideological overenthusiasm which was naive, cost him heavily. They took his watch away deciding that “the man was a fool and kicked him upstairs”. It was Valeria’s love for her husband that brought her to the communist fold,

¹. Ibid., p. 12
otherwise she was a boyar. Her bourgeois pride evaporated in the heat of Marxism which made him a communist militant. Later there was a shift and she developed feelings of sin of "helping to bring in the new regime, by a private system of atonement, setting up her mutual-aid female network." Consequently the party denounced her and expelled her for her "cosmopolitan psychologism" or Freudianism. Corde was earlier a journalist but resigned for having "cultural inclinations you couldn't satisfy by journalism," and this brought his transfer from Paris to Chicago.

Corde and Minna are putting up at Valeria's old fashioned apartment in Bucharest. The heterogenous image of the "earthquake-damaged buildings, winter skies, gray pigeons, pollarded trees, squalid orange-rusty trams hissing under trolley cables," is symbolic of the decay and disjunctedness of life pattern in a regimented-power structure society. Soon we get lost in the world of dilemma which gets reflected in two meetings Corde and Minna have had with Valeria nearly in a week. The first was official by special dispensation, the second was unofficial that enraged the superintendent of the hospital, a Colonel in the secret police of the state. What a system wherein the contact with the patient on the death bed is controlled by checks and surveillance! This world has its whims and

1. Ibid., p. 107
2. Ibid., p. 64
3. Ibid., p. 7
fancies to look upon the human dealings: cousins and nieces were not permitted to meet the Cordes in the apartment, for it they had to move to hotels since the streets were spotted by intelligencia. Even in hotels there was nothing private, a dialogue in confidence and privacy was a utopian fantasy. The hotels were equipped with detective devices, "with their deluxe totalitarian comforts and the goings-on of the secret police - securitate: devices behind the draperies, tapes spinning in the insulated gloom."\(^1\)

The Colonel was the sole authority to regulate the system in the hospital and thus he represents the repressive, tyrannical character of the communist reality. He is a class by itself, trained in prison administration and psychiatric institutions where the dissidents are kept for purges. Here in an east European province of the Russian empire, anyone who refuses to surrender his individuality to the system is branded as dissident and they have their own monstrous mechanism to deal with such cases. "They do everything Russian style. If you're a dissident who can't see the socialist paradise, you must be sick in the head..."\(^2\)

How the stringent measures adopted by the power controlling machinery destroy the essence of life and convert it into a rigid mechanical breathing becomes manifest in the fear-psychosis which the people develop under the bureaucratic

1. Ibid., p. 14
2. Ibid., p. 215
machinery: even revelation of one's identity to near relatives creates shuddering sensations of mortal fear.

Bellow's description of the crowd that gathers at the cemetery to attend Valeria's funeral is a peculiar product of man's display of fascistic leanings in his conduct. The overwhelming sense of fear, gloom and stiffness suggests that the very spirit of life is hardened, signifying death in life.

"Some of them could not easily raise their heads for identification, their neck muscles had grown so stiff. Yes, many had the cervical arthrosis. There were splashes of dark pigment on their faces. Old mouths gaped up at you when they spoke.... They came... well, they had their reasons. They were there to signify, to testify. They came also to remind Minna of their existence. 'Yes, we're still here, in case you wondered, and we could tell you plenty. And your mother, she got you away, it was one of her great successes. Good for you. And for her. Now it's over for her, and soon for us, too. And this is what turns us out, in this gloom.'

The novelist introduces a subtle contrast between the quality of life as experienced by the masses under the old regime and the new order. The crowd was like a demonstration that came to pay regards to Valeria and also to see the American couple, Corde and Minna, but the real purpose was as Valeria's sister, Gigi, explains, to tell "the regime something," which was definitely a reflection and exposure of excesses perpetrated on them by the new communist regime.

"It wasn't because Valeria had fallen from grace, or because she had stood up to the Politburo or the Central Committee, or refused years later to rejoin

1. Ibid., p. 209
the Party when they invited her. They came out with a sort of underfed dignity in what was left of the presocialist wardrobe, to affirm that there was a sort of life - and perhaps, as Communists or even Iron Guardists (it was conceivable), they had sinned against it - the old European life which at its most disgraceful was infinitely better than this present one.\(^1\)

Since Corde is a foreigner in Bucharest, he has no been able to shed away the fear and suspicion of the government machinery. However, what sustains his humanity is the fair idea of how things could take place in such random fashion in Romania - "forced labor, mental hospitals for dissenters, censorship."\(^2\) And thus his suspicion that Minn could be in trouble anytime is not ill-founded because the Colonel was a sort of person who hardly responded to human appeal and partly because she was taken as a defector of the party when she left Romania for America and is still a case of dual citizen with an American passport flying in without a visa. The predatory nature of the state now, as it was in the past, dots on unconceivable atrocities but the modus operandi has changed. It is reported that,

\[\text{"...according to Amnesty International they inject mind drugs in psychiatric hospitals, and who knows how many people are dying in those places. Electric shocks, sulfadiazine injection.\(^5\) And it was much rawer before when the Colonel was an apprentice. One of my mother-in-law's colleagues, a Minister of Justice, has his head hacked off in his cell. They decided not to bring him to trial."}\(^3\)

\(^1\) Ibid., p. 212  
\(^2\) Idem  
\(^3\) Ibid., p. 67
Bucharest is a city much dreaded for its arbitral exercise of power control in the guise of 'protocol' which is, in fact, a caricature of the norms of a civilised society. For example, if one has to have a conversation with a foreigner, he can do so first by reporting it to the authorities, and one cannot entertain old acquaintances at their homes unless they got "an official clearance from something they call Protocol. Without Protocol they couldn't give her a cup of tea." After Valeria's death Minna, the scientist, feels unsafe with Corde, her humanist husband, in her own home country since any moment they could incur the wrath of the power centre. Corde says that, "Minna was afraid of letting me out alone. She thought they might pick me up on some pretext, and that would really complicate things." Another illustration of the regime harbouring the vision of a socialist paradise is exposed in the treatment meted out to Vlada Voynich's brother who was thrown out into the solitary prison cell for ten years for his socialistic philosophies. But when a delegation of the British Labour Party visited Bucharest, they brought him out, washed and clothed him since the dinner was to be hosted in his name to show to a delegation of the opposing political ideology their socialistic liberalism and generousness towards the well being of the masses.

1. Ibid., p. 216
2. Ibid., pp. 216-17
"He was supposed to be giving a dinner to the British delegation. It was about six in the evening. The guests were due at seven. At about six-fifteen, they brought in his wife. She had been in prison, too. Ten years. The one didn't know whether the other was still living. She was wearing a nice dress. No time to talk the cook was an agent, anyway. Any minute, the bell would ring..."

'Ah, what a thing. The visitors never caught on? Like G.B. Shaw in Russia. Like Henry Wallace.'

Corde confronts the real horror of this 'socialist paradise' when the question of Valeria's funeral arrangement comes up and the decision of the 'higher ups' is more a show of their callousness and petty class prejudices which ought to have been shed away with the dead. They go beyond the gross which is a sure symptom of the system reaching putrescence. They were hard on Valeria saying that her daughter sought defection from the party whereas the fact was that she protected Minna from the vengeance of the power hierarchy of the police state and endured ostracism while fighting the officials. She finally got "her daughter out of the country. The rigidity and the bureaucratic stiffness of the power-machinery becomes manifest in the Colonel's behaviour who is a by-product of the system: he got training in psychiatric institutions to crush the dissidents like mentally degenerate persons. But thoughts as such have little impact on Corde's consciousness. The sense of mortality and its encounter at the crematorium teaches him how life is to be accepted in

1. Ibid., p. 216
its entity, the essence of which lies in fellow feelings and sense of universal brotherhood:

"He was not entirely himself - the inward fever, in the system, he felt disarticulated. But why should he expect to be himself? At the crematorium he had gone through a death rehearsal. You couldn't rehearse death gratis. It had to cost something."1

It is the force of his moral awareness that Corde has been able to survive the devastating power game between the power elite and the powerless when Valeria is on the verge of death. Efforts are made to seek the maximum help from Valeria who represents the grace and mortality of the old world and the retrograde force that thwarts the bid is the KGB Colonel, a representative of the new order for which the only reality is to kill the soul of man. In moments of mounting tensions compassion and human feelings emanate from the faces of the old. Inspite of the fact that some of them undertook the job of working as agents of the regime many evolved their own system to pass on secret messages for helping each other in time of distress. Opposed to this set of people are the young who lack social concern and are hardly alive to the moral beauty of the old concepts of loyalty, public morality and justice. Corde's humanism and social concern find reflection in his choice of the study of the Greek and the Roman classics, the Renaissance and the Puritanism and the letters of Rilke. His consciousness is fully awakened to

1. Ibid., p. 214
the moral constructs and implications of virtues such as liberty, equality, justice which became the watch words of the French Revolution for the cause of civilization and the dynamic idea of progress. The new regime is using these virtues as masks and draperies to hide their real faces from the public eye. But Corde's moral sense, unlike the utopian vision of a Renaissance humanist who looked upon man as a paragon of beauty but found him otherwise, does not get distracted.

Corde is well conversant with the brutal realities of life confronting man under a totalitarian value structure. The world is governed by the tactics to bedevil and denaturalise man and he is driven to a situation of utter helplessness and desolation. The novelist's dig at one anti-human and nightmarish feature of communist order is reflected in setting a pain-level for the people and the irony is that they rationalised the harshness of this schematization by calling it a liberal socialist phase of political philosophy which borders on the senselessness of violence, regimentation and repression of human interest. The overtones of the totalitarian system becomes discernible in their bid to impress upon people's mind that the government has the power to set it and that each individual has to understand this monopoly and "be prepared to accept it." They take pride in calling this phase of history a creation of tender liberal society which "has to find soft ways to
institutionalize harshness and smooth it over compatibly with progress, buoyancy. So that with us when people are merciless, when they kill, we explain that it's because they're disadvantaged, or have lead poisoning, or come from a backward section of the country, or need psychological treatment.¹ To Corde's moral sense, such a view of reality is a by-product of the terror of history unleashed by the French and the German in the two great wars. This 'archaic pain level' is used as a device to raise people's consciousness to certain degrees by which they should be able to bear affliction which, they explain, will make them wise and strong, whereas the tragic aspect of the situation is that this mode of raising people's level of consciousness will certainly crush the very power of sensitivity in man. It is nothing but a brutal display of man's innate savagery and the old primitive passion which is still in currency in this Rumanian capital through human agency. The 'fucking colonel' being one who "was running us through the Brief Course, a refresher for Minna and an introduction for me."²

Valeria's death in the party hospital, where even human encounter with the dying patient is controlled by the power-whim of the privileged group in the government machinery, has taught Corde the value of affirming life by accepting the facts including mortality. However, Corde and

¹. Ibid., p. 272
². Idem
Minna return to Chicago, Minna is hospitalised as she could not withstand "the brief refresher course" inflicted on each individual by the communist bureaucracy but Corde, in the words of the novelist, "was minutely aware of things, and the source of this awareness was in his equilibrium, a very extensive kind of composure." The "equilibrium" and the inner harmony which Corde has attained in the midst of the bitter and sardonic social milieu of the communist capital is symbolic of the truth that the 'being' has gained the new strength and illumination to share Martin Buber's view of self-discovery which is not a subjective phenomenon: the self discovers itself not in relation to itself but in relation to others.

Chicago is another universe with a different power structure. Corde is attached to it by strong feelings since it is the city of his childhood. What persistently continues to nag him in Bucharest is the jury trial involving the death of a white student, Richie Lester, murdered by the two blacks Lucas Ebry and his accomplice, a black whore, Riggie Hines. The situation grows highly embarrassing with Valeria on death bed in the hospital during the dismal days of December but Corde/this tragic dilemma. Corde as a dean held himself morally responsible for this act of violence, murder, rape and molestation and got involved in the matter to get the whole case thoroughly investigated and brought

1. Ibid., p. 278
the criminals to conviction. Besides, the dean, being a highly delicate and sensitive spirit, could not reconcile with the all pervasive sense of physical and human destruction in the city and thus wrote two disturbingly mystifying articles about its moral and cultural life in the Harper's that evidently nettled the college authorities and created a stir. Corde's moral being felt outraged, the socio-political scene gave him a shock and he saw the debris of the failure of humanism in the streets and in the rise of skyscrapers over the derelict lots wherein the bourgeoisie guarded under lock and key the Byzantine wealth and life.

The publication of the two articles and the resultant cry is a sure indication that the dean is alive to the sanctity of the moral aspect of American reality. It was a scathing exposure of the growing criminal tendencies on the campus and the moral pollution which was corroding the essence of ethical conduct and codified pattern of the established institutions. Corde's insistence on having the murder of Rickie thoroughly investigated makes him strangely unpopular, first, because his own nephew Mason (his sister Elfrida's son) is involved in the crime and second, the college authorities regard him as a pest for unnecessarily creating an atmosphere of tension, hostility and racism in the college. The college office is stuffed with complaints and objections as if those Harper pieces had stirred a hornet's nest. Alec Witt, the Provost, who got very angry
with the Dean, and whose moral duty was to protect the dignity of the office of the Dean, had personal dislike for Corde. Corde was a "high principled idiot dean" in his view and thus his appointment has been a mistake." He took upon himself the responsibility to "clear up the mess." For the Provost, Corde

"...was an outsider, he hadn't come up from the academic ranks, hadn't been shaped by the Ph.D. process. It wasn't even clear why he had wanted to become an academic, and even an administrator."1

Alec is a prototype of the Colonel in Bucharest - he represents power "qualified by the higher deviousness as power usually was" and Corde's mistake was that he challenged this 'real world of power.' The college wanted Corde to get a clearance for the publication of the articles. The novelist employs the device of irony to debunk Alec's magnanimity that even on the day of Valeria's death when Corde needs peace most, the Provost indulges in pestering campaign by connecting himself with the dean on the telephone.

"The Provost said, "You may not have heard that you were subpoenaed by your cousin.'
'Is that so?'
'Mr Detillion wanted to put you on the stand to establish the heavy involvement of the college in this case. I've checked into that with our legal department...'
'With some real lawyers..."2

1. Ibid., p. 177
2. Idem
The students stage demonstration to denounce the audacity of the dean for the text of the two articles. A small militant group known as the Revolutionary Marxist pass a resolution declaring Corde a racist and insist that he should seek public apology to the Blacks for presenting them as animals and savages. The articles brought to light the hellish conditions prevailing in the jails and the hospitals and the inhuman treatment meted out to the criminals by the authorities. The details are highly nauseating and morally repulsive which Corde picked up from the court rooms at Harrison and Kedzie at the County Jail, from the Hospital and Robert Tylor Homes. The court rooms were strangely crowded with cases of whirling lives, which in the words of the novelist, is the 'blight of Chicago.' It comprises

"...dope pushers, gun toters (everybody had a gun), child molesters, shoplifters, smackheads, purse snatchers, muggers, rapists, arsonists, wife beaters, car thieves, pimps bailing out their whores."  

Of the many exotic cases of beastly sensuality which came up for trial, the cases of sexual abuse of small children was the worst and most repulsive to moral sense. "Pictures are produced of screaming kids whose faces are spattered, covered with gobs of semen." Corde could not reconcile with this act of moral affrontery as to who took such pictures

1. Ibid., p.158
2. Ibid., p. 159
waiting until the thing had been done. It could be the work of no other than 'some undercover-agent photographer.' The second case was about moral violence and atrocities which the jail authorities perpetrated on the prisoners in the County Jail as becomes manifest in the plea the lawyer made to the judge that poor criminal under trial be freed since he would not be able to bear the pain in the jails:

"Look at this poor slob forty-year-old adolescent with these fat tits in a dirty jersey; if you send him to County Jail they'll tear him to bits. They'll beat him, they'll burn him with cigarettes for the fun of it, they'll sodomize him day and night. He'll come out a cripple. Better just give him a scare and send him home."  

Such a dismal account of sub-human life as lived at the County Jail before Rufus Ridpath took over as its director speaks of Corde's being so morally conscious of the pain of the suffering humanity. Ridpath was a negro with immaculate clarity of reforming mission and honesty, he saved millions of dollars in the budget and refunded the money but this move of honesty recoiled on him since instead of appreciation it brought indictment and dismissal. During Ridpath's directorship, the account goes, the murder and suicide rates among the prisoners were cut down, he controlled the reckless beatings, stabbings, tortures, buggerings but his moral failure was that he did not humour the political bosses and thus they raised witnesses against him to testify the charge of battering the blacks whereas, in the words of

1. Ibid., p. 159
the novelist, he had not the hands of a "brutalizer". Wolf Quitman, Ridpath's lawyer told Corde all about how Ridpath overworked nearly sixteen hours a day to flush out crime and corruption from the jail. The jail, Quitman told, was run by the criminals and Ridpath was locked into mortal battle to eliminate their menace from the very roots.

"It was on the barn boss system. The gang chiefs ran it. Hard for you and me to imagine what went on there. Only by general terms, the catchwords. Damn rough scene. Drugs, rackets, homosexual rape. Plenty of money changing hands. Buy damn near anything you wanted. And people beaten and tortured. Lots of weapons. If you could work loose any piece of metal, you made yourself a knife. If you soaked a rolled newspaper in the toilet and hung it from the window in winter, it froze into a club. You could kill a man with it, and when it thawed where was the evidence? Not exactly the Montessori school. Excuse me if I offend, but professor-criminologists were brought in, and they were afraid to go into the tiers and put down the barn bosses, or even look at them. You can't blame them for it, but they sat in the office and wrote reports, or articles for criminology journals, while the suicide figures went up and up, and murders higher and higher. They didn't dare go into the tiers of the jail and they couldn't take charge."1

The moral violence corroding the cultural niceties of the 'dawn tough city' of Chicago is reflected in Corde's passionately defending the Ridpath case which speaks of his sense of humanity and concern with the predicament of the blacks being put on the cross. Corde sees in Ridpath the reflection of the old pattern of relationship existing between the blacks and the whites which in the

1. Ibid., p. 153
present he finds sadly missing. Corde painfully records the plight of the blacks in American society showing how the effective black image is destroyed by the black gangs themselves:

"...the Rangers and the El Rukins, and the outlaw chieftains - black princes in their beautiful and elegant furs, boots, foreign cars. They controlled the drug trade. They ruled in the prisons. For young blacks, of all classes, even perhaps for young whites, they provided a powerful model."\(^1\)

And thus, Corde tried to clear Ridpath's reputation but the city intellectuals had their own reservations which is a reflection of their own parochially narrow moralistic outlook on life. "What's with this Professor? What's he talking? His pilot light is gone out."\(^2\) And certainly Corde's moral stance and attitude to evil and to the blacks in Chicago can not have human appreciation in so morally repellent a social milieu of the city.

Corde left Chicago to attend to Valeria in Bucharest, his office kept on posting details of the Richie's murder case currently under trial. The Harper's office was flooded with letters recording reactions of various sorts, such as the "Liberals found him reactionary. Conservatives called him crazy. Professional urbanologists said he was hasty. 'Things have always been like this in American cities ugly and terrifying.'\(^3\)

1. Ibid., pp. 149-50
2. Ibid., p. 152
3. Ibid., p. 186
Some said Corde had no sense of history:

"'The author is a Brahmin. The Brahmins taught us to despise the cities, which accordingly became despicable.' Mr Corde believes in gemulichkeit more than in public welfare. And what makes him think that what it takes to save little black kids is to get them to read Shakespeare? Next he will suggest that we teach them Demonsthenes and make speeches in Greek. The answer to juvenile crime is not in King Lear or Macbeth." ¹

The others had comprehended Corde's intent properly, saying, that according to the Dean, "a moral revolution is required". Ridpath, the director at the County Jail, and Toby Winthrop are the two "moral initiatives" for Corde but it is irksome to the college Provost because morality, according to him, is the hegemony of the whites. Toby is an ex-hitman, a hired killer and a heroine addict, he was in County Jail as prisoner before and during Ridpath's time and was tried three times for murder. What impresses Corde is Toby's ultimate affirmation of human values and the moral urge to save the derelict lot from moral degeneration and death. Toby once took a heavy dose of heroine and regained life after eighteen hours. His chance encounter with Smithers, another black addict, in the detoxification unit of the Billings Hospital awakened his moral conscience, the beast in him straightened its moral curves, he learnt the lesson of 'how to become human' by being close to the sickening sensation of life. Smithers was brought to the hospital in a state of wilderness, Toby Winthrop helped the hospital

¹. Ibid., p. 186
authorities to control the beast in Smithers in the ward and looked after him like a fond mother but during the process he himself was cured of the disquieting non-human stuff in him by realising the individual's responsibility towards himself and the humanity at large:

"I wouldn't leave him. They had to measure his body fluid. I held the man's Johnson for him. You understand what I'm saying? I held his dick for him to pee in the flask. He had a bad ulcer in his leg. I treated that, too. That was his cure, and it was my cure, at the same time. I was his mother, I was his daddy. And we stayed together since."¹

After Smithers's release from the hospital the two founded the detoxification centre to cure the addicts without methadone. Toby has been a victim of jungle-morality in Chicagoan culture-sophistication, his close observation of the forces controlling the system is revealing: "You can't do much for Ridpath. The guy who did the job on him don't have to worry about you or me, my friend. It's their town. Their names are in the paper every day."² And therefore Corde's visit to meet Toby at the operation Contract speaks of his moral initiation because in an atmosphere of general crisis in morals, such cases of moral quest and procuring the divine cure for the neglected section of society is a curious human phenomena. This is suggested by his reflections on the scene around the place, "Christ, the human curve had sunk down to base level, had gone beneath it. If there was

1. Ibid., p. 190
2. Ibid., p. 188
another world, this was the time for it to show itself."

Corde's sympathy for the blacks branded as the underclass by the whites in American society is apparent. The capitalist class condemn them to unimaginable suffering and death as if they were not human and were born to writhe like warms crushed under the white boots. Mason represents the racial hysteria which becomes articulate in the imagery he employs to scan the placement of the blacks on the social totem pole, "Those people of the underclass, dopers or muggers or whores: what were they, mice? To the 'thinking population', to establishment intellectuals, they were nothing but mice!" These underclasses live a marginalised existential reality, where there is almost imperceptible chasm between life and death and are extricated from being a useful cog in the wheel of capitalist machinery for want of occupancy of a responsible station as assigned to them by the power group. They have no means to evaluate the constructive role and its implications in context of social reality. The traditions which segregate the blacks, Corde feels, be demolished and a new value-structure, good and human, be evolved to recognise the human in them in the interest of humanity. This is also a grim reality that their saviours have to bear the brunt of the elite class in that they are side-lined and alienated in the social circle

1. Ibid., p. 188
2. Ibid., pp. 40-41
as 'traitor' or a 'fool'. This was one aspect of American reality that Corde attacked in the articles and that evidently unnerved the elitist sensibility.

Corde's humanistic vision becomes manifest in his bid to explain that virtues such as liberty, equality and justice are as much a concern of the blacks as it is of the whites. His love for the underprivileged section of the society, the weak and the beaten-up to the bottom, for the failed and those about to fail constitutes the core of his philosophy of life. The power group in America on the one hand live by adhering to laissez-faire doctrine in morals and thus fail to establish the bond essentially linking a man and a man, irrespective of colour, class and social distinction, and on the other hand, employ the meanest stratagem to sustain the passion for securing wealth and political supremacy. They turn blind to its ironic implications that the passion to grow upon the exploitation of the other half of the society will pervert their 'being' and destroy its meaning and spiritual essence. Corde's own brother-in-law, Zahner, is a representative of the commercial culture to which the profit motive is one sacred fact. He lives by pecking over garbage cans, that is, he grows richer on spreading moral garbage instead of cleansing it from people's lives. Even his boyhood friend, Dewey Spangler, who is a news commentator, joins the power-elite and advises Corde to abdicate what is traditional and show allegiance to
the value-orientation of contemporary reality.

Further Corde's concern with the well-being of the community is powerfully reflected in the publication of the discovery of Professor Beech's 'Lead-Poisoning project'. The scientists have shown the deadening effect of lead on human sensibility which must be checked if humanity is to survive. The idea that lead-contact can destroy the very life-sensitivity fills the mind of the elite class to destroy the initiation in the underclasses.

Corde in the first place is skeptic of the authenticity of the government agencies to measure the growing level of lead poisoning since they lack the necessary instruments and their methods are faulty. Secondly, he has read Beech's paper in Bucharest with interest and thus takes upon his own self the moral responsibility to warn people against the rising lead-level jeopardizing human survival through the dispersal of this poison in air, water, soil, forest, animals, cities and human cells as the results obtained in the laboratory have established. It is "about five hundredfold above natural prehistoric levels. The true levels have been established by fossil bone analysis, by the examination of the sediments of fresh and marine waters, of old tree-stem woods, of snow strata in the Antarctic, and of Greenland ice."¹ Alec Witt's retrograde view of reality opposes Corde's growing interest in Beech's material discoveries which need

¹ Ibid., p. 139
serious discussions and in case their repercussions are not paid any heed, humanity is exposed to vital loss of its essentials. He indirectly guards the interest of the power-elite by discouraging Corde not to make people alive to the dangers of lead poisoning by projecting in the newspaper the risks involved in it.

"'These environmental, ecological questions are very complex.'

'I wouldn't do it if it were only that. I don't care to get mixed up in environmentalism. But I am interested in Beech himself. The personality of a scientist, his view of the modern world."1

Since both Professor Beech and Corde, the Dean, come from the Midwest, they have a lot in common, both are in the late fifties and are moral visionary. Thus it is Corde's moral consciousness and social concern which prompts him to assist Beech in a humanitarian project as this, which involves the painful elimination of what is characterized as human in man by degrees. If there are few like Alec Witt representing the bourgeois interest in a universe stuffed with unreality, there can be many to show gravest reservations to act as moral reflector to record its deadly impact on human consciousness. The deadly dulling of consciousness is so slow that the victim can scarcely feel its effect. "We would be dulled down into the abyss unaware that we were sinking." Matter coming in contact with the tiny lead particles grows deadly poisonous - water, vegetation and air become contaminated. The scientists conclusions are:

1. Ibid., p. 180
"Chronic lead insult now affects all mankind. Biological dysfunctions, especially observable in the most advanced populations, must be considered among the causes of wars and revolutions. Mental disturbances resulting from lead poison are reflected in terrorism, barbarism, crime, cultural degradation. Visible everywhere are the irritability, emotional instability, general restlessness, reduced acuity of the reasoning powers, the difficulty of focusing, et cetera, which the practiced clinician can readily identify."¹

Beech's conclusion of lead-poisoning are undoubtedly deadly and Corde fully stands by him that man be made aware of the risk involved in his constantly being near to it. It's natural corollary is socio-cultural and moral pollution. It permanently effects nervous system, the intellectual faculties are impaired and the kids become "restless, frantic" and develop behaviour-problems. One tragic aspect of Beech's apocalypse is that an escape from the lead contact is impossible:

"So the bottom line is that we eat and drink lead, we breathe it. It accumulates in the seas, which are getting heavier by the day, and it's absorbed by plants and stockpiled in the calcium of the bones. Brains are being mineralized. The great reptiles with their small brains wore thick armor, but our big brains are being hardened from within."²

Corde's criticism of the media, the academics and the educational institutions has its moral justification as these agencies, being the vital forms of rousing human consciousness have turned passive in the task assigned to

¹. Ibid., p. 140
². Ibid., p. 221
them. And thus, what Corde does, in fact, is a moral duty of the communication industry, it is the media that stands for enlightening the masses but it is a pity that it has become "part of corporate America. They are part of the problem, hence their "impartiality" is "meaningless." The capitalist class exploits the media to serve its interest and thus "breeds hysteria and misunderstanding." Corde is hard on the role of the academics and the universities. The academics are ruled by public opinion. They were not set apart, with all their privileges, to be like everybody else but to be different. If they could not accept difference they could not make the contribution to culture that society needed. The challenge to the Humanists was the challenge to produce new models. The educational institutions have fallen into abysmal deep disappointment and have ceased to function as castles of light and love. Corde's colleagues, in his eyes, were 'failures and phoney,' as the articles revealed. It is their Philistinism on display that hasdevoured their moral initiation and their urge to work towards raising the level of human life. Therefore, the situation is comical in that the elite of the intellect who are supposed to put up a fight for the preservation of old greatness and glory give in to the great emptiness and have become instead an elite of influence and comfort. When the cities begin to decay with the moral filth, academies can not check this volcanic eruption of evil but certainly they can do a lot by drawing the people's attention towards it. They can tell, as Corde
himself somewhat wildly tries to do, "what the human meaning of this decay was and what it augured for civilization." ¹

Though humanism has failed in the West to create the new image of man - man as regenerated and reborn, Corde is out to investigate its causes of failure. He is aware of the factors responsible for the failure of these humanistic institutions and it is fundamentally in context of this existing scenario that his moral stance has social relevance in the sense that Corde's refusal of the world and the shared agony of human experience would be against the principle of moral consciousness and social concern. It is immoral in the sense that it thwarts the individual satisfaction on the one hand, and on the other, casts deleterious effects on man's growing awareness towards social obligations. Dewey Spengler as a member of the elite class is critical of Corde's moral battling against the collapse of urban America which speaks of his elitist bias. What Dewey is vocal about is the language Corde used in the two articles that it made a mess of his viewpoint which was far from being true; "The Dean's problem had been one of language. Nobody will buy what you're selling - not in those words. They don't even know what your product is." ²

Dewey tells how Corde came under the spell of socialistic philosophies of Rousseau and the concept of

¹. Ibid., p. 298
². Ibid., p. 296
them. And thus, what Corde does, in fact, is a moral duty of the communication industry, it is the media that stands for enlightening the masses but it is a pity that it has become "part of corporate America. They are part of the problem, hence their "impartiality" is "meaningless." The capitalist class exploits the media to serve its interest and thus "breeds hysteria and misunderstanding." Corde is hard on the role of the academics and the universities. The academics are ruled by public opinion. They were not set apart, with all their privileges, to be like everybody else but to be different. If they could not accept difference they could not make the contribution to culture that society needed. The challenge to the Humanists was the challenge to produce new models. The educational institutions have fallen into abysmal deep disappointment and have ceased to function as castles of light and love. Corde's colleagues, in his eyes, were 'failures and phoneys,' as the articles revealed. It is their Philistinism on display that has devoured their moral initiation and their urge to work towards raising the level of human life. Therefore, the situation is comical in that the elite of the intellect who are supposed to put up a fight for the preservation of old greatness and glory give in to the great emptiness and have become instead an elite of influence and comfort. When the cities begin to decay with the moral filth, academies can not check this volcanic eruption of evil but certainly they can do a lot by drawing the people's attention towards it. They can tell, as Corde
egalitarian societies and gave up the successful career of journalism to be an academician hoping to fulfil their ideal of creating high human types, the individuals who "would satisfy the human need for stature and love of the beautiful."
The implication of 'high human types' does not mean the creation of an elitist group and its snobbery and false superiority but "generosity and love of humankind". It is in this context that Corde's resolution to resign from the college job and to go with Minna to Mount Palomar is a fine illustration of social concern. He enters the lift following Minna the lift begins to rise taking Corde higher into another zone of reality - of the stars and the heaven where the human and cosmic, the finite and the infinite meet. Its coldness throws him into reflections over man's mortality and the lost vision of humanity, it connects him to the coldness of death which he experienced in the crematorium during Valeria's burial - "The dome never opened. You could pass only as smoke." The tragic world-view is redeemed by his moral insights into absurdity of man's condition. Corde's ascent to the observatory is given a symbolic implication: the "curved course of the lift" moving along the structural archs, speaks of the eerie spectacular movements of life which, if well comprehended in right proportions, will abolish the interior, the ego, for the restoration of harmony within the self: Corde felt as if "The interior was abolished altogether - no interior - nothing but the open, freezing heavens. If this present
motion were to go on, you would travel straight out. You would go up into the stars."¹

Corde’s rejection of the brutal realities of life in Chicago is not a gesture of romantic separatism. He accepts, like Sammler, this universe to be his planet on which he has to live with a perfect understanding of its metaphysics of existence and morality. Up in the air the tension is released in the realization that the tension, though a part of cosmic design, leads to harmony and thus the self gains the psychic harmony and poise.

"The sky was tense with stars, but not so tense as he was, in his breast. Everything overhead was in equilibrium, kept in place by mutual tensions. What was it that his tensions kept in place?"²

The self in the state of moral illumination has the vision of its own reflection into the nature of reality of the material world which, to ordinary eyes, looks like Plato’s cave - reality reflecting shadows within shadows. And his problem is now not how to change the ontological nature of the world as it stands in all its vileness and sublimity, but to evolve his own pattern of living, keeping in sight the chaos as created by the forces of disvalues for want of absolutes in a pluralistic society. And thus Corde, as a seeker after moral truths of life grounded in social realities, survives the nightmare of the Darwanian jungle - morality in Chicago and the repressive, anti-human tendencies of the communist view of reality as manifest in Bucharest.

¹. Ibid., pp. 305-06
². Ibid., p. 306