INTRODUCTION
The Bellow-criticism largely hinges on the various dimensions of Bellow's ideological convictions, philosophical premises and problems of the self, such as the survival of the self or the quest for identity which form the intellectual content of his novels, yet no full length study has been made to explore the theme of evolution of moral consciousness centred in concern for humanity which makes the protagonist to evolve his own pattern of life in absence of any built-in-pattern of human perfectibility and reinstate the values of love and affection in place of social and political regimentation. The protagonist rejects the existing view of human reality and evolves a strategy of survival based on human decision so as to give moral equivalence to all men as human beings and such an outlook on life brings him closer to the vision. The present thesis aims at fulfilling this task in context of Bellow's faith in the affirmation of human values which are kept alive through the creation of moral consciousness in the protagonist as the ultimate survival strategy to transcend the trivialities of life. But its character is essentially humanistic and social, not esoteric or metaphysical. Nor is it conceived in vacuum, rather it arises out of the ethical imperatives of man's social behaviour and responsibilities that he is his own rule and his own end but the implication is not that if the ends are open, then everything is permissible. This moral sense enlightens the protagonist
in regard to certain cardinal issues despite inadequacies: the moral sense invokes the rejection of two formulations of the self-one, as conceived by the individualists of the nineteenth century and the second, as initiated by the nihilistic votaries who propagated the 'littleness' of man. The philosophy of social concern and commitment will enlighten the protagonist to adjust with other human beings with whom he may come in contact.

And since moral consciousness has a peculiar role to play in making of man and has the capacity to transcend into a realm, wherein during the process the possibilities to develop insights into the complexities of life are opened up, it has its genesis in the philosophy of humanism and the existential aesthetics, especially of Sartrean principle of priority of existence over essence which had its reproachment that the doctrine of existentialism fosters the creed of subjectivity, and Sartre himself had to explain his view in order to demolish the charge by connecting existentialism with humanism saying that it "is a doctrine that does render human life possible; a doctrine, also, which affirms that every truth and every action imply both an environment and a human subjectivity."¹ This principle of subjectivity makes man a "project", it puts everyman in possession of himself.

Its simple implication is that it holds man wholly responsible for his acts, and not that man is concerned only with his own self. This consciousness that in fashioning his own image he fashions man involves the profound responsibility of the whole human race. It is this moral sense that makes man conscious that he has his own humanity and that his life extricated from its social context is rendered sterile. This moral illumination makes him reconcile himself to an existence he earlier sought to escape. The emphasis is upon affirmation through acceptance of the conditions of living that to exist is to act and to act is to choose. And it is in this act of choice which is purely existential that all values are created. The self becomes alive to the realisation that the existence of others has as much a reality as his own, that reason is insufficient to unlock the mysteries of living and the fear of mortality is transcended by the positive and active participation in life.

F J. Neithammer, a German educationist, used the term humanism for the first time in context of the Greek and the Latin classics as writings promoting the larger human interest, which later began to denote theories or doctrines taking "human experience as the starting point of man's knowledge of himself and the work of God and nature."¹ The two most significant, common assumptions of the humanists are: first, the belief in the value of human potential, second, the rejection of any system of thought like nihilism which denies any meaning to life and which treats man as depraved only to be saved by

divine grace. The existential view of man of the humanists is rooted in humanity-centred context, not in supernaturalistic religious authority or the ideological prescriptive dogmas. They show their moral commitment to encourage free thought which, they believe, will lead man toward fulfilment of innate endowments and the democratic ideal of humanity. They all declare that "they are opposed to authoritarian or totalitarian forces that dehumanize man. All profess compassion for human suffering and commitment to the unity of mankind." The various schools of humanism may differ in their approach to enlightening man in regard to his placement in the universe, whether the universe is divine or manichæanistic, but the humanitarian concern constituting their centrality is not eclipsed since the humanist is aware of the positive contribution to the direction of bettering man's moral and ethical life. For example, the humanism of the Greeks revived by the liberal bishops in the middle ages known as the Christian humanism created an intellectual stir that a religious philosophy without being anti-God can also be pro-man. In the wake of such a view, the church rituals were found wanting on the understanding that the rituals, if not relevant to human needs and are incapable of promoting good life, are imperfect and thus need reorientation.

The ethical humanism has religious connotations and is sometimes termed as "humanist temper" for its having values such as the creation of consciousness in man that he has human dignity and power and infinite possibilities which he has to respect and cultivate in his own self and promote the same in others too. This aspect of value of the humanist temper finds expression in Sartrean third modality of the being, "Being-for-others". Edward L. Ericson underlines the twin principles of human responsibility and personal worth as the foundation of ethical humanism. "The ethical humanist finds his 'golden mean' in an earth-born, life-centred and realistic ethic - open empathic, pragmatic and nonexclusive - enabling us to avoid the extremes of absolutism and nihilism, which are alike corrosive of meaningful freedom and responsibility."¹ Man for the ethical humanist is a 'goal-seeking organism' but his values are not arbitrary or accidental for the reason that they are grounded in the realities of human situation, its need and history. And thus, there is an indisputable stress on the fusion of the value of the self with the principle of responsibility and commitment. "Authentic moral freedom derives from the nature and creative activity of man himself, from the interplay of his social feeling and rationality (the ability to foresee consequences and consider confronting ends) combined with the drive to achieve

¹ "Ethical Humanism", in The Humanist Alternative: Some Definitions of Humanism, p. 56
meaning and wholeness in personal and social life. The ethical humanists are aware of the interplay between cultural and social systems, they are alive to the uses of the democratic ideals governing life and thus reflect authoritarianism which, they believe, destroys the sacredness of relationship and trust upon which the principle of interdependence and the norms of civilised life rest. The humanist temper, in the words of Horace L. Friess, is, "man's awareness of a sense of human dignity and power and a sense of responsibility for cultivating and maintaining it, and for achieving an integrity and wholeness of human life." That is, it is the fusion of freedom and commitment which alone can create meaning in life and make man achieve human integrity. The comment of Randall on Friess's statement lays emphasis on the value of obligation, that "obligation is a curtailment of the freedom to do wrong." The theistic humanists and the atheistic humanists differ radically in their interpretation of human reality in relation to cosmic determinism. Miriam Allen de Ford, an atheistic humanist, sides with the materialists that man is the product of natural evolutionary process, and it is he alone who has to give his own explanation of the random occurrences taking place in the universe. That is why she attaches much significance to the scientific humanism by which she clearly

1. Idem
3. Idem
means that a scientific outlook on life can seek to resolve the philosophical, ethical and intellectual problems confronting man. No ethics and moral principles are accepted as the final governing principles of life if they are not grounded in human experience and have the authority of supernatural mandate. "Man must learn to exercise a high ethical policy toward the earth on which he lives, towards the multitudinous plants and animals inhabiting it with him, toward his fellow humans - yes, and toward himself as well - or cease to survive."¹ In ethical humanism, the most important thing is the emphasis on right relations between the people involving the notion of human responsibility which is at the centre of the philosophy of humanism. And thus humanism, instead of defining man in terms of universal given ends, calls him to a human programme based on certain intrinsic values of life in the wake of new technology for ameliorating human lot: "Acceptance of interdependence and the solidarity of interests as the basis of human relations means acceptance of a share in joint responsibility for creating for all the conditions of a life worthy to be called human, a human providence in which each may be his own end without mockery."²

¹. "Heretical Humanism", in Humanist Alternative: Some Definitions of Humanism, pp. 80-81
Humanism today is widely used as ethical humanism, scientific humanism, religious humanism, Christian humanism, liberal humanism, theistic humanism, and atheistic humanism. The existential humanists, following the lead as taken by the ethical humanists, seek to reinterpret man as a cognitive subject in relation to the world he has to live in. Their interest is in human freedom, they consider the world as an environment in which man, once freed from comforting illusions, is free and responsible for framing his own nature. He sees the offer of an exit in the restoration of free will to be human being, the freedom to choose being most important characteristic to bestow dignity upon him which is largely shaped, not by social, political and religious conventions but by his own decisions and existential choices: he has a free will to do exactly what he pleases. There is every possibility that his choice can be purely arbitrary and justified as good or bad by no external criteria: it could be a demonstration of self-annointed ethics of morality that Satan chooses in hell - 'Evil be thou my good' - oppose to what is accepted as moral in heaven:

The stress of the existentialist on uniting freedom with responsibility and obligation is similar to the temper of humanism which involves "an attitude toward and an appraisal of, the nature and possibilities of man and his essential needs." Obligation is defined as a restraint and curtailment of the freedom to do as one pleases to do. The existentialist's advocacy for man's new faith is not what is

1. John Herman Randall Jr., "What is the Temper of Humanism", in Existentialism from Dostoevsky to Sartre, p.58
transcendental but man himself - man's infinite possibilities coupled with acute awareness of man's infinite limitations. Sartre, Marcel, Jaspers and Camus have interpreted their own view of man in terms of a set of experiences as the key to the human condition, sharing a common belief that the meaning be assigned to a world which is opaque to human understanding and intransigent to human effort. For Sartrean man "the thing, not the idea, comes first and neither God nor logic are anywhere except, perhaps, in man. Instead of saying that the universe is all meaning, he says that meaning does not exist anywhere in it - except perhaps in so far as man, all alone in an absurd universe, is able to lift himself by his own bootstraps and create what does not elsewhere exist."

Man, Sartre holds, is responsible not only for his own individuality but for all men and thus "in choosing for himself he chooses for all men." Even Jaspers, a professed Catholic thinker writes:

"Man, however, is not a self-sufficient separate entity, but is constituted by the things he makes his own. In every form is his being man is related to something other than himself: as a being to his world, as consciousness to objects, as spirit to the idea of whatever constitutes totality, as Existenz to Transcendence. Man always becomes man by devoting himself to this other."

It is this social interaction between his ownself and that of

2. "Existenzphilosophie", in Existentialism from Dostoevsky to Sartre, p. 168
the other existents that his freedom entails greater degrees of responsibilities in proportion to multiple choices. The existentialist are, Jaspers is one, for example, alive to the dangers of incomprehensibility and directionlessness in case man is left to romantic egocentricity: "If man wants to grasp himself directly, he ceases to understand himself, to know who he is and what he should do."\(^1\) Man, Jaspers continues, "cannot be comprehended on the basis of himself."\(^2\) The self-discovery takes place in a world of inter-subjectivity and thus every human purpose however individualistic bears universal implication and every purpose, however universal, becomes comprehensive to every man. He is equally aware of the significance of communication in communal existence:

"The thesis of my philosophizing is: The individual cannot become human by himself. Self-being is only real in communication with another self-being. Alone, I sink into gloomy isolation - only in community with others can I be revealed in the act of mutual discovery. My own freedom can only exist if the other is also free. Isolated or self-isolating Being remains mere potentiality or disappears into nothingness. All institutions that maintain soothing contact between men under unexpressed conditions and within unadmitted limits are certainly indispensable for communal existence; but beyond that they are pernicious because they veil the truth in the manifestation of human Existenz with illusory contentment."\(^3\)

Jaspers's thesis finds support in the writings of the two existential humanists - Gabriel Marcel and Martin Buber -

1. Idem
2. "Ekistenzphilosophie", p. 179
3. Ibid., p. 174
who put much emphasis on the value of genuine communication between the self and society. Following Kierkegaard, Marcel is opposed to formulating any abstract system in making sense of human existence in a meaningless universe. He states that his philosophy, "taken as a whole can be seen as an obstinate and untiring battle against the spirit of abstraction."\(^1\) Since the silence and the irrationality of the universe does not provide a rational explanation of human existence, the meaning can be assigned to it through personal experiences and participation in being to reconcile the complexities involved in inter-subjective relationship. In the context of living, not philosophy, to participate is to exist and to exist is to co-exist in a situation for want of which is reduced to deprivation of existence. Camus's concept of the rebellion also demonstrates the "submission of the individual to the common good" in the rebel's attitude of 'All or Nothing'. The rebel, Camus holds, gains realisation that it is in association with the others that he can evolve values distinct from animal values.

"Rebellion is in no way the demand for total freedom. On the contrary, rebellion puts total freedom up for trial. The object of its attack is exactly the unlimited power which authorizes a superior to violate the forbidden frontier."\(^2\)

The rebel is also aware of the fact that it is only in the act of rebellion that values are to be deduced from the conditions of living which includes the acceptance of the

2. Idem
limits of the possible. Rebellian exceeds the bounds the rebel set for the antagonist and his demands are that he should be treated as equal:

"The rebel demands undoubtedly a certain degree of freedom for himself; but in no case, if he is consistent, does he demand the right to destroy the existence and the freedom of others. He humiliates no one. The freedom he claims, he claims for all; the freedom he refuses, he forbids everyone to enjoy." 1

However, before we make an examination as to what degrees the philosophical formulations, as propounded by the ethical humanists and the existential humanists have gone into shaping the moral outlook of a Bellow - protagonist which makes him transcend subjectivism by developing moral consciousness rooted in the principle of social concern, it is peremptory to take into consideration the various critical studies which have been made so far on his novels. Even a conscientious scrutiny of the material available on Bellow, it is felt, is not wholly illuminating to place his philosophy of art and life in right perspective. It has missed the real intent of the artist and that of his protagonists' as well who ceaselessly strive to formulate a moral paradigm of values to comprehend the significance of life grounded in social realities, rather than to anarchically affirm the cult of individual subjectivity. Hence the present thesis has its relevance in post-war American reality.

Critics have generally concerned themselves either with the theme of affirmation in a bid to define the role

1. Ibid., p. 248
of the artist in contemporary society. They have made casual remarks about Bellow's commitment to a vision and belief in the power of intuition in regard to comprehending the nature of reality of the world, but the major emphasis has been on the question, how to be human, in the midst of a naturalistic and hostile milieu that robs man of his individuality. Some, having studied Bellow's fiction in the line of Jewish heritage, emphasize his Jewish imagination. Malcolm Bradbury is one to discover the humanistic tradition of Judaism pervading Bellow's novels: his work, the critic observes, "displays a deep Jewish humanism"1, to affirm man and his self in a world largely characterized by alienation and displacement. Commenting on the Jewish - protagonist as figured in the American Jewish novels of the 'fifties', Frank D. McConnell finds the Jew as "an urban outsider, an alien at the heart of living almost unnoticed within the urban melting pot"2 Though Bellow is conscious of the fact that the Jewish imagination sometimes suffers from over­humanizing everything, Chester Eisinger's comment on Bellow's participation in the Jewish imagination is pertinent that Bellow's basic attitudes, the overwhelming need for love and the joy in life, is akin to the principles of Hasidism.

A sizeable segment of Bellow-criticism centres on the stylistic subtleties such as myth, imagery, sarcasm, irony and satire and the use of paradox and of comedy which


makes Bellow, in the words of Maxwell Geismar, 'a novelist of the intellectuals' since the method deployed by him to deal with the crisis as experienced by his protagonist is essentially the same as one employed by an intellectual to resolve a metaphysical checkmate. Bradbury also contends that all Bellow - characters are haunted by the European intellectual heritage which converts them into heirs of modern romanticism, always thinking to defend their inner claim in a world where his place is no longer secure and beyond the ego, he feels "there is the failing city, the accumulating, oppressing mass of things, the forces of modern diminution".¹ The comic sense of life and the efficacy of laughter, the novelist feels, can convey a sense of truth that is often eclipsed by over-intellectualised abstract speculation. Some have called Bellow a great realist, following the naturalistic tradition of writers like Sinclair Lewis and Theodore Dreiser. Allan Chavkin discovers in Bellow's fiction the strain of modern romanticism to show Bellow's debt to the English romantics for the formulation of his artistic creed in the wake of an ongoing struggle between man and the impersonal agencies pushing him towards marginalisation. As such, he develops a false sense of sufficiency to the extreme that the vision is lost and therefore what sustains its stability, in Bellow's own words is, "the balance that ensures its safety, it must

¹ The Modern American Novel, p. 134
evade every impulse from within, every offer from without in the interest of self-sufficiency.\footnote{1} No one can lose sight of the fact that by 'balance' Bellow means a life of moral consciousness tying down man to obligation and freedom. In absence of this illumination, he misconceives the nature of reality and loses sense of proportion and discrimination. Even violence is misconstrued as the means of affirmation which verges on the anarchic affirmation of the self, devoid of any moral scruples. Molly Stark Wieting underlines in Bellow's novels the use of the pastoral mode of presentation of reality opposed to the studies made on his Jewish urban milieu keeping the two cities - New York and Chicago - in the background. The recent criticism appearing in the 'eighties', Ben Siegel makes an intensive study of Bellow's critical attitude towards the educational system and the universities in America which are looked upon as the primary agencies to produce the modern mass culture.

Prominent critics such as John J. Clayton, Keith Michael Opdahl and Tony Tanner have shown their reservation in regard to the thesis that a sense of history is central to Bellow's novels, Malcolm Bradbury and Judy Newman are sharply divided on Bellow's concept and treatment of history. Newman in her study of Bellow as a novelist of the Neitzschean Sixth Sense lays emphasis on his retreat from the notion of "history as nightmare, as tragedy, as farce, as black comedy; the retreat into the myth or into the heightened presence of
the crisis mentality."¹ Newman discovers an echo of "tension(s) between the timeless and the time bound" in the works of Bellow. Daniel Fuchs's analysis of Bellow's thematic strands in relation to the novelist's modernistic tendencies in art, culture and aesthetics show the novelist's disagreement with a number of Freudian constructs and discovers in his works a "systematic deconstruction of Freudian modes of thought."²

Bellow is alive to the apparent threats of the loss of individuality in an urban culture in its industrial and nuclear complexes which convert the sensitive individuals into alienated beings. He thus stresses the assimilation of the individual into the society. This act of exploring the complex problem of self in relation to community is a plea that the individual should come out of the morass of his alienated being to accommodate the self with the society as T.J. Hoffman also sums up: "Bellow's hero moves into with a desperate hope that the human dilemma will be solved in community, recognition and action."³ Leonel Trilling rightly underlines Bellow's anti-Wastelandish view of man. He does not associate himself with those who "accept the belief that modern society is frightful, brutal, hostile to whatever is pure in the human spirit, a wasteland, and

² Ibid., p. 3
and a horror."¹ Tony Tanner and Irving Malin share a view that man as an alienated being is caught up in the vast mechanism of anti-human forces but it is his faith in his own potentialities and worth of human dignity that can salvage him from festering onslaught of the forces of inertia and passiveness. Tony Tanner draws our attention in particular to affirming the spirit of rebelliousness in the individual, society may drift to dissolution but the individual will stand victorious by turning the quest towards nobler aspirations of life: "Society may move towards its death with the false concepts of progress and prosperity - but somewhere, somehow the human spirit will start to disengage itself, to protest, to assert its need for true values, for real freedom, for genuine reality."²

That Bellow is critical of the contemporary value orientation, feels John J Clayton, is not without direction; he is in the first place a "spokesman for our culture, as a defender of the Western culture tradition, one who can reorient cultural chaos without entering it and can examine cultural nihilism without sharing it."³ Clayton takes Bellow's exploration of self as a case of equivocation: the

¹. Leonel Trilling, "The Two Environments", Encounter, XXV, July, 1965, p. 11
novelist, on the one hand, indicts the cultural darkness and the persistent denigration of human life in the modern mass society, because of man's developing of false notion of selfhood, yet on the contrary he seems to be a staunch defender of the idea of self, the self which is the organic self in the whole and not a separate self: "Bellow is hostile to the de-valuation of the separate self in modern literature and he values, individuality as did Emerson". Clayton calls Bellow "a psychological novelist before he is a social novelist or moral spokesman" for his bringing under focus the contradictions essentially involved in the treatment of certain aspects of society.

Keith M. Opdahl brings out the yawning gap between what Bellow-protagonists aspire to be and what they materially achieve in the midst of the naked realities of the socio-economic ambience around them. The protagonist craves for community but the community, in return, as Bellow projects, demands surrender of individuality as its price of admission. This conflict between the individual and the society, Opdahl contends, comprises the matrix of Bellow's fiction. But this tradition of criticism is lop-sided in that it misses the core level of conflict which is between the individual and his own self before he is locked into the clash with the impersonal agencies controlling his destiny in a mass society. Opdahl traces the shift in Bellow from social

1. Ibid., p. 3
2. Ibid., p. 4
issues to the ultimate problem of evil and death and agrees with Clayton to consider Bellow as a psychological novelist moving from public to private issues and then exalting them to metaphysical plane.

Bellow, as a matter of fact, is a novelist engaged in a quest for meaning in life. He creates fresh images of man to show what it means to be human. In the writings of the prominent novelists such as Melville, Hemingway, Doestoevsky, early Faulkner and James Joyce man is depicted as wretched and helpless being and Bellow's departure from their portrayal in relation to presenting the true image of man is not an apparent gesture of disagreeing with them. But what he believes is that there are also other truths about man to be told: man as animal is higher than animals by virtue of the power of imagination and intuition with which he chooses to act and imposes his own pattern of value preferring the rebel's point of view - 'this is how I want things to be, to 'this is how things should be'. Robert R Dutton defines man as sub-angelic and his faith in man's imaginative power generates waves of hope rather than despair. Commenting on Bellow's own participation in the quest of his hero, Opdahl also underlines man's subangelic character and potential which makes him battle against his own predicament and limitations when locked in conflict with destiny to seek resolution. Bellow, says the critic, "is aware of the buoyancy of man, and takes it as a cause for
celebration, he is aware of the ultimate helplessness of man before fate and takes it without sentimentality or apology as something mysterious but his final appeal is not to the resolution of man's conflict with fate but to the spectacle of man seeking resolution.¹

Joseph J. Waldmeir, while classifying the post-war American fiction into five trends as 'the novels of social criticism', 'the accommodationists', 'the Beat - Absurd - Black Humour', 'the quest novels', and 'the neo-social critical' points out how the critics have tagged the label of 'the rebel', the 'accommodationists' and the 'questers' with Bellow's protagonists. David D. Galloway in his investigation of the positivistic aspect of absurd literature groups Bellow together with John Updike, William Styron, J.D. Salinger and establishes a viewpoint that their heroes are by definition 'rebels' for their sharing a belief in man's ability to open up new possibilities for his salvation in an absurd and meaningless universe. Marcus Klein calls Saul Bellow, Malamund, Ralph Ellison and James Baldwin "accommodationists", for the reason that their heroes accommodate themselves to "a society and an environment which rejects them as non-conformists"² without surrendering their identity.

Bellow's defence of self-preservation and honest integrity of the self becomes manifest in how his characters

try to maintain an honest gesture to show that the life of an individual in face of the frightful brutal crude and inimical society means something. His idea of the counter-claim of the formulation of the self is akin to Sartrean concept of man as 'project' holding him fully responsible for his action. The individual chooses to lead an honest life of moral obligation and accountability. And thus his glorification of individual shows "the possibilities for finding meaning in such lives." The individual must be human, accountable, in spite of weaknesses. Throughout his works he unequivocally dismisses the romantic egocentricity and the cult of pure, absolute freedom with an appeal to re-instate the values of love and affection and individual's involvement with and commitment to the vast humanity. Bellow shows concern with the general slump in morals and accepts disintegration as a fact of modern man's life because of his faulty attitude to self-realisation. Bellow says in his Noble Prize speech, "Much is disintegrating but we are experiencing as an odd kind of refining process." ¹

The 'term' defined

Though the logic of defining a term is not so simplistic, moral consciousness by definition is the sense of what is right and what is wrong from human point of view. And social concern, evokes images of shared fate of humanity.

¹ Saul Bellow, "Noble Prize", in The American Review, 22, No.2, Winter, 1978, p.64
reciprocity, right relations between the self and society, fellow feelings, freedom and obligation to generate ideas of human progress and common good. Moral consciousness, is the consciousness of one's human dignity and self assertion which is the prime instinct behind all human activities but the risk it involves is that sometimes it tends to be purely Nietzschean doctrine of self-preservation verging on 'pure individualism', which is repugnant to the essence of moral consciousness. Self-assertion is not to create Faustian illusion of might as it will lead to natural interests of all in a common life and consequently no ground for a moral appeal for the recognition of any law, not actualized by force. It is that moral faculty, a form of interiorized psychic harmony and the ensuing social consciousness which makes man intensely human. The word 'self' in self-assertion is vague in its implication, as to what self - physical, intellectual, religious, moral- is to be asserted. The philosophy of social concern characterizes the notion of good life and social justice in its devotion of human energy to a common cause. The morality of social concern acknowledges "the mutual solidarity of man and their equivalence in the consideration of their interest and aspiration, it is directed towards the maturity of all men." The rightness or the wrongness is judged by passing moral judgements on human acts and the agents and thus it is

distinctly an awareness of ethical - humanistic import which frees man from the imprisioning delusions of a narrow sectarian view of religious dogmatism. The two words 'moral' and 'consciousness' amply illustrate the morality of moral consciousness in that the 'moral' is what is human, one aspect of which is the creation of consciousness which impels man to act in human terms. Moral consciousness has its own morality and thus it be not confused with morality which is a relative term. What separates morality from moral consciousness is the varying process and attitude enlightening the self. In moral consciousness are inextricably bound together both consciousness and consciousness of moral sense which saves man from regression. Consciousness of morality is destroyed for want of illumination and what man achieves is spiritual vacuum rather than the fully actualized human nature in its totality.

Moral consciousness is essentially authoritative or obligatory in character in the sense that the individual is independent of any external authority - of the society, state, nature or a deity. It is the self which imposes this moral order upon itself and connects the rise of moral consciousness with the discovery as made by the phenomenologists in regard to the structure of consciousness. With the more secular and anthropocentric philosophy of humanism and existential thought which seeks to "dignify and ennable man" and according to which 'to be human' is

the highest good that amounts to affirming the worth of man in a world where everything is given but nothing is explained the emphasis is on the value of choice which man as a rational being has the capacity to make, since he is no more than a choice-making animal. Max Scheler, the German phenomenologist, rightly sums up that the "very essence" of man "is the open decision"¹ which he chooses to make in a given situation and which also means that he is condemned to exist within the limitations imposed. The existentialists find man helpless in that he has no higher authority than his own self to make appeal for resolving the resultant crisis of existence. His own self is the reality and in reality lies value. If man is absolute in himself, the sole creator of meaning and value in life, then what keeps him away from moral distractions is the moral sense and the more intensely he is aware of it, the more he becomes real of his own self.

There are three basic factors to contribute to moral consciousness - cognitive, affective and conative. The cognitive factors imply perception of moral standards and evaluation of an act by passing moral judgment on it, the affective factors or the emotional involve moral sentiments and feelings of approval or disapproval which we judge to be right or wrong from moral point of view but the essentials of moral sentiments in human consciousness tend to be barren

for want of social sense. And the second characteristic of moral consciousness is socialness. That is the moralistic life is inconceivable apart from society. Man, to an existentialist, is nothing but what he makes of himself and the view is sometimes reproached as feared to sink in subjectivity. But if existence is prior to essence and man is held responsible for his acts then the charge of 'subjectivity', loses bite because, unlike a stone which is a 'being-in-itself', man is both 'being-in-itself' and 'being-for-itself'. He has to attain the essence of existence, not in isolation but by being a fraction of the social stream of existence. The fundamental concept in existential thought is the concept of 'being' or existence. The being in the state of 'For-Itself' gains illumination that it has its freedom and the capacity to be different from the state nature has condemned it into. This view of man is well reflected in Sartre that man "first of all exists, encounters himself, surges up in the world - and defines himself afterwards. If man as the existentialist sees him is not definable, it is because to begin with he is nothing. He will not be anything until later, and then he will be what he makes of himself."¹ The existential humanists look upon man in possession of himself and entirely responsible for his existence but by responsibility they do not mean that he is responsible for himself but that "he is responsible for all men."²

¹. "Existentialism is Humanism" in Existentialism From Dostoevsky To Sartre, p.349
². Idem
The process of evolution of moral consciousness takes place by stages. It does not come in a flash as a revelation. It has a philosophy of its own which can be explained in Sartrean position of the en-soi, versus the pour-soi. A considerable part of valuation of man has shown him as an ignominious and helpless victim of socio-biological forces and thus in a state of crisis of identity. Man as abandoned to his own resources in a universe divested of meaning can affirm his humanity by exercising his freedom to choose and live without any illusion or evasions: he needs to evolve a philosophy so as to be conscious of the moral aspect of his acts leading to affirming human condition.

Keeping the fact in view that to break the artist's mode of portraying the view of reality into phases is tantamount to overschematization yet sometimes the swing from one phase to another is so conspicuous from novel to novel that by studying them in their inner relationship one can have a view of reality which the artist intends to project. And in wake of Kant's insistence on man's cognitive limitations the choice left for man to have a free play of his potentialities is to uphold faith in his capacity and the value of moral consciousness. Thus the concept of moral consciousness and the social concern is studied in three phases, which constitute the broad features of the thesis. They include
a) Understanding the self - the philosophical perspective,

b) Conflict and beyond,

c) From self to social concern.

The first stage of the 'being' is the state of *en-soi* in which like a stone or a table it has no consciousness of itself to transcend its nature and thus it is complete and whole in itself. Opposed to this mode of existence, man by virtue of possessing a subjective life, is always in a state of self transcendence. It is with the stretch of imagination that he becomes something other than what he is. He is thus both a 'being-in-itself' and 'being for-itself': in the 'In-itself' state the being is unconscious of its imaginative power and is kept lying totally inert and apathetic to the random occurrences around. In the 'For-itself' state of existence, it encounters and experiences a stir, a conflict to go beyond the limitations and become what it is not. The conflict involves the process of transcending the facts of existence, the self becomes conscious of self-discovery and accommodation of the self of its own self with the numerous others which opens up the possibilities for the being to proceed from the self to social concern. Bellow is aware of the paradox involved in the process of immersion of the self in the crowd: the self confronts problems in state of isolation when it gets alienated from the society as much as it experiences while it comes in confrontation with the outer
world fearing that it might lose its individuality. But what appears to be an insolvable mystery is ultimately resolved in "the sacrifice of the self demanded by social circumstances". If the self can be possessed by god-like reason, it can also run riot to gloat over stupid imaginings. And thus it is essential to have the consciousness of this 'man-beast-angel' complex to keep man to the path of virtue.

In Bellow's own words, there "is man's own greatness and then there is the greatness of his imbecility - both are eternal." And thus his criticism of the writers in the past who have failed to evaluate man's capabilities in relation to 'en-soi' versus 'pour-soi' position has its positive implications, in their eyes man is an ignoble wretched creature who wastes away his energy over fanciful romantic wishful thinking or false posture of power but Bellow's estimate of man is humanistic and without sounding presumptuous he strikes moral chords to affirm his humanity that on the nobler assumption he is a being who at least has "sufficient power to overcome ignominy and to complete his own life. His suffering, feebleness, servitude then, have a meaning."

However, the protagonist in the first phase of the growth of moral insights into the mysteries of human existence is passive and inert both to the inner yearnings.

3. Ibid., p.25
of the self and of the outer world. He has a glimmering notion of 'reality' and of his own 'moral intention' to discover meaning in life. And if there is any stir or conflict, for the most part, it takes place in the realm of the inner mind only and thus the protagonist remains a symbol of inaction and lifelessness. He fails to make inroads into the walls of an absurd universe imprisoning the self. He has little realisation of his own humanity, which tears him away from the attainment of profound truths of life. While confronting this moral dilemma of the self in relation to the other selves, he has yet to develop the understanding that self realisation demands demolition of the frontiers of an insulated world of self and be an active participant in the common world by accepting the fate as shared by others. Consequently, the vision gets distorted and the protagonist loses sense of discrimination between the ideal and the real verging on the loss of selfhood and individuality. The protagonists of the first three novels which are examined for the exemplification and illustration of the incipient stage in the evolution of moral consciousness are the symbolic extension of inertia, indifference, passivity and non-involvement and thus they wage an unsuccessful battle against the forces responsible for generating feelings of lifelessness and impassiveness. They remain as "isolates" and "aliens" for want of commitment to and involvement with life. Each one is pushed entirely upon his own
self which puts the very facts of simple existence in doubt. It is not that they are blind to reality that the world is disjointed and irrational but what they lack is the understanding and vision to comprehend the nature of reality. The pattern of value they evolve is highly subjective and personal since they confine themselves to a solitary place. Joseph (Dangling Man) is condemned to a marginal state of living. He seldom leaves the room, has no one but his ownself to communicate with. Hence he feels necessary to keep a journal for the communion, wholly interiorized, with the self. Ironically, he thinks of establishing a 'colony of spirit' cleansed of greed, spite and rancour, which shows that he speculates on the nature of good life but he never tries to concretize those reflections into substantial formulations of moral consciousness. Asa Leventhal (The Victim), the protagonist of the novel, is living a settled life in London but for want of moral impulse looks unaccommodative and impassive and moves gingerly. He is torn between the claims of a purely self-centred life to remain uninvolved and the philosophical import of social concern to be good and respond to the plight of another man. Kirbee Allbee is too fired with the social impulse to save humanity but recoils in privacy in face of the mechanism of law and the mass behaviour of the crowd. The recollection of an incident is too heavy on his nerves when he could not save a man from bleeding to death who was crushed against the wall by a running train and the policeman representing
the tyranny of the system kept the crowd away, thereby letting the man die.

Tommy Wilhelm (Seize the Day) is a painful portrayal of the plight of a lonely man who in the night feels like "howling from his windows like a wolf". In a big city like New York, he has no one but his ownself to talk to in the day and "reason with yourself at night". He is involuntarily drawn to mourn the death of a stranger which is certainly a human gesture, the positive demonstration of the individual's sense of social-mindedness and obligation. It is at this crucial moment of immersion in the stream of social existence that Wilhelm experiences transitory but powerful intimation that the 'being' is a part of a vaster 'we'. With the dawn of a new consciousness to judge things, including morality in the right perspective, he is to 'seize the day' to confront the anguish of the existential dilemma and live life cheerfully, being prompted by moral earnestness.

In the second phase of the rise of moral consciousness the protagonist believes in transforming the existing conditions, by being not an avoider, but an active participant in life. The fact is illustrated by the changing pattern of the life of the protagonists of two novels, The Adventures of Augie March and Henderson the Rain King, which are placed thematically in the scheme of the study as the novels showing the 'being' developing consciousness of the 'being-for-itself'. It is a state which brings the protagonist in clash with the harsh nature of reality on the one hand, but on the other
makes him rise above its imperfections to make life meaningful. The 'being' enters into the state of 'becoming' which creates a stir to open up possibilities in the wake of which the victim-hero becomes conscious of his own humanity and will to transform the conditions of living. The understanding of self seems to be no longer incomprehensible and is studied in its relation to the other existents for its authenticity as the existentialists would have it. Its revolt and defiance against the existing pattern of living are controlled by rules of moral constructions: The idea sounds inconceivable that the solitary self will regain solidarity after the attainment of the authentic selfhood outside the selves of other existents. And thus the 'I' in Cartesian doctrine of pure subjectivity "I think, therefore, I exist", becomes the plural 'we' in the cry of collective cause of humanity in Camusian rebel, "I rebel, therefore, we exist."¹ The realisation that ego cannot reach others through cogito shows man as a conscious existent, growing restless to be of himself and validate Heraclitus dictum, that 'a man's character is his fate'. The change from inertia to activation may involve certain problems of ontology but the shift brings illumination that the romantic liberation of the self has also its limitations and it is in the acceptance of these limitations that the self becomes alive towards its social and moral commitment for the good of the total culture of the community.

¹ The Rebel, Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin Books Ltd., 1975, p. 28
In the two novels, *The Adventures of Augie March*, and *Henderson the Rain King* Bellow turns to the picaresque mode of narration and employs comedy to laugh out the moral imperfections of the self. The death of King Dahfu in an encounter with the lion leads Henderson's initiation into consciousness to make sense of the catastrophic incident: the King, being drugged by the illusory theories of improving his personality, turned oblivious to the world around him and thus became a victim of individualism which Henderson will reject altogether. Henderson changes the King's formula so as to fit it into his own pattern and realises that to attain a state of being, man owes something to the significance of others. Thus, both Bellow and his protagonists reject the view of many great existential thinkers that in order to be fully himself the individual should extricate himself from the crowds because his "being with-others is usually swallowed up in the inauthentic collectivism of the 'they'."¹ Henderson has developed moral insights into life and thus he feels that he needs "the Other in order to realize fully all the structures of my being."² Thus the persistent call rising in the heart of Henderson 'I want, I want, I want!', symbolising human cry for comprehending the ultimate mysteries of life is resolved in the novelist's comment on his return from the

---

2. *Being and Nothingness*, p. 303
jungles of Arnewy and Warrari: "The sleep is burst and I have come to my life." That is, peace and contentment has come to dwell in his heart which, in the final phase of moral consciousness, he has to share with the people in the midst of whom he has to live or advance the cause of civilization. But still there are lesser degrees of acceptance of and involvement with life as a result of which his experiences are yet to be evolved into the founding principles of moral sense. Augie's alignment to the 'axial lines of existence' is also an attempt similar to the rebel's creation of an alternate world of truth, love, peace and harmony. The sense of rightness or wrongness remains no longer elusive, the fundamentals of ideal living are manifested with the belief that to be moral is to be human. His desperate struggle to protect the autonomy of the self, against the forces of dehumanisation secures for him Sartrean concept of freedom which gives man the capacity to merely say 'no' which apparently comes to nihilation, at the level of creativeness, of all limitations imposed upon freedom.

Sartre designates the third modality of the 'being' as 'being-for-others', which is the essential structure of our being. The two other modalities are 'being-in-itself' and 'being-for-itself'. The 'being-in-itself' is what it is, it is complete in itself which includes no negation, whereas 'being-for-itself' is what it is not and is not what it is. That is it can not be the same at all time and in all given situations but its realisation cannot take place in isolation.
It is effected through the 'being-for-others'. And what is significant is that this structure is not established from outside, rather it comes "by making explicit the pre-ontological comprehension which I have of myself that I apprehend being-with-others as an essential characteristic of my being."¹ Bellow believes that the literature should aim at revealing the essential structure of our being as well as those of others for the creation of a communitarian value structure. The view finds support in the existential premises that "one of the chief motives of artistic creation is certainly the need of feeling that we are essential in relationship to the world."²

The protagonists in the third stage of the 'being' gain illumination that the other is the measure of the 'being' and thus what constitute human reality is the transcendental relations with the others. Herzog, Sammler, Charlie and Corde are no longer the victims of romantic egocentricity and subjective thinking. They accept life with greater degrees of acceptance in the midst of community and seem to desperately clinging to every bit of experience which they have encountered and stamp their superiority of the self, not the self that is drugged with romantic delusions but a self that is fully alive to the moral obligations and responsibility while it is on the way to establish its individuality.

¹. Being and Nothingness, p. 245
The stage from 'self to social concern' takes place when the individual establishes right relations between his self and the society by way of immersion into what Kierkegaard calls 'crowd' and Nietzsche the 'herd'. In the wake of this mode of interaction, Martin Buber fears, the essence of 'I-Thou' relations may sink into the 'I-It' mode of relationship, and the danger, as Jaspers sees (Man in the Modern Age) is: how to keep individuality intact in mass existence where the pattern of life gets vitiated by the living conditions of modern industrialised and urban state. The self of everyday, Heidegger points out, becomes an atom of the 'they self' and is on the verge of sinking into insignificance. Since in the state from self to social concern the entanglement and interaction of the self with the others is inevitable, there is a strong possibility that the impersonal 'they' may deprive the self of its individual life. And the mark of authentic being with others is that mode of relationship which "promotes existence in the full sense... it lets the human stand out as human, in freedom and responsibility. On the other hand inauthentic being-with-others suppresses genuinely human and personal. Whatever kind of relation to the others depersonalizes and dehumanizes is an inauthentic one. Thus there is a paradox involved here. A purely individual existence is not possible and could not properly be called an 'existence'; yet existence with the other is to be judged authentic to the degree that it lets individuals
to be free to become the unique persons that they are. True community allows for true diversity."¹

Since the protagonist is in the position of Sartrean man, a being who is what he is not and who is not what he is, he is separated from others as the object is separated from the subject by 'nothing' and it is in the actualization of this 'nothingness' that he transcends his being and evolves a pattern of values to live by and be a different man. In him the core of existence which is to precede the essence is fashioned by moral judgements, sentiments, moral ideas and impulses. Consequent upon such a moralistic outlook on life what is irrational and the debased in nature gets transcended and poses no threat to the life of the moral being. Herzog and Sammler experience life in all its nakedness with the belief in 'human occupancy' and the value of the power of human contact in forging a moral link with the universe they have to inhabit, however fractured and frigid it could be. They share the Marxian view of interpersonal relations that the "wealth of the individual depends entirely on the wealth of his real connections."² And thus the vision is never lost. Herzog, for example, is the victim-complex of the crisis born of a rather Faustian quest for acquiring marvellous qualities, and not feeling satisfied by simply being a Herzog, an individual sharing common nature. But experiences teach him

¹ John Macquarrie, Existentialism, p. 121
² Collected Works, Vol. V, p. 51
otherwise that "subjective monstrosity mostly overcome, must be corrected by community, by useful duty." Bellow gives a twist to effect in Herzog the mechanism of the forces of morality which tears him away from the out-moded individualistic concept of self. He gains a realisation to see stealthily the paramour of his ex-wife bathe his little daughter that man"liveth not by self alone, but in his brother's face," the brother, being a representation of humanity outside his own.

Likewise, Sammler discards the fantasy and utopian idea of human plantation on the moon and prefers to live on his 'planet', Earth. This outlook on life is moral, one implication of which is to accept the bounds of finitude and ordinariness of life in the absence of which man is driven on verge of nervous break down and contemplates suicide as the viable alternative to escape the horror of life. The entire gamut of thought-process is reorchestrated: Sammler places his faith in Kierkegaard's Knight of Faith who "having set its relations with the infinite was entirely at home with the finite. Able to carry the jewel of faith, making the motions of infinite, and as a result needing nothing but the finite and the usual." Sammler's moral sense and the ensuing feelings of social commitment for the well-being of humanity are reflected in his exhortation to the engineers and technicians who operate great machines that their moral

---

1. Herzog, p.273
2. Sammler's Planet, p. 63
commitment toward ameliorating the degenerating and wounded life in the slums where the adolescents are converted into drug-addict angry young men. Human plantation in the space may further dehumanize man for his espousal of a philosophy sans morality. Here the self becomes alive to the goal 'to be human' which has always been a cherished ideal with Bellow's protagonists who sincerely try to make a place as human in the community without which, he feels, he cannot be called human.

Charlie Citrine, the protagonist of Humboldt's Gift also arrives at a stage in life to accept mortality as fact of human existence. He has developed a philosophy of life, rooted in the capacity and power of love and brotherhood in social dealings. The poet Von Humboldt Fleisher and his protege, Citrine, are the two romantic questers who find themselves in an absurd urban American environment of the 'fifties' and the 'sixties'. They grapple with the central issue - how to live the purposive human existence. The success-myth alludes Humboldt and his failure is the result of the wishful thinking that "if life is not intoxicating it is nothing." But even in such moments of romantic delusions, the moral insight is not dulled, it becomes manifest in his cravings to be good as he tells Charlie: "I have to locate myself. I'm here (here on earth, he meant)"

1. Humboldt's Gift, p. 28
to do something, something good.\textsuperscript{1} The moral injunction which purged Humboldt of egocentricity and self glorification is enough to make Citrine aware of the peril involved in the idea of special destiny and of being 'World Historical Individual' and thus under this newly acquired wisdom, life becomes not only a matter of living but persistent struggling to extricate the self from the mundane realities of life and continue to stay within the bounds of humanizing power of moral sense. Corde, the protagonist of \textit{The Dean's December} is an extension of Sammler plus Herzog in the sense his involvement as the Dean of a College in the Lester case is symbolic of his moral attitude to problems of sociological concern in which the self is absolved of its individualistic character. This is implicit in his exposition of the value of the two diverging political ideologies: capitalism and communism. In America, the capitalist system, with jeering appellation, exploits the blacks, branding them as the 'underclass', the poor and the superfluous people. The result of free enterprise and the danger of lead-poisoning and communist totalitarian tendencies in human conduct disallow personal expression and instil fear-psychosis in day to day life. After his return to America Corde resigns from deanship and decides to restart with his profession of a journalist to be himself. At the end he accompanies Minna, the German wife, to her Palomar observatory where he enters into the lift to

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{1} Ibid., p.128
\end{flushright}
rise high into the sky and catch a glimpse of the 'heaven' which will, speaking symbolically, enable his moral being to live a life of order, stability and involvement with the outer world.