CHAPTER-II

- THE ADVENTURES OF AUGIE MARCH
- HENDERSON THE RAIN KING
The two novels - *The Adventures of Augie March* and *Henderson the Rain King* form a category of fiction, known as the fiction of struggle. Forged in what Lionel Trilling calls 'the liberal imagination', they are graphical portrayals of the protagonist's struggle and the resultant pains and sufferings which they find to be the essential part of the conditions of living. It is the struggle that saves Augie March and Henderson from the victimization of their self by the impersonal absurd forces. What they eventually arrive at is seeking harmony with their own nature and the outer world: they develop certain moral vital truths of life that it is through resistance and revolt against the "tumult, the zaniness and crazed quality of modern experience" that man can define the essentials of their humanity by establishing communication between them and the society, and not by being an avoider of what life and its limitations entail. And thus there is a total departure in tone, style, and the mode of presentation which is picaresque. The struggle involves action and action leads to a quest for evolving a view of life rooted in the context of morality and social realities. But their action is largely confined to the territory of the mind alone for want of clarity of vision. In this context Malcolm Bradbury's observations are pertinent: the protagonist, he holds, "are large mental travellers in quest through large social, psychic and neo-mythic landscapes to find the measures of their being, the nature of their human tenure."
Augie is Bellow's new kind of a picaro-hero who refuses to live by those life-conditioning factors which leave Joseph 'dangling' nor is he a victim of circumstances like Asa Leventhal. He realises that all is possible in a world which otherwise may not ensure the cogent possible alternatives for human survival. This awareness of existential view of man makes him feel that man is born, not to be condemned to absurdity and nihilism but to live a life of significance. But what he lacks is commitment, he loses sight of purpose and direction as a result of living a life of continual uninvolved existence. Augie matures into Eugene Henderson, the rich protagonist of Bellow's next novel Henderson the Rain King. Henderson develops a sense of satiety in a world of sufficiency and for comprehending the meaning of self in relation to society, he makes two trips to the Africa of mind and during the process he learns that man is neither God, nor animal but has a little of both in him. With this new learning he returns home with peace and contentment, the sleep is burst which is symbolic of Henderson's moving closer to the value of moral consciousness and social concern.

The Adventures of Augie March (1953)

The Adventures of Augie March is an attempt to explain the protagonist's humanity in a social milieu founded on the ethics of machiavellianism, opportunism, self-aggrandisement, overambitiousness and utter disregard to the norms of moral decency and social concern. Thus the novel becomes a
document of autobiographical details of a Chicago-born immigrant Jew, Augie March, who makes attempts to understand his placement in the scheme of things outside his own world.

Augie moves from place to place but never gets deeply involved in any experience, believing that it will not lead him towards "better fate". He wanders through a vide territory which constitutes the general contemporary human condition, meeting numerous people, encountering endless experiences and seeking adventures which make him, in his own words, "varietistic" in the sense that the amalgamation of activities, so contrary in nature and psychological implications, is a sure indication that the being is in the state of moral processing. Committing petty acts of theft like stealing books and entering the fringes of the underworld are acts of untrammled freedom of self which cannot go with what Augie does later in life such as becoming a union organiser and joining Trotsky's cause which are purely related to the value of social concern. It is told that he finally settles in Paris indulging in shady business deals. The changing pattern of his activities involves shifting phases of one consciousness to another which is a sure indication that the being is in the state of moral progression. And thus under the existing situation, Augie enters into the world to explain his humanity where little is explained in terms of morality and much is left for man to define. He proceeds to reject the accepted social order in favour of new experiences expecting that they will form the core of the self and open
possibilities to evolve the ultimate strategy of survival but ironically he meets failure for lack of commitment to the philosophy of social concern. His struggle has its own moral significance which will make him comprehend the right relationship between the individual and the society and to overcome the ignominy born of a false value orientation. What saves Augie from moral confusion is the nature of struggle which is more with his own self but it is sharpened and thwarted by a series of confrontations with a number of characters who are machiavellian in their outlook of life and who are out to impose their pattern of life on him. As such, he fears that the continual of the existing situation will jeopardize his freedom.

What does the book aim at when it shows the expression of Augie's freedom through petty and vulgar immoral activities? There are hints that Augie is a law abiding individual and he also harbours illusion to overcome the errors of romantic separation of self fostered by a value-system founded on cash-nexus theory to develop moral insights into the problems of existence. The universe Augie is condemned to inhabit is highly unscrupulous, inhospitable and acquisitive wherein a rat race to capitalise on each other's moral imperfections goes on to make things more hideous and asocial. Augie is the product of such a socio-economic and cultural ambience which can easily make roads into the 'being' if it, for want of moral awareness, keeps drifting uncommitted and uninvolved in life. But it is out of his seeming conformism to external influences that there
emerges the consciousness and the moral exigency which impel him to comprehend the 'axial lines' of life. As a matter of fact, the book intends to resolve the dilemma which Augie is to confront: is man a free moral agent to make choices to define himself through acts to be what he is not or is he to remain condemned to the state of *en-soi* for being a victim of the forces of biology, religion, culture and history? It is against this existential premises that the book seeks to assign the value of social concern to Augie's struggle.

Though the novel mirrors the adventures of Augie March yet the core interest lies in the study of a set of characters whom he happens to meet in life and who act out as the agents and become instrumental in the evolution of his moral consciousness. They are addressed as 'destiny moulders' who comprise a set of dehumanised and morally crippled beings, emanating malignant lights from their face to dazzle anyone of ordinary sensibility. Their philosophy of machiavellinism and cultural nihilism, which is an offshoot of industrial capitalism, has disoriented their vision and robbed them of the elemental natural piety. And their joys of life are centred wholly on cash-nexus value. Their existence in the novel is imperative, perhaps to show up the inadequacies of their evil traits which, overtly or covertly, are to rouse Augie's consciousness to reject their value orientation and evolve his own view of life. One such character is Grandma Lausch, an old eccentric Russian Jew, who is a widow of a rich businessman. The
novelist's intention to project her as the staying power and influence on Augie is apparent from the start in that the word 'grandma' is sufficient to evoke fear and command, respect and status in one's household. Nothing moves in the house of the Marches without the symbolic nod of grandma and one wonders how the woman who came to live with them as a boarder could succeed in accumulating so much power. The case becomes all the more ironic when it is learnt that the woman is one whom her own daughter-in-law had cast away for her snobbish and dictatorial attitude, has come to be accepted as a queen-mother, a 'posh' woman in the house as Augie tells:

"...she preferred to live with us, because for so many years she was used to direct a house, to command, to govern, to manage, scheme, devise and intrigue in all her languages." 1

Her strategy to mould the destiny of the Marches is prompted by one core trait of machiavellian ethic that is self centredness which makes man highly individualistic and asocial. Every move of the 'grandma' is regulated to her own advantage which, ironically speaking, exposes her true, selfish and unsentimental nature. She has the far-sightedness and the expertise to exploit persons and circumstances so as to grab the maximum benefit out of them. It is she who for the first time puts the romantic idea in the mind of the family that Augie and his brother, Simon, are handsome and thus there is every possibility that any rich man may take

fancy on them and make their fortune. This fanciful notion that if one has a magnetic personality he can make his fortune is a part of American dream of success. That is, such romantic stuff can easily delude man to commit errors of romantic self and frustrate the nobler aspiration of life. And therefore it is interesting to note how during the course of initiation of moral consciousness Augie has to overcome this vain idea and comprehend the significant relationship between self and society for finding the 'axial lines'. But the grandma has more concrete reasons which are personal to tell to the outer world that she can make an ordinary family grow rich on such fanciful notions which, if turn out to be a concrete reality, can make their fortune unaided by any external support of 'a governess or guidance'. And thus she keeps a close watch over Augie and Simon and watches their every activity with keen interest to mould it in accordance with her idiosyncratic pattern of life. She takes it upon her as a self-appointed duty to 'wise-up' the family, but the wisdom is reflected in the fact that Augie at the age of nine has grown into a liar and can appreciate the art of lying without any moral vacillation. She boasts of having already 'formed' Augie by sending him to Anna Coblin, his mother's cousin, apparently intending to enable him to learn 'culture and refinement' which verges on irony to illustrate the purity of her mission. She teaches Augie's mother also the art of bribing a person or telling lies while she happens to visit the free dispensary. She also instructs the lady how she has to behave when she
is asked any question:

'Don't tell anything. Only answer questions,' she said to me. My mother was anxious that I should be worthy and faithful. Simon and I were her miracles or accidents; Georgie was her own true work in which she returned to her own fate after blessed and undeserved success... 'When they ask you, "Where is your father?", you say, "I don't know where, miss." No matter how old she is, you shouldn't forget to say "miss". If she wants to know where he was the last time you heard from him, you must tell her that the last time he sent a money order was about two years ago from Buffalo, New York. Never say a word about the Charity. The Charity you should never mention, you hear that? Never, when she asks you how much the rent is, tell her eighteen dollars.'

However, the Grandma's 'empire' soon begins to crack down with Augie and Simon growing mature and learning more about their own moral responsibilities towards the self and the world. What does Augie's comments on the failing authority of Grandma suggest? He is aware of the duplicity and hypocrisy of the old lady that becomes manifest in her conduct when she asks the Marches to respect what the middle monkey says "speak-no-evil" and "sinned mischievously herself against that convalsed speak-no-evil." Simon at times defied such stances of moral ambivalence of the old lady - "I never repudiated her that much (as much as Simon did) or tried to strike the old influence, such as it had become out of her hands." Though Augie is set in motion, yet his passive acceptance of Grandma's influence shows that the passivity is inward and the being is yet to disengage itself from the evils of romantic separatism and day dreaming, "poor

1. Ibid., p.13
2. Ibid., p.9
3. Ibid., p.58
souls dreaming... of a better life." She finally feels disenchanted with the family's intellectual fibre and lack of talent and withdraws to retire into a charity home for the aged and the invalids.

Of the various destiny-makers Augie comes in contact with and who adopt various strategies to impose their own version of life and reality on him, William Einhorn, the first superior man, a high school junior of Augie "not long before the great crash"¹ is another Machiavellian influence to teach him how to make the world fit into his own scheme. He has his own method to teach by way of examples as becomes manifest in an episode whose implications are highly moralistic. When his father dies he takes Augie to his room to ransack it and destroy papers that would damage his fortune and plan. He is killing two birds with one stone, first, he is to impress upon Augie's mind the art of succeeding in life by resorting to means of dishonesty and second, to clearing obstacles if there are any that may crop up to harm his interest as a result of the death of his father. One curious phenomena about Einhorn is that Bellow has painted him as a cripple and he uses this physical deformity as a mask to display his real directing power to set people around him. Augie is much impressed by his philosophical insights into the art of success and the enormous power of supermanliness to the degree that he

¹. Ibid., p. 60
discovers some of the traits of Grandma in him:

"Einhorn had a teaching turn similar to Grandma Lausch's, both believing they could show what could be done with the world, where it gave or resisted, where you could be confident and run or where you could only feel your way and were forced to blunder."¹

Einhorn, as a matter of fact, considers himself as one having something special to do in life but the reality is that he is a cheat, a swindler and the speciality about him is nothing but overambitiousness and overlustfulness. He is a man having a great lust for power, pelf and petticoat. He exploits his own half brother Dingbat whom his father considers an idiot but he has great fascination for Einhorn's money making talent: "Willie is a wizard, give him two bits' worth of telephone slugs and he'll parley it into big dough."²

And thus, he trains Augie to deal with his brother, Simon, as he does with Dingbat. He advises Augie to be happy over the misfortunes of Simon which for him is highly a negativistic and immoral therapy but it is otherwise moral for Einhorn since what is material for him in life is the end, not the means:

"...one should choose or seize with force; one should make strength from disadvantages and make progress by having enemies, being wrathful or terrible; should hammer on the state of being a brother, not be oppressed by it; should have strength of voice to make other voices fall silent - the same principle for persons as for peoples, parties, states."³

¹. Ibid., p. 80
². Ibid., p. 90
³. Ibid., p. 214
The pose of his crippleness is shattered when it comes to matters pertaining to sex. He is driven by limitless sexual greed "single-mindedly and grimly fixed on the one thing, ultimately the thing, for which men and women came together." The very smell of a woman gives him a big boost, he is always in need of girls and his affair with one Lollie Fewtar and later with Mildred show him as a moral pervert and sex-devourer of the innocent girls. The climax reaches when he plays the same trick with the girl, Mimi, whom his own son, Arthur, is going to marry. He lays his hand on Mimi's legs and in case she does not resent, then she is a fit case to marry Arthur. This is how Einhorn arranges things and fits people into his own scheme and does not spare even those in blood relation. He teaches the relevance of norms of conducting the worldly affairs by way of examples. One day he makes Augie to carry him on the shoulders to a whore-house to celebrate the occasion of his graduation from high school. He does not hesitate to give a dope to his wife that they are going to a big show. As a matter of fact, he wants Augie to be conversant with the world of the whore-house so that he could exploit Augie any moment since such sexual escapades are greater needs of his than they are of Augie's. It is thus under his thumb that Augie gets practical 'lessons' and 'theories' of power. His activities are instructive with wide interests ending no where as Augie concludes - "He had to be in touch with everything." \(^2\) and

1. Ibid., p. 78
2. Ibid., p. 70
they enlarge his area of understanding the world of the self and the method of its exploration in regard to facing up the evil in the world, but since they generate perversion, self-centredness, opportunism and inhumanity in human conduct they cannot be accepted as the viable forms of moral consciousness. For example, Einhorn's reaction to Augie when he talks of becoming a union organiser is highly negativistic and hostile to the growth of man as a social unit of larger community. It is sure to distract Augie from the idea of social concern and norms of morality. It clearly encourages isolation, non involvement and nihilates man's endeavour to ameliorate human conditions. Such a view of life of romantic egotism and estrangement from the common world has been condemned by Bellow in his acceptance speech for the National Book Award for Herzog: "The estrangement, though it produced some masterpieces, has by now enfeebled literature."¹ When Augie asks if it was "a waste of time, what I'm doing?" Einhorn's answer is characteristic of the depiction of Augie's existence:

"Oh, it seems to me on both sides the ideas are the same. What's the use of the same old ideas?... To take some from one side and give it to the other, the same old economics.... You think that with a closed shop you're going to make men out of slobs.... Look here, because they were born you think they have to turn out to be men? That's just an old fashioned idea."²

Augie's moral education is effected through his relations with another woman Thea, who is a perfect votary of 'use-value' of man rather than adhering to love as the

² The Adventures of Augie March, p. 293
universal value in life. This is a pure strain of machiavellianism in her conduct. That is, she keeps company of persons as long as they continue to be of any material use to her but throws them out like garbage articles the moment they cease to provide her entertainment to her expectations. Thus, she is the target of the novelist's dig at the instincts of commercialisation of norms of morality founded on the ethics of consumerist culture. She is married to one, Smitty, to ensure a life of money, status and security but continues to flirt, when she feels bored, with Talevera, Moulton and Iggy and is constantly in need of a man to flirt with outside her conjugal relations with her husband. Thea is a prototype of a perfect schemer and manipulator as Einhorn is. She is drawn to Augie out of rivalry when she sees Augie make love with her sister which becomes intolerable to her. Inspite of Simon's advice to marry Lucie Magnus because it would ensure luxury and power in life, he is helpless to refrain himself from responding to Thea's love and later to Stella's which deprive him of the much-fancied idea of independence and real happiness in life. And it so happens when one has his own idea of love which is at once impulsive and physical. Augie's developing fascination for Thea shows his power of beauty-spell. She knows that people have weakness for beautiful girls and can do any favour to win their love. She says that there are "lots of people everywhere who are crazy to do me favour." But the bitter

1. Ibid., p. 380
experiences of his Mexico trip have exposed the shallowness of both Thea and the romantic notion of love when after his fall from the horse, Thea turns indifferent to his pains and prefers to continue with her crazy game of catching wild pigs and snakes for her satisfaction.

Thea takes Augie to the remote places finding him a fit object to gratify her lust but she always keeps someone in reserve in case Augie falls from her grace. She has no sympathy for the losers and when Augie goes to her, she flatly denies him her favour: "Right now I have no use for you." Augie is not all that he appears to be, there is something within him which pushes him towards inner illumination and his temporary trap into worldly manipulations are not so much substantial to weaken the essential moral chords of heart. He is well aware of the risks involved in the game of adaptation. While in Mexico, for example, he enjoys shooting animals and takes delight in training the eagle birds, he feels that his association with Thea can be the object of his pursuit of 'axial-lines' but in moments of solitude his moral sense comes on the fore and makes him question the ways of his own childish nature in regard to allowing various persons to dominate his self:

"Look out! Oh, you chump and weak fool, you are one of a humanity that can't be numbered and not more than the dust of metals scattered in a magnetic field and clinging to the lines of force, determined by laws, eating, sleeping, employed, conveyed, obedient and subject. So why hunt for still more ways to lose liberty? Why go towards, and not instead run from the huge drag that threatens to wear out your ribs, rub your face, splinter your teeth?"

1. Ibid., pp. 369-70
It is after Thea's callous rejection of love that Augie looks into his own-self to find it a victim of moral ambiguities, that is, the idea of 'an independent fate' and the romantic concept of love cannot go together. In the state of por-soi, the self struggles to define its existential essence which is not fixed. And thus Augie makes investigations into his own moral imperfections in context of his philosophy of love and freedom:

"Now I had started, and this terrible investigation had to go on. If this was how I was, it was certainly not how I appeared but must be my secret. So if I wanted to please, it was in order to mislead or show everyone, wasn't it now? And this must be because I had an idea everyone was my better and had something. I didn't have. But what did people seen to me any how, something fantastic? I didn't want to be what they made me but wanted to please them. Kindly explain! An independent fate and love too - what confusion." 1

Since Augie March starts with the idea of 'good enough fate', the moral implications of Heraclitus' words - "A man's character is his fate" become the accepted ethics of life. He is fully convinced with the dictum in context of the existential view of man that man is potentially a great creative creature who can improve his condition provided he fully explores the meaning of self - his self or character is nothing else but the sum of his actions, which, in turn, are influenced by the people around him. And it is precisely for want of a sound socio-moral philosophy that Augie is gullible and is easily trapped into fraud, trickery and

1. Ibid., p. 464
manipulations being practiced by the worldly people. Augie's personality is such that he is easily pliable to anyone's manipulations. Who-so-ever encourages him to indulge in any kind of activity such as stealing or telling lies, he is instantly drawn to all influences because he lacks singleness of purpose. It is during these moments of social interactions that he romantically develops "an easy touch for friendship."¹ Bellow draws a comparison between Augie's state of moral distractions and Simon's success at school. In his own words, we have:

"I didn't have his singleness of purpose but was more diffuse and anybody who offered entertainment could get me to skip and do the alleys for junk and prowl the boathouse and climb in the ironwork under the lagoon bridge."²

Simon is, thus, equally a shaping influence on Augie to mould his destiny as others do. His life-philosophy is forged in Mammon worship. We are told how when he was at high school he earned fifty dollars as an honest class treasurer. The nature of honesty gets reflected in an uncharitable show when Augie asks him to send money and he keeps the money which he borrowed from Einhorn by himself instead of sending it to Augie for providing an instant relief. However, the conflict between 'love' and an 'independent fate' continues to haunt Augie's mind and he as a pursuer of self never successfully resolves this dilemma till the end of the novel. Even his conclusive love with

1. Ibid., p. 18
2. Ibid., p. 37
Stella which is a sort of sequel to his earlier love with Thea, does not in any way improve upon his condition because Stella proves to be a different girl from what he imagined she would be. Instead of being "simply warm and loving", she is discovered to be a flirt, telling lies 'more than average' about her pre-marital affairs, evidently to trap Augie into marriage. In his marriage with Stella, Augie is deprived of love and warmth and the freedom to explore the nature of self. Even his 'kingly' dream of being a teacher and set up a foster home to educate the children is frustrated for his too much dependence on Stella and Mintochian. However, his struggle against such oddities of life illumines his mind and he develops moral awareness that it is better to stand on one's knees rather than to die on someone else's legs. The evils of living a life of naked individualism bring a realisation that to make life meaningful and comprehend the relation between the individual and the world at large, one has to be a useful cog in the vast mechanism of social relations. But Augie lacks the skill to accommodate his self with the society and thus his turning to God rather than depending on his own powers to resolve the dilemma of existence and save the self from the state of inertia and passivity shows his confusion and moral puzzlement. "Please God! I thought, keep me from being sucked into another one of those currents where I can't be myself". His adventures and experiences among the machiaevellians therefore, teach him the significance of a life of involvement and commitment which will ultimately be a help to make him

1. Ibid., p. 482
comprehend the 'axial - lines' of his life.

Augie has still to develop this moral consciousness that his ideals and ambitions, howsoever noble and high they may be, will lose their relevance if they continue to exist as the stuff of the mind only and are not concretely related to social realities. The same is impressed upon his mind by Cleme Tambow in his explanation of moral inadequacy of such a utopian vision of life fed on ambitions verging on individualism:

"You have ambitions. But you're ambitious in general. You're not concrete enough. You have to be concrete."  

Tambow chastises Augie for developing the romantic notion of 'nobility syndrome' which is a sequel of the earlier errors that shut him out from the reality:

"What I guess about you is that you have a nobility syndrome. You can't adjust to the reality situation. I can see it all over you. You want there should be Man, with capital M, with great stature."  

In psycho-analytical term, Augie's 'nobility syndrome' makes sense. Augie being a by-product of a travelling man and now living a life of want and depravity in slums, explains why he succumbs to the people of virtue or vice. He is not a criminal in the physical sense and his repeated acts of petty crimes are not a reflection of his being so, as is manifested in his articulate conscience which is morally in conflict with his own self. His longest childhood

1. Ibid., p. 501
2. Ibid., p. 502
association with a thief, Stashu Opecs, and his stealing with him in a world where morality is taken to be morality-ridden—morality is a crime which they commit for the satisfaction of dexterity that this could also be done. He is once caught while stealing with Jimmy Klem and is beaten. Being deprived of a decent living, he is constantly in need of money and thus he plunders a leather-goods shop in Chicago with Joe Gorman and later helps the immigrants run across the border from Canada to New York, but he narrowly escapes the police and the incident opens up new outlook on life. Padilla, his one time schoolmate and a book-thief, initiates him into new experiences of stealing books to impress upon his mind that this could be something better in life. All such criminal and illegal acts are, no doubt, closely connected with the impoverished conditions of living, in contemporary American reality and with his idea of 'an independent fate'. And therefore, illusions as such are responsible for the seduction of deprived section of humanity into the abysmal pit of evil and shame. But Augie does not feel at ease in his being clubbed with the dubious characters and if it is so, one can ask why does he 'circle' widely between the two sets of characters, the elite and the influential on the one hand, and the deprived and the criminal on the other? If he feels a threat to his identity as a human being then why does he let these 'destiny-makers' overshadow his self? Agreed that Augie never fully rejects their manipulations, but equally he does not wholly adopt their ways which shows that he is conscious both of their
moral imperfections and of their moral flaws and of his own distorted view of reality. What he needs to extricate himself from these mystifying manipulations is the insight and to be of himself an independent initiation and singleness of purpose. That is, it is always others who initiate him into actions such as the jobs he holds are arranged by others, be it through Simon or other acquaintances including the women. What further creates complexity of vision is the curious phenomenon that he leaves one job after another without seriously looking into the depth of moral implications and social realities which go with the job that he relinquishes or undertakes. This pattern of 'going in' and 'coming out' becomes hard for Augie to surmount with the passage of time and life becomes a painful experience, particularly when he sees Simon come to terms with realities of life and comprehend the meaning of 'independent fate'. Opposed to it, Augie continues to clutch at nothingness, there is little recognition about what he precisely wants: "I know, I longed very much, but I didn't understand for what."\(^1\) And it is primarily because of this rudderless momentary driftings that Augie falls into anyone's trap and readily follows any direction as suggested to him. He willingly becomes a participant in every sort of activity of deceit, theft, stealing, love and sacrifice, but the nature of participation is not so serious as to leave an imprint on his self. It is the growing strength of moral sensibility that prompts Augie so explicitly

\[^1\] Ibid., p. 99
to say 'no' to persons who take him to be a gullible object for adaptation, nor does he let sufferings and failures demoralise his self to the degrees beyond repair. Augie is not clear about the precise nature of resistance and the natural tendency in man to 'opposition' to only external influences but what is significant is its realisation to escape confusion and despair in life. The very tendency of 'opposition' is sufficient indication to speak of evolution of consciousness - his unemployed consciousness and evasiveness has now become alive to define its humanity and the need to protect the self from the forces of subjective thinking and the romantic idea of independent fate to make the self more sociable. Einhorn is critical of Augie's this stance of defiance and revolt because it is essentially incompatible with his ethics of life. He discovers this trait of defiance and revolt in Augie for the first time, "You have got opposition in you. You don't slide through everything. You just make it look so" ¹, which Augie affirms:

"This was the first time that anyone had told me anything like the truth about myself. I felt it powerfully. That, as he said, I did have opposition in me, and great desire to offer resistance and to say "No'! which was as clear as could be as definite a feeling as a pang of hunger." ²

Of all the machiavellians what the Grandma does to stir his ambition is a fine illustration to exemplify this viewpoint. While giving him affection she calls him a 'cat

1. Ibid., p. 99
2. Ibid., p. 137
head' and a 'Meshant' and rebukes him for his misadventures:

"If Kreindl's son can be a dentist you can be governor of Illinois. Only you're too easy to tickle. Promise you a joke, a laugh, a piece of candy, or a lick of ice-cream, and you'll leave everything and run."  

Mrs. Renling also plays upon this weakness of Augie. She intends to adopt him and wants to see him grow into a fashionable young man but later when he consults Einhorn, he refuses to be built into the world of the Renlings, though he continues to enjoy life as a rich man can do with them. His own brother, Simon wants to fashion him upon his own scheme through his marriage with Lucy, for bettering his prospects. Augie does not disappoint the rich in-laws of Simon - he enjoys playing the game of pinochle at the house of the Magnuses saying, "Why shouldn't I marry a rich man's daughter?" Simon is happy to see Augie fall in his line and deal with Lucy-affair but his "willingness and spoon-lickery and obliging and niceness" is deceptive when he knowingly withdraws from the scene. Mimi uses him for a peculiar mission, Einhorn exploits him for all singular jobs such as doing odd works in his house, in his tool room and in the whore-house. Aunt Anna begins to look upon him as the future husband for her daughter Freidi. Augie watches with keen insight the morality involved in the whole mechanism of various devices which they employ to mould him according to their own pattern of life. It is immaterial as to who outruns whom in their art of manipulation and exhibiting supermanliness. "People have been adoptive towards me, as

1. Ibid., pp. 37-38
2. Ibid., p. 288
if I were really an orphan."¹ Augie is a deserted child of a matriarchial family on charity but does it mean that anyone who comes in his contact should take him as clay on the potter's wheel to cast into a mould of his choice.

These various influences are significant in the structural plan of the novel. Augie disapproves adaptations of all types, the dream of an independent fate does not let him fully involve any single human encounter, his saying 'no' to the temporary embraces of these machiavellians shows that he has a 'pang of hunger', a vision to shape his life but it is not fully realised for his lack of initiation and involvement in life as he himself says:

"I never had accepted determination and wouldn't become what other people wanted to make of me. I have said 'No' to Joe Gorman too, to Grandma. To Jimmy. To lots of people."²

His refusal to be built into the worlds of the two women, aunt Anna and Mrs. Renling, and his saying 'no' to shove off their constructions shows that he is conscious of his humanity and that he does not wish to wield life on others' advice. During his talk with Mintouchian, there is a reflection of the mode of existence the self has entered into and is conscious of its nature."¹ I have always tried to become what I am. But it's a frightening thing. Because what if what I am by nature isn't good enough."³

1. Ibid., p. 121
2. Ibid., p. 138
3. Ibid., p. 559
Bellow intends to depict Augie perhaps as a representative figure of contemporary American literature on which have come to stay a number of literary influences of nineteenth and twentieth centuries. He, like literature in general, accepts for a while all influences, his passive and wishy-washy attitude to life hardly lets him to make direct attempt to keep himself away from the destiny makers. The reality of the situation is that Augie continues to come under the spell of various influences which understand him in context of their own thesis, stir his emotions, provide him unsought-for exhortations and then finally aim at grafting him according to their needs. But despite of this exposure to various influences he feels tired of them and their philosophy of life. The being in the state of por-soi is struggling to be what it is not and be different from what it is. This finds expression in his own words: "To tell the truth, I'm good and tired of all these big personalities, destiny moulders, and heavy-water brains, Machiavellis and wizard evil-doers, big-wheels and imposers-upon, absolutists."\(^1\) The process brings insight into the problem of the 'being' in regard to developing consciousness so that it may comprehend the significance of the struggle in relation to the well being of the community. In the period of self examination Augie resolves to abdicate the romantic idea of being something special, which is a vanity and which makes one to remain a symbol of romantic separatism:

\(^1\) Ibid., p. 603
"The ambition of something special and outstanding I have always had is only a boast that distorts this knowledge from its origin, which is the oldest knowledge, older than the Euphrates, older than the Ganges."1

But during these moments of self examination the truth is revealed to him - that one cannot serve mankind while preserving his independence. This shows that he has not been fully able to overcome the confusion as experienced by Joseph and Tommy in their state of en-soi.

And thus his adventures and experiences enable him to realise the value of social concern in regard to finding the 'axial lines' of life and restoring peace within himself through communication and involvement with the world outside his own. He will not choose passivity as the ethics of life which will make the dilemma of existence more hideous and terrible. He says,

"...look! a man could spend forty, fifty, sixty years like that inside the walls of his own being. And all great experience would only take place within the walls of his being. And all high conversation would take place within those walls. And all achievement would stay within those walls. And all glamour too. And even hate, monstrousness, enviousness, murder, would be inside them. This would be only a terrible, hideous dream about existing. It's better to dig ditches and hit other guys with your shovel than die in the walls."2

Keeping the social implications of his idea of "fate good enough" Augie does not feel reluctant to undertake menial jobs such as distributing hand bills and selling hot dogs and paints. He works as a salesman, a dog carrier, a

1. Ibid., p. 524
2. Ibid., pp. 525-26
labour organiser, a research assistant, he even assists in coal business and shooting of crows and training the eagles. During this phase of life Augie comes in contact of people who miraculously appear to be the distributors of worthless advice, irrespective of the dimension and the nature of crisis that it may involve. He visits various places and changes position because his relations with the people are based on temporary acquaintances and therefore are not enduring. In the words of Tony Tanner, Augie "does not have any developing and deepening relationship"\(^1\) because he has yet to make his earthly pilgrimage intensely human. It is through his contact with so much evil rampant in American society and the resultant pain and misery that he gains insight into the truths of life: he realises the sense of futility and hollowness of cherishing the idea of a distinguishing self in isolation. His reflections that "even a truth can get cold from solitude and solitary confinement"\(^2\) are his moral gains.

However, Augie has definitely reached a stage where what matters is not that he is not conscious of absurdity and nihilism as conditions of human existence in general and the futility of the endeavour to practice separatism in particular, but it is his optimism and hope in the good of humanity that brings illumination into the heart of things. The problem now is not that 'ideals' and 'reality' are at cross with each other but to develop an outlook to come to

\[1\] City of Words, New York, Harper and Row, 1971, p. 71

\[2\] The Adventures of Augie March, p. 184
terms with reality by comprehending the grave moral truths that ideals are to be grounded in social reality so as to make them human. The self, if retreating from reality, remains a fragmented self which evokes the vision of a destructive nature resulting in the contamination of essentials of humanity.

Bellow at the end brings in Columbus to signify the human aspect of man's struggle towards comprehending the nature of reality and partly to illumine consciousness. Augie's awareness of the possibility of failure of his endeavour is very much human that will make him to look at the failure and success as naturally being part of life as the cycle of the day following the night: "I may well be a flop at this line of endeavour. Columbus too thought he was a flop, probably, when they sent him back in chains. Which didn't prove there was no America." This frank acceptance of human reality that man has to be his own Columbus to discover new plains and the price he has to pay for the quest are symbolic of the rise of consciousness deeply rooted in social realities. Augie ultimately learns that a life of stability, peace and love will make him achieve the 'axial lines' of life which is reflected in his wish to own a piece of property to raise a home for materialising his scheme of 'the foster home and academy.' Augie's visualising the bliss of conjugal life is the manifestation of inner yearnings which is purely human and therefore moral - it is through love of humanity and involvement in life that he can achieve his ideals.

1. Ibid., p. 617
In *Henderson the Rain King* Bellow resets the stage to dramatize the protagonist's attainment of moral consciousness in a world of opulence and plenty. If the world of affluence relatively ensures intellectual stamina, material satisfaction and the taste of authority on the one hand, it generates in the possessor's mind, on the contrary, the sense of satiety and moral vacuum, and the ultimate terror of death. The book concentrates on this seeming paradox through the encounters and confrontations of the protagonist ranging from the pre-historic culture to the contemporary civilization thereby including within his scope of experiences the elements of contemporary civilization confronting man today in the West. The gap between the desire to acquire more and more and the sense of insatiability generates feelings of absurdity and meaninglessness because the possession of one want allures man to crave for the other and when nothing is left to fight for, the invigorating query - what now remains of real concern? - constitutes feelings of absurdity and nihilism. When victory over basic human needs is achieved all other wants are superfluous and luxuries upon their possession pale into insignificance. Thus, the satisfaction and the realisation concerning the material and the spiritual needs of man is founded upon degrees of consciousness. The victory of one consciousness brings feelings of defeat since consciousness is not absolute. The book is thus a fictionalization of the two vital issues which
concern all contemporary American novelist - how man can be
more of himself and the obstacles to its achievements by
way of evolving one's own system of thought of laying order
over chaos which is repugnant to moral awareness. During
the process while looking for ground to affirm the human
conditions as they are, the protagonist is sometimes
cought in the imprisoning delusions that thwart awareness of
the self and like a disillusioned derelict finds himself
unable to comprehend the significance of life. He looks
dazed for a while but a stage comes in regard to
comprehending human conditions, its limitations and the
possibilities which teach him that since the realisation of
the absolute is beyond man's grasp, that all romantic wishful-
ness cannot be actualised and therefore what saves man from
the growing feelings of meaninglessness is the consciousness
of one's humanity and the limitations imposed upon it by
life within which he seeks the deeper social implications of
existence within the community as a whole.

What distinguishes Henderson, the protagonist, from
the earlier heroes are his beatitudes of life - affluence,
education, the cultural legacy: he is a graduate of Ivy
League University, his great-grand father was the Secretary
of the State, his great uncles were Ambassadors and his
father, Willand Henderson, was a famous scholar. His
enormous physical strength with extraordinary height - 6 ft.
9 inches and weighing 230 pounds, ironically speaking,
induce him into festering temptations to commit more wrongs. His social status and rich inheritance of three million dollars after paying taxes are sufficient warrant of a life of more security, steadiness and peace. Since he happens to be the sole survivor of a rich family, he develops an impulsive and idiosyncratic temper together with certain evils such as excessive boozing, whoring, and picking up quarrels with his wife, son, friends and all coming in his way. Consequently, he commits a series of mistakes which act out on his self like a two-edged weapon and what in return he receives are the painful shots of life. His ambition to enter into medicine at the age of fifty five is no doubt a noble and humanitarian idea but at this period of age since man chooses retreat from active life, the urge seems to be more the expression of frustration and crisis born of the inner spiritual anguish rather than human yearning that a life of prosperity can generate.

The novel from the start insists on this imperfectibility of Henderson's attitude to the self in relation to its spiritual and material concerns. As such, he soon feels bored of a life of surfeit and wants to drive the devil of material prosperity out of his house for the purification of spirit. How is it that Henderson, despite a rich inheritance, status and inordinate physical strength, feels inner turmoil and develops an aggressive temper that finds expression in his continuously harassing his family, friends and other acquaintances he comes in contact with? It is his failure
and lack of commitment to the value of social concern that makes him incapable to abdicate the romantic notion of self. This lack of comprehension that the essence of life lies in relating one's self to the society at large creates misgivings that he alone can create his own fate in a world of privacy and affluence outside society: "Society is what beats me. Alone I can be pretty good, but let me go among people and there's the devil to pay."¹ He says that he is, "still not ready for society" - why so? It is not that he is unaware of risks involved in going alone to carve out his destiny in isolation. As a matter of fact, his problem is that he cannot shed away the cult of pure absolute freedom of self. While he is alone, he feels comfortable but in the midst of community he feels like a stranger, a displaced person clamouring for a 'station in life'. Little does he understand that the old primeval view of self preservation could find favour with the primitive man when life was a battle between one individual and another because he was by himself both individual and the society but in the contemporary net-work of over computerized civilization, man cannot afford to go alone. His confessions that he has "made a mess of everything and there's no getting away from the results"² show that he is yet to grow into this consciousness that capitalism can sustain one materially but it makes him internally suffer from the poverty of soul.

². Idem.
Henderson develops wrong notions that with his own power he can overcome all problems. "In a crisis man must be prepared to stand alone, and actually standing alone is the kind of thing I'm good at. I was thinking," he reflects, "I should be good, considering how experienced I am in going it by myself." Very often he hears an inner voice, "I want, I want, I want!" but he has no clear idea of its ambiguous genesis and demands. Besides, the continual state of alienation and displacement generates feelings of emptiness in life: he feels that "even pigs were profitable" than a life of sufficiency which he is living. The voice ringing in his ears is symbolic of man's discontentment with the nature of reality even in the midst of plenty. How much more man needs to silence the demands of this voice and what is its precise nature, Henderson fails to comprehend. The only thing he knows is that whatever he possesses in all its plentitude is not enough to keep time with the ceaseless voice produced by his diseased heart. It is the old voice of human heart craving for comprehending the greater and deeper things of life'.

"Now I have already mentioned that there was a disturbance in my heart, a voice that spoke there and said, I want, I want, I want! It happened every afternoon, and when I tried to suppress it it got even stronger. It only said one thing, I want, want! And I would ask, "What do you want?"
But this was all it would ever tell me. It never said a thing except I want, I want, I want!"  

1. Ibid., p. 107
2. Ibid., p. 24
The sight of people around "working, making, digging, bulldozing, trucking and loading" is an ironical externalisation of Henderson's inner actionlessness which brings to his mind that by getting himself involved in routinized domestic chores, he can seek an escape from the nagging assault of these inner mysterious voices. That is why he turns to chopping woods, driving tractor, and working on the barn among the pigs to keep himself busy. But the failure of the experiment as a remedial cure to overcome the spiritual crisis drives Henderson to the world of violin and literature. He sees everything "wanting to pull together", wondering how the pursuit of sanity is a form of madness in an age of madness. He is fully aware of the paradoxical nature of reality. However, he feels gingerly and questions his own self perhaps to elicit some release from the existing crisis of existence.

"Come on, tell me. What's the complaint, is it Lily herself? Do you want some nasty whore? It has to be some lust? But this was no better a guess than the others. The demand came louder, I want, I want, I want, I want! And I would cry, begging at last, "Oh tell me then. Tell me what you want!"  

But the address to the voice brings no resolution to diffuse the tension and its mounting pressure on the mind. One day he happens to come across a quotation in his father's book, "The forgiveness of sins is perpetual and righteousness first is not required." It gives him an understanding the birth of new consciousness that he, is seized by an urge

1. Ibid., p. 24
2. Ibid., p. 3
to flee to a remote corner away from the clatter and chaos of modern life to assert that part of his inner being which would be found, not in what he has been in the past, but in what he is willing to make of himself. And therefore the urge to live a life of meaning takes him to Africa with a rich friend, Charlie Albert, where values, Irving Malin observes, are to be reconsidered and "reality subjected to new perspectives." Charlie is a cameraman who is going to Africa with his friend to film the natives and their animals. The natural surroundings and the atmosphere of 'the ancient bed of mankind' stir his imagination and for sometime he feels no pressure on his heart. The voice ceases to ring in his ears. He feels ecstatic to see life all around in its glory and splendour. Perhaps it is the novelty of the place that enchants Henderson's questing imagination and that is why the general response is of release and surprise: "Bountiful life! Oh, how bountiful life is." 

Nevertheless, Henderson one day during the photography exercises, hears the voice within, "I want, I want, I want!", which warns him of his lack of directionality. The voice reminds him that the real purpose of the trip is not to take pictures but to explore the higher truths of life which will save him from the existing dilemma. Thus being directed by the inner urge to do something worthwhile he seeks Charlie's permission to go to some other parts of the land. He takes

2. Henderson the Rain King, pp. 42-43
an Abyssinian native Romilayu, his guide enters into the deep forest, which represents the incomprehensible nature of reality. Romilayu takes him to the unexplored part of the land known as the Arnewi village inhabited by a tribe of cattle-raisers. The place has unique geographical features looking like the 'original place' where man was born. The dreary and barren look of the place speaks of its drought-stricken conditions. Perhaps the rain gods have felt offended and the whole land lies under a curse. A queer sensation seizes over him and he feels as if he has left the world of fabulous wealth far behind because the region bears similar looks of pre-Adamic climate:

"I got clean away from everything, and we came into a region like a floor surrounded by mountains. It was hot, clear, and arid and after several days we saw no human footprints. Nor were there many plants; for that matter there was not much of anything here; it was all simplified and splendid, and I felt I was entering the past - the real past, no history or junk like that. The prehuman past."

Here his experiences and encounters with a number of personalities like queen Willatale are of great moral significance in that they impress upon his mind that life can be made a meaningful pilgrimage by coming to terms with its realities and sharing joys and sorrows with others.

In the description of Arnewi village Bellow's use of terminology is significant in the creation of moral awareness in Henderson's mind. This finds expression in his repeated use of words, such as 'glitter', 'gold', 'light', 'radiant'

1. Ibid., p. 46
which are his metaphorical reflections over the beginning of a new consciousness in regard to the value of social concern. He is aware of the loss of the primeval innocence but lacks clarity on the vital issue - how to repair the loss. One possibility to seek remedy, he feels, lies in explaining his human integrity to the queen Willatale. When she asks who he is and what place he comes from he answers that he 'is really kind of on a quest,' he is a pilgrim - quester seeking illumination, so as to escape the agony of spiritual deprivation:

"Who - who was I? A millionaire wanderer and wayfarer. A brutal and violent man driven into the world. A man who fled his own country, settled by his forefathers. A fellow whose heart said, I want. I want. Who played the violin in despair, seeking the voice of angels. Who had to burst the spirit's sleep, or else. So what could I tell this old queen in a lion skin and raincoat (for she had buttoned herself up in it)? That I had ruined the original piece of goods issued to me and was traveling to find a remedy?"

The pathetic sight of the distressed natives and their mourning over the mysterious death of their cattle moves Henderson to pity. The inner moral urge prompts him to be socially useful to the collective cause of humanity. This speaks of the progression of the 'being' to exist as one useful unit of the social fabric. He orders Romilayu to ask precisely what, "they want me to do. I intend to do something and I really mean it." This is a step leading Henderson towards identification with the sufferings of the tribe, a symbolic extension of his own humanity at large.

1. Ibid., pp. 76-77
2. Ibid., p. 51
Prince, Itelo is their champion who explains to Henderson the real cause of the scarcity of water. There is water in the cistern but the flow is interrupted by a thick mass of untouchable frogs, "a vast number of these creatures woggling and crowding, stroking along with the water slipping over their backs and their mottles, as if they owned the medium."¹ His instant cries at the frogs calling them "the little sons of bitches" to evidently threaten their extermination are the expression of his essential humanity and the urge to do something in the larger interest of the tribe. His intention to eliminate the frogs shows his utter disregard to the existence of others. That is, he has to comprehend the ontological structure of the 'being' - and develop the understanding that he is the project which "is fundamentally a project of absorbing the Other"² for the recovery of his being. The frog symbology teaches Henderson the higher values of life, they are his 'reality' as the rock is of Sisyphus during his descent from the summit to the lower plains. If frogs, as it is feared, are boulders to disrupt the flow of water, so are the voices to thwart the flow of life, human consciousness, and therefore the urge to purge water of the frogs suggests to get life ridden of its mysterious voices. The analogy is relevant that the existence of the frogs in water and the voices of life are the very conditions of living, which Henderson has to learn to live with. They will remain where they are and thus if

¹. Ibid., pp. 59-60
². Being and Nothingness, p. 475
he makes any attempt to intervene in their mode of existence and the factors governing their life, it will lead to conflict which "is the original meaning of being-for-others". But he can surmount this ontological problem by keeping the fact in view that the Other as freedom is the foundation of his being-in-itself, and he has to identify himself with that freedom to be himself, his own foundation. As such the transcendence will imply the other's transcendence transcended.

But before Henderson takes the project of clearing up the water supply, he, as per custom of the land, is to wrestle with their champion, Prince Itelo. During the fight when Itelo tightens the grip on Henderson, he asks the Prince to loosen the hold so that he could tell something serious. "Your Highness, I am really kind of on a quest", Henderson tells the Prince. And no one can lose sight of the fact that he is certainly on a kind of quest to develop consciousness for the illumination of his darker self and probing 'the secrets of life'. However the champion is overthrown, Henderson is to meet the queen Willatale, the Bittah woman, and her sister Mtalba. The form of greeting is ritualistic. Itelo puts Henderson's hand against his breast but when the queen does so, a touch of her breast momentarily arrests his gaze and gives a sensation as if he were touching "the secrets of life."  

1. Idem  
2. Henderson the Rain King, p. 65  
3. Ibid., p. 72
Bellow creates a situation to show Henderson's self awakening from a spate of relative unconsciousness to step into a state of heightened consciousness. The passivity of the two women towards the plight of the natives throws Henderson into puzzlement how they can afford to be so unconcerned about the menace of the frogs. The utter disregard of the Queen and her sister to the wellbeing of humanity as represented in their own natives is like a theatrical device used in tragedy to 'cure emotion by means of an emotion like in mind'. The positivistic aspect of this homoeopathic, treatment is that the passivity of the two women makes Henderson look into his own inadequacies and thus the self is roused into action to be of itself. Henderson now feels convinced that the old queen can make him overcome the inner spiritual turmoil and help him in comprehending the significance of life:

"I believed the queen could straighten me out if she wanted to; as if, any minute now, she might open her hand and show me the thing, the source, the germ - the cipher. The mystery, you know. I was absolutely convinced she must have it... It comforted me just to see her, and I felt that I might learn to be sustained too if I followed her example. And altogether I felt my hour of liberation was drawing near when the sleep of the spirit was liable to burst."  

The queen Willatale discovers in Henderson the desire to live life but mere 'grun -to-molani' is not sufficient unless it is related with the beats of community life. It confirms Henderson's mission of the visit to the land. Her

1. Ibid., p. 79
words full of wisdom of life, Henderson is hopeful, will enable him to seek reconciliation between the claims of the self and the determinism of the outer world. In response to her words, "Grun-to-Molani", meaning 'You want to live' shows enthusiasm to get at the objective truth of the message, "Yes, yes, yes! Molani. Me molani... Not only I molani for myself, but for everybody", which is the core of the philosophy of social concern. He becomes alive to the universal significance of the queen's message of 'living opposed to 'not living'. It is not subjective and if it encourages the celebration of the individual within the whole, it does so because the individual is as significant a component for the society as society is significant to absorb the individual within its whole.

Henderson's action of blasting the frogs to clear the cistern of the blockade is a clear indication of his social urge to do something good for the tribal population. He uses a home-made bomb to blow out the frogs but the operation misfires, because it blows out one end of the cistern. The water flows into the arid land. This failure brings him realisation of human failure in broader context but it leaves him despairing and frustrated. Henderson has to understand that the Faustian conceit in man to be the very god on earth will bring damnation, what he needs to learn is the knowledge that human potentialities have also their limitations. It is this awareness that makes Henderson keep up the spirit of struggle and comprehend the meaning of life.

1. Ibid., p. 85
in relation to the philosophy of social concern. However, the loss caused by the blast is disheartening and he expresses a desire to repair the loss before leaving the place. The resultant feelings of dismay and horror act as a prelude to the growth of moral awakening and bring release from the forces of darkness within man which keep the spirit in bondage. He leaves the place but the encounter with the Queen and her words of wisdom "Grun-tu-molani" and the failure of the project to clear the cistern of its impediments are the positive gains of this intellectual odyssey. While bidding 'goodbye' to the Queen and her people, Henderson acknowledges his own inadequacies of life. "Good-by, Prince, Good-by, dear lady, and tell the queen good-by. I hoped to learn the wisdom of life from her but I guess I am just too rash. I am not fit for such companionship. But I love that old woman. I love all you folks. God bless you all."¹

The scene of struggle and the ensuing moral awareness now shifts to another part of Africa, the Wariri village, where 'bigger buildings some of them wooden' create an impression of relatively advanced society, opposed to the prehistoric culture of the Arnewi. Henderson's movements from the uncivilised past of man's history to the contemporary world of 'radar', with Romilayu, are the recordings of man's evolutionary past through various stages of civilization and thus they become the reflection of his being growing in moral consciousness, "the giant spiders" set up their nets

¹. Ibid., p. 112
"like radar stations among the cactuses." ¹

King Dahfu's personality casts a spell on Henderson's imagination. The two soon become friendly. Henderson is now a guest in the royal palace where the king is surrounded by his women. He sees "a higher quality or degree of light" ², in the king whose very first question - Do you envy me? - has moral implication for a quester like Henderson who is out to explore the secrets of the 'being'. That is why he tells the king that his purpose of the trip to the land is to "see essentials, only essentials, nothing but essentials, and to guard against hallucinations. Things are not what they seem, anyway." ³ In the land of King Dahfu, two episodes are dramatised to show Henderson's descent into the depths of the ontological structure of the 'being', first, his appointment as the 'rain king' at a rain making ceremony where he succeeds in lifting their goddess of cloud, Mummah, and the second, is his encounter with the lioness, Atti, when king Dahfu takes him in a deep underground chamber for his understanding of the two forms of reality - 'the tamed' and 'untamed' which man cannot afford to avoid.

Henderson is to be appointed 'rain king'. The ritual consists of two parts - the first part begins with Dahfu and a lady throwing two skulls to each other. Henderson later learns that the two skulls are human skulls of the king's

1. Ibid., p. 114
2. Ibid., p. 157
3. Ibid., p. 161
father and grandfather. And the second part shows a number of wooden gods, being placed in the centre of an arena to be subjected to indignities and disgrace. The whole show looks very weird and forboding to Henderson's sensibilities but the crowd shouts joyfully at it. The next move is to carry the wooden figures to a distance. At the end two are left - Hummat, the mountain god and Mummah, the goddess of cloud. Hummat is shifted by a strong native but all the contestants including Bunam, the last year's champion, fails to lift Mummah which Henderson does successfully. The success of this show of demonstration of his monumental strength and fierceness of resolution makes Henderson happy. He himself describes what he felt during the episode.

"I stood still. There beside Mummah in her new situation I myself was filled with happiness. I was so gladdened by what I had done that my whole body was filled with soft heat, with soft and sacred light. The sensations of illness I had experienced since morning were all converted into their opposites.... And so my fever was transformed into jubilation. My spirit was awake and it welcomed life anew. Damn the whole thing! Life anew! I was still alive and kicking and I had the old grun-tu-molani."

The episode teaches Henderson the myth of human potentiality: with the bursting of the spirit's sleep, man is made to realise that he should not rely on the forces outside his own. His experience with the frogs involved technical ingenuity, contrary to depending on his own strengths in the case of removal of Mummah. Henderson, the mover of Mummah, is now their 'rain king' - their Sungo. But what he later

1. Ibid., pp. 192-93
experiences is all nightmarish, he is stripped and with a few weeds on his body is made to dash through the village-streets being hooed at by the crowd. Finally he is thrown into a stinking cattle pond. He comes out dripping stale mud hoping that the mud "would cover my shame, for the flimsy grasses, flying, had left everything open."  

Henderson's rise from the ooze and foul-smelling mud is symbolic of the moral awakening regarding the facts of human existence, including death. Truth is revealed to him and he sees in him the humanity in all its shame and spiritual nakedness. The human aspect of this spiritual enlightenment and Henderson's final immersion into the facts of his own existence cannot be undermined, Henderson as their king, is aware of his moral games of a life of involvement with the community which he earlier thought was 'none of my damned business'.

"I guess it served me right for mixing into matters that were none of my damned business. But the thing had been irresistible, one of those drives which there was no question of fighting. And what had I got myself into? What were the consequences? On the ground floor of the palace, filthy, naked and bruised, I lay in a little room. The rain was falling, drowning the town, dropping from the roof in heavy fringes, witchlike and gloomy. Shivering, I covered myself with hides and stared with circular eyes, wrapped to the chin in the skins of unknown animals."  

King Dahfu is very much impressed by his urge to do something of greater significance in life for the good of

1. Ibid., p. 199
2. Ibid., p. 203
humanity. The Queen's wisdom of life, the king feels, is not sufficient for Henderson and therefore he explains the meanings of the words 'grun-tu-molani' in wider perspectives:

"I know that Arnewi expression," said the king. "Yes, I have been there, too, with Itelo. I understand what this grun-tu-molani implies. Indeed I do. And I know the lady also, a great success, a human gem, a triumph of the type — I refer to my system of classification. Granted, grun-tu-molani is much, but it is not alone sufficient. Mr. Henderson, more is required. I can show you something now — something without which you will never understand thoroughly my special aim nor my point of view. Will you come with me?"¹

And thus king Dahfu leads Henderson to the underground den of lion where the sight of Atti, the lioness, creates fright in his mind. The king feels that though Henderson "has set forth to accomplish a very important matter", yet he is an avoider who has spent his life in "momentous avoidances" and therefore he badly needs a lesson in 'unavoidable' which means the facts of human reality including mortality as Dahfu's encounter with the beast and his subsequent death symbolise. And Atti represents that 'unavoidable reality'. It can teach him many crucial things about life and might transform him into a more morally conscious and open individual so that he could come to terms with the real situations in life, instead of playing an avoider.

"First she is unavoidable. Test it, and you will find she is unavoidable. And this is what you need, as you are an avoider."²

¹. Ibid., pp. 217-18
². Ibid., p. 260
Seeing Henderson reluctant to crawl and roar like Atti, the king persuades him to keep patience since whatever he is doing, he tells, is all for his education. It will teach him the true significance and benefits of social life lived in the midst of other fellow beings. However, Henderson goes down on all fours to prowl and roar like Atti. What are the moral implications of this shattering experience of man's regression into his primitive self? The purpose of King Dahfu's education is to make Henderson realise that 'grun-tu molani' is not sufficient for developing the consciousness and the limitations of man's choice to be free from the freedom of choosing. Man must realise the animal in him and absorb lion qualities within self. And thus the whole process is not without its moral progression: man is in perpetual state of 'becoming' by way of self-transcendence. The human roarings rising from the very depth of soul are the manifestations of the hidden unfulfilled aspirations and longings. This exercise of animal roarings Henderson feels, will convalesce him, and make him feel rather sensitive to the moral beauty around him.

Dahfu's death in the encounter with the lion, Gmilo, explains the relevance of his education how man has to act courageously to break the repeated cycle of 'fear and desire without a change', the whole mankind has wrapped itself in. This final confrontation with the wild terrifying form of reality and the roar of the lion shake the state of
dormancy, the self is awakened to the consciousness which unravels the truth of human existence that man can scarcely escape the innumerable shapes and forms of reality. That is, the simple recognition and passive acceptance of the 'given condition' is not sufficient to live. Instead, what is needed for human survival is the continual struggle against these conditions so as to give form and sense to senseless nature of reality. Queen Willatale's words of wisdom 'grun-tu-molani' was 'a starter' to recast his outlook on life though she herself stood indifferent to 'shots of life'. And so are Dahfu and Atti inert to the instinct of change and progression, but Henderson's longings are for instant redemption as everything about him cries out for salvation: "Salvation, salvation! What shall I do? What must I do? At once! What will become of me?" And the possibilities of salvation lies in comprehending the two natures of reality - the 'tamed reality' and the 'untamed reality' which Atti and Gmilo respectively represent.

Henderson's admission that man's struggles and desires are incompatible in given situation, that his longings and wishes are futile is a clear reflection of his newly achieved wisdom of life but what sustains hopes, he has also learnt, is the desire and immediacy to continue to keep pace with the rhythm of life rather than cease to exist. Henderson's fear that he, being their Sungo could be made the next king, as the dying Dahfu told him, is genuine. He manages to get out of the place and after having

1. Ibid., p. 217
faced hunger and fatigue enters the territories of civilization. He carries the lion-cub with him. (It is supposed that the lion is Dahfu's soul) as a token of his love for the dead king and to express his sense of gratitude for his moral education which ultimately enables Henderson to come closer to the bone of reality. The restless familiar inner voice seems to be at last stilled in Africa and he becomes fully alive to the meaning and value of struggle against the limitations of life. He will not waste away his energies now in feverishly following the mysterious call of voices but will plan to do something of significance and value for humanity.

Henderson has realised that it is not the material prosperity but the purity of action rooted in social dealings that will characterise the essence of life and make it worth living. During the journey on the plane he becomes friendly with an orphan boy who, it is told, is going to some people for adoption. One can infer that perhaps Henderson himself will adopt the boy because during the moments of conversation with Dahfu he has learnt that man's spiritual gains imply the shared fate of humanity. The gesture of Henderson's leaping and frisking around the plane, when it lands briefly in Newfoundland for refuelling with the boy on his back, amply illustrates the birth of a new consciousness and a changed attitude towards humanity. The confusion and moral vacillation, after the bursting of the spirit's sleep disappear, they now no longer will
continue to fester his imaginative faculty:

"Laps and laps I galloped around the shining and riveted body of the plane, behind the fuel trucks. Dark faces were looking from within. The great, beautiful propellers were still, all four of them. I guess I felt it was my turn now to move, and so went running - leaping, leaping, pounding, and tingling over the pure white lining of the gray Arctic silence."

The use of the infinitive 'to move' and the repetition of the word 'leaping' is a powerful assertion of Henderson's entry into the zone of reality: he is essentially involved in a process of reintegration of moral consciousness and social realisation.

While back in America, Henderson, being inspired by king Dahfu's idea of 'nobility' and the values he lived by, will study medicine at this period of life to act as healer and serve humanity. After his comprehending the secrets of the world of self through his two imaginary trips, he feels morally enlightened to face up the most crucial question - how to live. The resolution comes, "I must begin to think how to live. I must break Lily from blackmail and set love on a true course." And thus what is pertinent from moral point of view in Henderson's case is not that he has gained the tremendous amount of experience in twenty days but that the wisdom of life which he has accumulated is not to be achieved by one in twenty years.

1. Ibid., pp.340-41
2. Ibid., p. 288
"I am giving up the violin. I guess I will never reach my object through it," to raise my spirit from the earth, to leave the body of this death. I was very stubborn. I wanted to raise myself into another world. My life and deeds were a prison.

"Well, Lily, everything is going to be different from now on." ¹

It is thus partly Dahfu's education and partly the wisdom of the Queen as contained in the words 'grun-tu-molani' that makes him conscious in regard to the existential wish to live life grounded in social realities. His words to stewardess show that there cannot be any greater wisdom of life than love of mankind.

"You know why I'm impatient to see my wife, Miss? I'm eager to know how it will be now that the sleep is burst. And the children, too. I love them very much - I think." ²

The simple flashes of illumination are not sufficient to achieve the goal of social concern. But he has reached a stage where all worldly distinctions, wealth, heritance, status and family now no longer look decorations but means of sustenance. He has known that even in the midst of sufficiency man can satisfy his metaphysical anguish by discarding the bourgeois idea of the autonomy of the individual mind. He can be what he is not.

1. Ibid., p. 284

2. Ibid., p. 335