CHAPTER-III

- HERZOG

- MR.SAMMLER'S PLANET
Herzog (1964)

Herzog is a book about a man's arriving at new awareness that it is by discarding the outmoded romantic concept of self as propounded by the modern philosophies - nihilism and romanticism - that man can unburden his 'puzzling and disagreeable self' of its monstrous subjectivity. Fearing the ruthless assault of the oppressive forces of cynicism, fraud, betrayal, infidelity and primitive moral anarchy on his humanity, the protagonist, chooses to seek a temporary withdrawal from the collective life of mankind and take refuge in the realm of privacy which, ironically, incurs alienation from the self and society. But soon the life of 'proud subjectivity', being shut out from the social realities proves disheartening and the protagonist develops predominantly an intellectual and moral approach to life to find a place for himself by establishing a personal identity and maintain an honest integrity of self without the loss of his moral and intellectual humanism.

The novel opens with Herzog's strolling in his big dilapidated country house at Ludewiyke. His opening words, "If I am out of my mind, it's all right with me" show that he is passing through a critical stage in life which at once gets reflected in his physical conditions and the state of mind: he looks pale, weak and distracted. But soon the mist begins to roll away when we learn about his
state of isolation and estrangement from his family including his son, brothers and sisters and his two divorced wives, Daisy and Madeleine, who betrayed his love for a friend of his, Gersbach, to the extremes that the two (Madeleine and Gersbach) spread rumours about the collapse of Herzog's sanity and the novelist's interrogative stance, 'was it true?' is ambivalent. Even the doctor and the lawyers play false and all this suggests that the self has withdrawn from "the collective and historical progress of mankind." To evade the agony and bitterness born of such a life of emptiness, he undertakes the assignment to teach adult-education classes in New York night school. There he happens to meet an elderly but otherwise a handsome looking woman, Ramona, who provides him comfort in moments of despair. He also learns about his quick shiftings from place to place and writing letters to record his experiences which he never delivers. The letters are a way of relieving the accumulating pressures on his mind; also they are part of his vast attempt to take stock, understand and clarify... they do not help him to come to terms with the dizzying clutter of his life and times, but also serve as a means whereby he can disburden himself of that clutter."

And thus the letters are more relevant than the real happenings to know about Herzog's life. If they tell about his moral confusions and acute personal crises, issuing from

2. Tony Tanner, Saul Bellow, Edinburgh and London: Oliver and Boyd, 1965, p. 95
Ludeyville under the moral and social impulses initiated by Vinoba Bhave. "I read of your work in the Observer and at the time thought I'd like to join your movement. I've always wanted very much to lead a moral, useful and active life. I never knew where to begin. One can't become Utopian."  

In the first few pages Bellow concentrates on Herzog's intellectual accomplishments and especially his Ph.D. thesis and the book, *Romanticism and Christianity*. The project is a subtle study of essential contradiction in man, of his conflict between the mind and the heart clashing in "heavy silence." He is caught between the opposing armies of sanity and madness, of the physical and the spiritual and action and passivity. But the crisis is not such as he cannot surmount. He has not been able to project a coherent view of the social ideas of the romantics, nor is he drawn to the idea of "objective research" as initiated by Hegel's dialectics. So long as he continues to be a passive victim of his romantic tendencies that he has a unique heart and its urges be fulfilled, he will not be able to integrate his self into a "social coherance." The consciousness is not passive, it has the moral urgency to discover a positive relationship between the mind and the heart; "What this country needs is a good five-cent synthesis." 2 One reason of Herzog's frustrations and failures

1. Herzog, p. 48
2. Ibid., p. 207
could be the cramping impact of too much information and academic pursuits on his sensibility and as such he is internally assailed by self doubts whether his existence has any social relevance. Like Augie, he comes in contact of a battalion of machiavellians who are the representative forces of nihilism and pessimism in the society. He calls them 'reality instructors', they are out to impose their own cynical version of reality and pattern of life on him. The list includes, strangely enough, a student of his, Geraldine Portnoy, who explains him the simple dynamics of Madeleine's desertion. The interest lies in whether Herzog understands the mechanics of their manipulations and is capable to mould them according to his needs and fulfil the cherished goal 'to be human'.

The juxtaposition of the past and present is symbolic of the contradictory challenges of life but adds to the artistry of the book in that the device partly depicts Herzog's turmoil and suffering which Bellow feels necessary to instigate him to overcome the evil in himself and rise beyond it to reveal the greatness of man. He confronts the Hamletian dilemma of existence - "Do I want to exist or want to die?" ¹ - but it is the philosophy of social concern, promise and hope, not of despair and nihilism that illuminates his thought-process. The spell of romantic delusions continue

¹. Ibid., p. 96
to frustrate his precise view of social reality. It is the love of his kids and the fulfilment of social obligations he realises, that creates sense of human dignity and a balanced view of life, even in moments of crisis and man's encounter with the forces of negation of life. "Now the first requirement of stability in a human being was that the said human being should really desire to exist. This is what Spinoza says. It is necessary for happiness (felicitas). He can't behave well (bene agere), or live well (bene vivere), if he himself doesn't want to live."

What actually happens in the novel outside Herzog's narration of the past experience is synchronised into five days' span of time. Outside his notes and letters which are more important to tell about his life at its various levels of existence, the real happenings powerfully dramatise the conflict between his private world of monstrous subjectivity and the impersonal senseless nature of the outside world whose strange ways have challenged his sanity. For example, the incidents, like, his leaving Madeleine and meeting Ramona, a business woman - student enrolled in evening course, his visit to Vineyard Haven to seek refuge, followed

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1. Ibid., p. 96
by a quick return to New York, his chance visit to court room where the main proceedings of the four cases are under trial, his decision to return to Chicago carrying his father's gun to murder Madeleine and her lover and the change of heart to see Gersbach give a tender bath to his daughter, his getting involved in an accident and the subsequent arrest and release from the police custody and at the end his decision to retire to Ludeyville where he is seen lying down on the same Recamier sofa brooding over his predicament with "no messages for any one. Nothing. Not a single word"¹ constitute the text and the design of the novel.

The impression imprinted on our mind after going through the text of these imaginary letters is about, no doubt, the overwhelming crisis confronting Herzog in the present and has made a mess of his life in the past, but outside it, they show that his level of intellectual capabilities is deteriorating to the degrees that even during the lectures the chain of argument often gets disrupted, to the dismay of the students, and one can readily discern that he is to overcome the trauma and haunting shadows of the past and the resultant slough of despair. He is not wholly freed from the responsibilities to create the present state of dereliction and helplessness in life. For example,

¹. Ibid., p. 341
if Madeleine has proved a brute force in her acts of ingratitude and infidelity, it is 'quid-pro-quo' in that the insult and indignities which Herzog inflicted on Daisy, the same he receives in return with interest from Madeleine. And thus, on the advice of his psychiatrist, Dr. Edwig that for some time he should leave the town, Herzog borrows money from his brother and after taking some time to take leave from his professional duties goes to Europe to restore stability and balance. Here starts the period of letter writing.

Herzog passes through a series of encounters and experiences with the nature of reality which show him a socially misfit but they culminate in clearing his mind of all confusion and distraction. Herzog during the moments of crisis craves for justification and sympathy from others but what he gets instead is callousness and betrayal which precipitate the situation he finds himself in. That is, he has the basic goodness of heart which for want of employment and freedom is rendered worthless. This is a powerful attestation of his sense of humanity which comes on the fore during moments of self examination. Analysing the situation, he asks:

"What good, what lasting good in there in me? Is there nothing else between birth and death but what I can get out of this perversity - only a favourable balance of disorderly emotions? No freedom? Only impulses? And what about all the good I have in my heart - doesn't it mean anything? Is it simply a joke? A false hope that makes a man feel the illusion of worth?"

1. Ibid., p. 207
Bellow, like a black humour novelist, does not reject the materialistic epistemology and believes as Marx proposes that all the mental constructs are the product of material circumstances, all value orientation correspond to the socio-economic system and forms of consciousness - art, literature, culture, philosophy, social and moral codes which are closely related with the class that rules. With this lucidity of reasoning Herzog dismisses the supposed wisdom and philosophy of conduct of these 'reality instructors' as mere manifestation of a paranoid view of contemporary social turmoil that characterised the temper of the 'sixties'. What is significant is not that Herzog submits to the mechanism of the reality instructors, but that what they do to influence his private life is at once manifest. The list includes social philosophers, existentialist thinkers, historians and important personalities of the past and present such as Rousseau, Spinoza, Kierkegaard, Vinoba Bhave, Nehru, Montaigne, Pascal, Professor Hocking. They aim at reinterpreting and altering history and consciousness in the light of their respective theories and intellectual formulations which Herzog, on application of these assumptions in the context of his personal life and evolution of moral awareness, finds wanting. The new theories and ideas of the post-modernistic tendencies in art, culture, philosophy and moral conduct he feels, want to change the outlook on life of the contemporary man. Herzog's observations in regard to
his dissatisfaction with the modern philosophies in life. They are also a sort of running commentary on his thought process ranging from abnormal state of mind to wisdom of life. Even in moments of despair and schizophrenia, he craves for order and thinks of doing some good for humanity which clearly shows that the self has taken a leap beyond the two modes of existence, en-soi and pour-soi, and is now fully awakened to the realisation that there is the existence of the Other and that reality is determined in terms of the quality of "relation of my being to the being of the Other." And thus the real direction of the book is toward the depiction of Herzog as a man who has battled against the contemporary paranoid view of social turmoil and developed consciousness to live with the monstrous realities of the world around him.

In the words of the novelist Herzog "felt confident cheerful, clairvoyant and strong" which shows that the self has gone beyond "stillness' and 'stirring' and the uppermost interest is the good of humanity as it has known. The word 'confident' is indicative of Herzog's developing a positivistic philosophy of life fully grounded in norms of morality. That is why he feels concern about the well-being of the 'have nots' and can find a place in the human community without which he cannot be called human. This finds expression in his readiness to donate his house in

1. Being and Nothingness, p. 303
these new-fashioned ideas, his criticism and support (which are Bellow's own) are expressed through his notes and letters which ultimately become the authentic comments on his personal life and his miserable and dismal alienated self. The advice and instructions as advanced by these characters create confusion in place of clarity of vision - such as Ramona's advice about his little daughter does not correspond to the advice of Geraldin in his frightful letter that it is not safe to leave the child in the company of psychopaths and the perverted individuals. And thus Herzog, much to his puzzlement, thinks of them and discuses against his will about the fraud, deceit and all sorts of evil of Madeleine, Zelda, Gersbach and his wife Phobe, the lawyer Sander Himmelstein and Dr. Edvig. They all grow impatient to mould and fashion Herzog's life upon their own philosophies and ideas:

"Against his will, like an addict struggling to kick the habit, he would tell again how he was swindled, conned, manipulated, his savings taken, driven into debt, his trust betrayed by wife, friend, physician."  

In the evolution of moral consciousness and its social implications the part played by these reality instructors' is positive in the sense that their obnoxious manipulations may not visibly succeed in shaping Herzog's speculations and thought-process but certainly they bring illumination so as to make him come closer to comprehending the nature of

1. Ibid., p. 156
evil and evolving a philosophy of life to live with it without ever losing his humanity and sanity. The deception and false, which his second lawyer Simkin plays on Herzog is a case in point, outside what others do to hoodwink him outright and impose their pattern of life on him. Simkin knows about the drama of infidelity going on between Madeleine and Valentine Gersbach but he never gives a hint of it to Herzog. Instead, under the professional greed he deceives him to file a suit against his ex-wife and incites him to wreck revenge on Gersbach, which is a sordid trick to add more to his miseries. Likewise, Sander Himmelstein, a Chicago lawyer, is in league with Madeleine to protect her interest in utter disregard to Herzog's wretchedness. His seriousness can be well surmised when instead of discussing the legal aspect of the case involving its intricacies and implications, he talks of offering an insurance policy to cover the risk of the kids: "If you get sick, have an accident, lose an eye, even if you go nuts, Junie will be protected."¹ When Sander tells Herzog that he will have no trouble from Madeleine because she will soon get married and claim no alimony, his dubious designs come on the fore. The way he defends Madeleine's morals in her relation to others including his own, is a fine illustration of his subscribing to a unique set of moral norms and code of conduct. Herzog tells:

¹. Ibid., p. 85
"You're a lunatic. And I known what she is."
"What do you mean - she's less of a whore than most. We're all whores in this world, and don't you forget it. I know damn well I'm a whore. And you're an outstanding shnook, I realise. At least the eggheads tell me so. But I bet you a suit of clothes you're a whore, too."¹

It is strange that all Sander Himmelstein's instructions to Herzog are dictated by Madeleine which speaks of the comicality of such a serious profession like law. It is further debased by his grotesquity when he threatens to discontinue the case if he (Herzog) does not value his advice in the case. His trick of creating scare that when he is out of the case, the shysters will take over him and Madeleine's lawyers will not spare him speaks of the callousness of a man of law stooping to any demeaning and acquisitive trickestering to grab money. Sander grows hysteric and screams,

"They'll kill you."
"Sandor, quit this."
"Put you over a barrel. Tear your hide off."
Herzog held his ears. "I can't stand it."
"Tie your guts in knots. Sonofabitch. They'll put a meter on your nose, and charge you for breathing. You'll be locked up back and front. Then you'll think about death. You'll pray for it. A coffin will look better to you than a sports car."
"But I didn't leave Madeleine."
"I've done this to guys myself."
"What harm did I do her."
"The court doesn't care. You signed papers - did you read them?"
"No, I took your word."
"They'll throw the book at you in court. She's the mother - the female. She's got the tits. They'll crush you."²

¹. Ibid., pp. 85-86
². Ibid., pp. 87-88
Fearing Sander's threat of the shysters and his 'getting out of the case' after he has managed to obtain signatures on the relevant papers in good faith, Herzog feels ruffled and thus to humour Sandor he agrees to act under his advice. He even gets willing to be bullied into taking the insurance policy which at the moment shows his instability and lack of confidence.

Similar is the stance of Dr. Edvig, the psychiatrist who is a moral pervert, he is bowled over by Madeleine's charms to thoroughly exploit Herzog's goodness. Since Madeleine wants to get rid of Herzog, she asks Dr. Edvig to suggest him (Herzog) that he should leave the town to restore health and sanity whereas the diagnosis was that "I was not off my rocker. Simply a reactive-depressive."¹ And Madeleine herself being a case of overambitiousness can easily outwit the psychiatrist as she did even an intellectual like Herzog by the sheer force of her brilliance and charm:

"Madeleine's ambition was to take my place in the learned world. To overcome me. She was reaching her final elevation, as queen of the intellectuals, the castiron bluestocking. And your friend Herzog writhing under this sharp elegant heel."²

Dr. Edvig acts as a trickster and swindler and thus, while teaching Herzog reality, is discovered to be a masochist who can declare any patient crazy provided such a diagnosis

1. Ibid., p. 53
2. Ibid., p. 76
gratifies his machiavellian greed. He gives religious sanctions to Madeleine's criminal dealings, as the incomplete letter tells in which she is addressed as 'saint' where as her saint-hood gets reflected in her sending Herzog's photo to the police (after he leaves the town) warning that if he ever sets foot on her porch, even to see his daughter, he should be arrested.

"But I would like to know how you decided that she is deeply religious.... Madeleine, your patient, told you what she liked. You knew nothing. You know nothing. She snowed you completely. And you fell in love with her yourself, didn't you? Just as she planned. She wanted you to help her dump me. She would have done it in any case. She found you, however, a useful instrument. As for me, I was your patient...."1

Of Herzog's reality instructors, Valentine Gersbach is the most repulsive specimen of humanity. Bellow has drawn him with a touch of sureness. He is responsible for destroying the conjugal harmony and bliss of Herzog since he happens to be very close to the family to the extent that all their secrets, including their sexual life and the growing mistrust between the husband and wife are known to him. We are told that in matters of personal crisis Gersbach acts as intermediary and that provides him opportunities to come in Madeleine's confidence with whom he later develops extra-marital relations. During such moments of nearness, his hatred of Herzog and the defending attitude to Madeleine's hedonism becomes manifest. For

1. Ibid., pp. 64 -65
example, when Herzog tells a tale of Madeleine's perverted intellect how she ransacked the library and collected some Russian books to raise a wall in the bedroom between the two, partly to suggest her infidelity and partly to remind Herzog of the painful history of the Jew's persecution by the Russians. Gersback changes colours. His indictment of Herzog that he is an avoider of responsibilities, is no doubt, a very interesting romantic twist of a lover's fancy:

"There's your mistake! Right there - she can't bear that nagging, put-upon tone. If you expect me to help straighten this out, I've got to tell you. You and she - it's no secret from anybody - are the two people I love most. So I must warn you, chaver, get off the lousy details. Just knock off all chicken shit, and be absolutely level and serious." ..."If you don't level with me, I can't do a frigging thing for you."

"Why shouldn't I level with you?" Moses was astonished by this vehemence, by Gersbach's fierce, glowing look.

"You don't. You're damn evasive." 1

The subtlety of mechanism of Gersbach as a reality instructor is too complex for Herzog to comprehend - he can make evil look so fascinating so as to deceive even the sharpest eye which becomes manifest when he brings books of Martin Buber for Herzog to study. The intention is to throw the spiritual colour over his sexual relations with Madeleine in the name of teaching him Buber's philosophy.

"I'm sure you know the views of Buber. It is wrong to turn a man (a subject) into a thing (an object). By means of spiritual dialogue, the I-It relationship

1. Ibid., p. 59
becomes an I-Thou relationship. God comes and goes in man's soul. And men come and go in each other's souls. Sometimes they come and go in each other's beds, too. You have dialogue with a man. You have intercourse with his wife."

Of the women 'reality-instructors' who damaged Herzog's power of intellect and the core of self, Madeleine, his ex-wife, is a reflection of man's illusory idea of happiness and romantic adoration of body. She is beautiful and brilliant and anyone who happens to come in her contact is instantly drawn to her hasty and deceitful charms. The truth about her is partly revealed through the technique of indirection. When Herzog visits his aunt Zelda, he finds that Madeleine has already poisoned her mind against him because the two are very close to each other. If Herzog finds Madeleine a 'sick and diseased woman', so she finds Herzog, a dictator, a regular tyrant' which does not exonerate him from the responsibilities of creating a calamitous situation he feels he is trapped in. Aunt Zelda defends Madeleine's seriousness of purpose when he calls her 'Junk' and enlists his romantic follies.

"You have your faults too. I'm sure you won't deny that."
"How could I?"
"Overbearing, gloomy. You brood a lot."
"That's true enough."
"Very demanding. Have to have your own way. She says you wore her out, asking for help, support."
"It's all correct. And more. I'm hasty, irascible, spoiled. And what else?"
"You've been reckless about women."  

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1. Ibid., p. 64
2. Ibid., p. 38
Herzog's own studies on the modern trends in various schools of thoughts and philosophies has brought discontent since he finds the image of man as projected by them partly valid. And that is why his study came to ending with the growing of new outlook on life "showing how life could be lived by renewing universal connections; overturning the last of the Romantic errors about the uniqueness of the Self; revising the old Western, Faustian ideology; investigating the social meaning of Nothingness." But it is Herzog's academic pursuits which are to a certain extent responsible for the failure of their marriage; he remains buried in the project, virtually leaving Madeleine as a prisoner in the house with no one to talk to or share company with except Valentine Gersback and his wife Phobe. Herzog attempts to work on the theme of human freedom and put it in right perspective that freedom is 'a howling emptiness' if it is not rooted in the philosophy of social concern. In the dream of human happiness the idea of self development and self realization remains a lunatic's fancy if they are interpreted from the standpoint of pure subjective self. Herzog is conscious of this dismal fantasy in his own self and the part it plays in self realization. When he makes a self examination objectively the truth is revealed to him. "Ah poor fellow!... He too could smile at Herzog and despise him. But there still remained the fact. I am Herzog. I have to be that man. There is no one else

1. Ibid., p.39
to do it. After smiling, he must return to his own Self and see the thing through."¹

Bellow creates a touch of beastliness in Madeleine's personality by projecting her as a hungry lioness moving in search of prey from person to person in order to gratify her romantic and vulgar day dreamings and when the heat of passion and interest in a person evaporates she betrays him to sleep in someone else's nest. Her angry outpourings to Herzog significantly support this idea. "What makes you think I intend to have a lifelong affair with you? I want some action." Herzog's individuality has been crushed, he has been robbed of his name, scholarly reputation, material prosperity and when he as a wronged husband is left with nothing to humour her bohemianistic impulses she moves to Gersbach who himself is blind to the ironic implications of this impious union.

It is at Madeleine's humour that Herzog buys an old house in the Berkshires and spends on its renovation the small fortune which he inherited from his father. He even relinquishes his post of professorship of international repute but soon Madeleine's beastly traits raise their head to batter down Herzog's humanity. Her feelings of boredom and disenchantment (though there seems to be little to make her feel so) brings a somersault in their affair: she considers herself too young, vital and sociable to be

¹. Ibid., pp. 66-67
buried in the remote Berkshires: she asks Herzog to leave for Chicago along with the Gersbachs. But what ironically Chicago brings to Herzog is divorce and the felt-intensity of this shattering experience is too painful to bear with. But Herzog's responsibility in the creation of such an unpleasant episode is material in that he acts under the impulsive overrides of a strange heart so as to make himself look a 'marvellous Herzog' in Madeleine's eyes and win her because she otherwise would never marry 'a plain, unambitious Herzog'.

Herzog makes an admission of his moral distraction and the failed endeavours that the mismanagement of affairs owes to the uniqueness of heart which gets exemplified in feelings of boredom and dissatisfaction he develops with Daisy, his first wife, and then with another young Japanese woman, Sono Oguki, whom he later deserted for Madeleine. The changing pattern of Herzog's relations with the women is symbolic of man's disillusionment at the level of emotions and intellect. Seeing that people around him are critical of his moral stance, Herzog is caught in a maze whether to give explanations of his conduct and social dealings to everyone. As a matter of fact during this phase of moral disenchantment when the 'being' loses direction in the dark tunnel of the libido, Herzog is unable to arrive at the genesis of overlustfulness and overambitiousness in man in general and in his own life in particular. He reflects,
"Was it a point of honor to explain myself to everyone? But how could I explain? I myself didn't understand, didn't have a clue."

Herzog met Sono in her West Side Apartment in New York. As a young girl, Sono lived for sometime in Paris during the war, the West "had spoiled her for life in Tokyo" and thus her rich parents sent her to study design in New York. She is an agnostic and unsure about faith. She is willing to share Herzog's communism provided he himself is true to its ideology and shows allegiance. The "untidy green sheets", the "rippled mattress" and "everything in disorder" in the bedroom speak of her disorderly unsettled pattern of life. Herzog's ordeal in her luxurious apartment reminds us of a questing knight but Herzog's quest is "for life giving pleasures" which he feels will solve for him "the puzzle of the body (curing himself of the fatal disorder of worldliness which rejects worldly happiness, this Western plague, this mental leprosy)."

Sono in fact represents the sensual nature in man and its enslavement leaves Herzog on verge of sadness and guilt that makes him 'look oriental'. Herzog for sometime was shacked up with Sono but soon he realised that she would not "answer my purpose. Not serious enough'.

1. Ibid., p.167
2. Ibid., p. 170
3. Ibid., p. 103
Equally is the tale of fanciful relations between Herzog and Daisy, the mother of his son. There is little illumination in Herzog's mind that his desertion of Daisy would further complicate and make his predicament blighter and it is natural when human mind is overwhelmed by haziness and fanciful notions of love. Herzog cannot fully appreciate human qualities in Daisy such as stability, order, contentment which, in his own words, are Daisy's strength. Polina, Daisy's mother, is introduced as the moral reflector. The old puritanical Tolstoin lady chastises and warns Herzog of the evil consequences of life of erotic pleasures which has the echo of Mephistophilean warning to Faustus of purgatorial flames and eternal damnation. The words 'outcast - dissolute' are like fiery flames to bring to his mind the illumination that Herzog has to cast aside the fiendishness to make life socially meaningful. Polina asks, "Well, what about it?" ... "First one woman and then another, then another. Where will it end? You can't abandon a wife, a son for these women - whores."\footnote{Ibid., p. 167} Herzog turns indifferent to filial affections and responsibility, being unaware of the ironic implications that his desertion of Daisy will pervert vision and destroy the warmth of human love.

Herzog's placement by Bellow in a brutally mechanised and consumerist world is a part of the strategy of the book
to make him conscious of the moral imperfections of his divided self that denies meaning in life. For want of this precise realization, life verges on sickness, hunger, want and spiritual deprivation.

Herzog finally turns to Ramona Donsell which is a sequel to seeking comfort in moments of brooding despair and exhaustion born of his irrational and emotional self in a bid to gain stability and real happiness in life through 'outer sources'. He shows bewilderment over this abominable submission to the urges of the flesh and in moments of relaxation castrates himself which is a sort of illumination to rise above the brutal mundane realities of the physical self and activate himself to do something practical for the good of man. Ramona like Herzog is a person who has seen much of world's ugliness and its fever and fret but now in her mid-thirties she is looking for a husband. She is not young but looks attractive and thus her attitude to deal with the crucial problems assailing Herzog's mind is different from the other reality-instructors. Herzog, she realises, is a case of disillusioned self who has lost faith in his own humanity under the painful blows of life. He is made to believe that he is like a used commodity item which, while no longer in use, is cast away like a piece of garbage. Ramona intends to pull Herzog out from this quagmire of lostness so as to make him live life of social commitment.
and obligations. She says,

"It just isn't true."... "What do you mean?"

"I know something about men. As soon as I saw you I realized how much of you was unused. Erotically Untouched, even."

"I've been a terrible flop at times. A total flop."

"There are some men who should be protected... by law, if necessary."¹

Ramona has recently sought divorce from Harold and needs a divergence she suggests Herzog to go to Montauk where she owns a big house, where the two can stay together during the summer. This is a plain gesture of awakening Herzog to the value of the humanising power of human contact which can reenergise his masculinity and retrieve faith in the value of reciprocity.

"One can have a marvelous time there. And you really ought to get some cheerful summer clothes. Why do you wear such drab things? You still have a youthful figure."

"I lost weight last winter, in Poland and Italy."

"Nonsense - why talk like that! You know you're a good looking man. And you even take pride in being one. In Argentina they'd call you macho-masculine."²

When Herzog talks of going back to Chicago intending to take away his daughter from the unlawful incarceration of Madeleine and Gersbach Ramona dissuades him from going to Chicago since it could create a masochistically humiliating situation. The advice is highly pragmatic but Ramona's pragmatism has hardly moral sanction, not because it is not founded upon the ethics of the utilitarian attitude to human

¹. Ibid., p. 197
². Ibid., p. 15
relations but that she disapproves of his idea of self sacrifice which, if misconstrued, becomes a disvalue.

"Listen, Moses, it's no disgrace to be practical. Is it a point of honor or something, not to think clearly? You want to win by sacrificing yourself? It doesn't work, as you ought to know by now. Chicago would be a mistake. You'd only suffer."

"Perhaps, and suffering is another bad habit."

"Are you joking?"

"Not at all," he said.

"It's hard to imagine a more masochistic situation. Everybody in Chicago knows your story by now. You'd be in the middle of it. Fighting, arguing, getting hurt. That's too humiliating for a man like you. You don't respect yourself enough. Do you want to be torn to pieces? Is that what you're offering to do for little June?"

Herzog temporarily responds to Ramona's sexual advances, perhaps sharing her belief in the healing power of the physical self opposed to the spiritual, "The body is a spiritual fact, that sinstrument of the soul", but her concept of physical-spiritual relationship seems to be a dangerous temptation to Herzog's moral sensibility which "can only lead to more high-minded mistakes." And therefore what is significant from the standpoint of social morality is not how or why Herzog is drawn to Ramona but the continuing feelings of discontent with such a pattern of life which would deprive the being of its essence. This finds expression in a letter he writes to Ramona because he has little courage to speak to her face:

1. Ibid., p. 195
2. Ibid., p. 209
"You are a great comfort to me.... It's true. I have a wild spirit in me though I look meek and mild. You think that sexual pleasure is all this spirit wants, and since we are giving him that sexual pleasure, then why shouldn't everything be well?" 1

Bellow alludes to Shelley's painful but otherwise illuminating utterance, "I fall upon the thorns of life, I bleed," to reveal the truth of reality to Herzog and impress upon his mind the significance of man's responsibilities in the creation of such a situation where he has no alternative but to fall upon the thorns of life and bleed to death as a result of the misconceived obsession of self introduced by the votaries of romanticism in the western thought.

Herzog's contact with and critique of the modern tendencies in art, philosophy and culture generates tension in place of clarity the genesis of which is the obsession of selfhood and strange behaviour. There is a gap between what he feels about their moral implications in real life situations and the pattern of life they intend to offer to man in context of his personal life experience and intellectual development. Bellow's use of the technique of indirection to create moral consciousness in Herzog is apt to suggest how the sight of humanity begets humanity. Feeling gingerly, Herzog moves to Chicago with sure intention to rescue his daughter June from the confinement of Madeleine and her lover but what he discovers there, contrary to his expectations, is a "scene that goes far to dispel his mistaken

1. Ibid., p. 16
pretension of self and his misinformed idea of his relation to other."¹ When Herzog sees Gersbach wash his daughter so tenderly the feelings of animosity get thawed which shows that the self is purged of those immoral tendencies which Madeleine and Gersbach represent. The social implications of the episode bring release of the self from the dark forces which have been by now imprisoning the self. He arrives at a new understanding that man can overcome the inadequacies and affirm life through acceptance. The realization is apparent. "And terrible forces in me, including the force of admiration or praise, powers, including loving powers, very damaging, making me almost an idiot because I lacked the capacity to manage them."²

However, Herzog has become fully conversant with the positive and negative implications of the modernistic approach to life. He has developed a moral outlook founded on the philosophy of collective good of humanity. "I wilfully misread my concept. I never was the principle, but only on loan to self." But now henceforth he will "stop asking people for advice and help. That in itself might change the picture."³ And thus, under such moral conditioning of the self Herzog sets out to reorchestrate the entire philosophy of life by abdicating the illusory notion of self to overcome the dread of death and sincerely try to make a place in the human community. In this context his letter to

¹. Robert R. Dutton, Saul Bellow, p. 129
². Herzog, p. 326
³. Ibid., p. 225
Professor Mermelstein is significant. "No more of that for me - no, no! I am simply human being, more or less." He has learnt, that the urge 'to be human' can be realised only by accepting the limitations life imposes on man and sharing responsibilities with the outer world complaining nothing of the evil existing in the world. He is fully alive to the risk caused by his stupidity and subjective thinking but now he is determined to see that "subjective monstrosity must be overcome, must be corrected by community, by useful duty." Now he shares Luke's concern for animal life as well. Luke's sadness over the death of his monkey becomes his grief and sadness. Viewed in the total context of humanity, even Madeleine's betrayal now no longer seems an act of treason in love, his attitude to her is transformed as becomes illustrative in his confession to Phoebe, Gersbach's wife. "I don't even loathe her much any more. And she's welcome to all she chiseled from me....I bless her. I wish her a busy, useful, pleasant, dramatic life. Including love." Bellow's insightful comments on Herzog's state of mind is revealing: Herzog takes leave of Phoebe after the talk. "There was a softer kindliness in Herzog's expression, not often seen. Rather awkwardly he took Phoebe's hand, and she could not move fast enough to avoid his lips. He drew her closer and kissed her on the head." The gesture is a display of his spontaneous affection for another person, for the self other

1. Ibid., p.219
2. Ibid., p.263
3. Ibid., p.264
than his own which is a sufficient hint to show that the self proceeds from self discovery to social concern. "He could share with rats too and all the while, one corner of his mind remained open to the external world."\(^2\)

The world of nightmarish existence is over. His long intellectual odyssey ends with the renewed zest for living a different pattern of life after retirement when he settles on the farmhouse. He can now get all the genesis of the Kierkegaardian notion of despair and absurdity and equally the waste-landish atmosphere of Eliot. Heidegger's notion of man falling into quotidian is no more baffling as the letter he writes to him explains: "Dear Doktor Professor Heidegger, I should like to know what you mean by the expression "the fall into the quotidian." When did this fall occur? Where were we standing when it happened?\(^2\) The other similar letters he has written to Shapiro shows his rejection of such an outlook on life which encourages inauthenticity and alienation of self.

"The canned sauerkraut of Spengler's "Prussian Socialism", the commonplaces of the Wasteland outlook, the cheap mental stimulants of Alienation, the cant and rant of pipsqueaks about Inauthenticity and Forlornness. I can't accept this foolish dreariness."\(^3\)

The tendency to write notes and letters is replaced by more socially useful creative activities such as painting

1. Ibid., p. 2
2. Ibid., p. 49
3. Ibid., pp. 74-75
of a piano for the child and visiting his son, Marco, on Parents Day. The idea to change the house into a sort of family resort is the manifestation of human longing having their social significance. This eagerness 'to be human' has radically transformed his attitude to life as finds reflection in his broodings over life experiences objectively, lying on the Recamier sofa. The idea to "live out marvellous qualities vaguely comprehended" and trying to be a 'marvellous Herzog' is no longer a romantic wishfulness. He is content to be just 'a plain, unambitious Herzog' - Moses E. Herzog - who will not turn to others for protection or for explanation of what he feels, lacks human character and involvement.

"But what do you want, Herzog?" "But that's just it - not a solitary thing. I am pretty well satisfied to be, to be just as it is willed, and for as long as I may remain in occupancy."1

However, while taking the little child around Herzog is involved in a minor automobile accident and is arrested for carrying the big, nickel-plated pistol to be quixotic. When Herzog and June are carried in the squad car for prosecution the 'tearless clouded' face of the child makes him reflect over man's inhumanity to man and the perversity of the vicious forces which have bulldozed the civilization in the past to warn man that "By yourself you can't determine which reality is real?"2 Strange thoughts about God's criminality and death being the only reality rise in his mind.

1. Ibid., p.340
2. Ibid., p.287
"But what is the philosophy of this generation? Not God is dead,... Perhaps it should be stated Death is God. This generation thinks... that nothing faithful, vulnerable, fragile can be durable or have any true power."  

However Herzog is bailed out by his brother, Will. He retires to Berkshires to settle into his long-abandoned house. Repetition of the sentence, "If I am out of my mind, it's all right with me", is no more misleading. It shows the moral nature of the existential discovery. Herzog has gained illumination about the existing natural order and man's consciousness of his placement in it. The "terrible forces" of the mind will no longer distract him from the path of social concern. The novelists' strategy to dramatize the change in Herzog's outlook on life is significant: as the flowers stay and prosper in nature, so man has to remain in nature which suggests the acceptance of its limitations for the attainment of the heightened state of consciousness. Herzog is freed from the impersonal threats as represented by the 'reality-instructors' inclined to crush his individuality.

"For perhaps the first time he felt what it was to be free from Madeleine. Joy! His servitude was ended, and his heart released from its grisly heaviness and encrustation. Her absence, no more than her absence itself, was simply sweetness and lightness of spirit."  

And thus the sustenance of the vital conflict between the 'emotional self' and the 'worldly realities' teaches Herzog, in the concluding lines, to move effectively towards gaining new forms of integration beyond the unsurmountable obstacles which, during the process of the growth of moral consciousness, have threatened his existence.

1. Ibid., pp. 289-90  
2. Ibid., p. 313
Mr. Sammler's Planet (1970)

Mr. Sammler's Planet is the second novel of the group to dramatize the protagonist's struggle against the forces of Fascism and Communism during the Nazi occupation in Poland and of capitalism in his own country and the ultimate rise of moral awareness to assert the inalienable worth of the individual and his right to participate in whatever the community might produce. The realization that unless man can 'erect himself' above his own self he cannot overcome the ignominies of life has both social and moral implication in the sense that it brings to the mind the significance of reciprocity in social dealings and the value of ceilling to the romantic separation of the self for the good of humanity. Artur Sammler, a man of seventy plus, with one eye damaged in war struggles to evolve Camusian lucidity for the discovery of meaning in life against a backdrop of the city of New York, where, it is told, his spirit feels suffocated by topsy-turvydom in morals that has polluted the entire stream of social life. Thus the warmth of human passion is congealed Sammler's philosophy of life that he evolves during the process provides him strength so as to enable him not to let the negativistic forces of life advocating the 'wretchedness' and the 'littleness' of man overwhelm that part of the moral being which constitutes the core of self. Nor does he feel enamoured of the cherished dream of the scientists founded on the technological progress that by way of transporting
man into the space for habitation he can be redeemed of evil. Science and technology has made a mess of this human world which has thrown mankind on verge of spiritual collapse and purposelessness in life. He develops a positive thinking that there is more beyond what is manifest to human eye, there is still hope for man to survive the assault of the forces of moral nihilism and absurdity on his 'being'. He fully discards the cult of the romantic adoration of instincts and impulses which in absence of limit disorient man's vision and leave him a disillusioned derelict, a wretched creature rotting in the hell of self indulgence, boredom and drudgery. What saves Sammler from this moral upheaval is his preoccupation with the shared ideals of humanity, a life of moral awareness and communitarian value-structures which, he feels, will make him attain that 'exquisite balance' and 'order within' and complete the assignment that he, as human being, is to fulfil in the society. The whole process of the attainment of moral consciousness is a sort of pilgrimage, analogous to Herzog's intellectual journey toward probing the ultimate mysteries of life to get at its moral truths.

The novel in the beginning shows Sammler living with his niece, Margotte Arkin, a widow of German nationality since her husband was killed three years ago in a plane crash. His daughter Shula who is an extension of the cult of hipsterism eating into the vitality of the West is also living with him and his nephew, Dr. Elya Gruner, who picked
up Sammler and Shula from the camp and brought them to America, is providing financial security to them. But soon Sammler moves away to a separate lodging and this action of his is okayed by Shula because it is not only the basic temperamental incompatibility and a generation gap between the two but chiefly it is her nasty and brutal sexuality that makes the old father feel highly disgusted. Shula gives a distorted account of her father's choice of living in separation that it is the nature of work - he has to complete the memoirs of H.G. Wells, that has made him "too tense to live with." The notes which he took to Poland in 1939 were destroyed during war - explosion and since he has to depend on his memory, separation is essential. But Sammler's memory is extraordinary, he can recollect what transpired between him and H.G. Wells, and what H.G. Wells said "about Lenin, Stalin, Mussolini, Hitler, world peace, atomic energy, the Open Conspiracy, the colonization of the planets." Therefore, the reproduction of the text needs moments of concentration and privacy so as to make the version an authentic document but not the sort of privacy and separation that Shula has projected. There could be a grain of truth in what Shula tells because Sammler, being the only son of a spoiled mother, developed a desire to be exceptional and reclusive in his early days. He later recollects amusingly that he coughed with a servant's hand.

2. Ibid., p. 29
on the mouth "to avoid getting germs on his own hand."

In his 'twenties' and 'thirties' while he was living in Great Russel Street, he studied English authors and subsequently came in contact with H.G. Wells and the Bloomsbury group of writers which ignited a spark of nobler aspirations in his mind to become an Anglophile intellectual Polish Jew and a man of culture. But what cut deeper to mould his sensibility were the family traits: "He and his mother had had a reputation for eccentricity, irritability in those days. Not compassionate people. Not easily pleased. Haughty."\(^1\) What later drastically overhauled Sammler's outlook on life were his experiences during the Second World War when the Nazis' occupied Poland. Sammler was a victim of the Nazi atrocities, his wife succumbed to the holocaust in Poland but he survived death, by hiding himself in a mausoleum, from very close quarters,

"So, for his part, it had happened that Sammler, with his wife and others, on a perfectly clear day, had had to strip naked. Waiting, then, to be shot in the mass grave.... Sammler had already that day been struck in the eye by a gun butt and blinded. In contraction from life, when naked, he already felt himself dead."\(^2\)

The trauma of this so near an encounter with death and war-brutalities in Poland crippled him emotionally and drove him to the point of insanity. For quite a long time he felt that "he was not necessarily human". During that

\(^1\) Ibid., p. 61

\(^2\) Ibid., p. 137
period he lost interest in his own self and developed highly pessimistic and negativistic view of life as he had no social relevance for the fellow creatures. But the contact with the mundane realities of the world in post-war period retrieved his faith in man - he felt he was 'human' again.

"In the human setting along with everyone else, among particulars of ordinary life he was human - and, in short, creatureliness crept in again. Its low tricks, its doggish hind-sniffing charm."1

Bellow introduces an episode involving violence to suggest how brutalities and callousness wrought by man on man robbed Sammler of his finer sensibilities and ultimately resulted in dehumanization. During this temporary stage of abnormality, Sammler killed a German straggler despite his appeal to take all his belongings and spare his life: "Don't kill me. Take the things."2 What does Bellow intend to work out? The Hemingway hero is violent to discover a meaning in life, Sammler's act of killing a stranger too is an attempt to comprehend the psychology of violence - violence as perpetrated with a design on man and the violence as man commits in a state of emotional instability caused by anti-human forces. Bellow humanises Sammler's violence and savagery by way of drawing a line between the callous and inhuman killings by the Nazis' and of Sammler who did it under abnormal circumstances. On the part of the Nazis' it was a well-calculated "conspiracy against the sacredness of

1. Ibid., p. 117
2. Ibid., p. 139
Thus, Sammler's moral sense feels repelled by the political gimmicks of the Fascists who gave a moral sanction to camouflage their atrocities such as, the drowning of a poor prisoner in the latrine trench in the camp and none daring to come out for his rescue. And therefore, Sammler has developed a realization that any political ideology of system is simple exhibition of someone's meglomaniacal stupidities if it has no regard for life's sacredness. That is why his idea and understanding of the communist revolution is disheartening for the ambiguity of its character; on the one hand, it boasts of its "triumph for justice in many ways—slaves should be free, killing toil should end" but, on the other hand, no one can lose sight of the "new kinds of grief and misery" that it has added to pain and suffering in the world. Sammler discovers little to rationalise the instinct of killing and taking life. He had seen life taken during the Nazi operation and he himself, under the passion of perpetrating violence on the weak and the helpless, had also taken life which now seems to be a show of perversion and inhumanity to his moral sense. He even feels morally embarrassed at what the revolution has made of human privileges. Earlier taking life, was, he reflects, a princely privilege but now the common man enjoys the same by indulging in senseless violence and indiscriminate killings.

Sammler is equally conscious of the evils of capitalism in his own country, which takes on its propagandistic value

1. Ibid., p. 18
2. Ibid., p. 228
for success. It is advertised that America is the most desirable nation in the universe for its espousal of the humanistic ideals of Fraternity, Equality, Liberty and Justice. But how is it that it has not risen above the racial discrimination and religious and political prejudices? What he sees all around is disappointing - man's surrender to the romantic day-dreamings which is the root cause of evil in the contemporary world. His encounter with a huge negro pick-pocket on the River side bus, looking like an elegant prince is a fine illustration of the growing menace of disvalues ready to devour the essence of life. The act of picking pocket, though looks a crime of little magnitude, but it is microcosm of the macrocosmic manifestation of the general slump in morals in the West today:

"New York was getting worse than Naples or Salonika. It was like an Asian, an African town, from this standpoint. The opulent sections of the city were not immune. You opened a jeweled door into degradation, from hypercivilized Byzantine luxury straight into the state of nature, the barbarous world of color erupting from beneath. It might well be barbarous on either side of the jeweled door."¹

However, the seriousness of this moral offence seems to be nothing difficult to bear with for a man like Sammler who has survived the inconceivable hardships of life and man's show of beastliness in the past. Sammler can well comprehend the moral and psychological implications of this act of criminality and violence:

¹. Ibid., p. 7
"You had to be strong enough not to be terrified by local effects of metamorphosis, to live with disintegration, with crazy streets, filthy nightmares, monstrosities come to life, addicts, drunkards, and perverts celebrating their despair openly in midtown. You had to be able to bear the tangles of the soul, the sight of cruel dissolution. You had to be patient with the stupidities of power, with the fraudulence of business."¹

Sammler's encounter with the negro pick-pocket shows that the forces of crime, violence and moral anarchy are let loose to contaminate the moral life of the society. Man can withstand the menace of this scathing version of American reality by striking at its very genesis, thereby discovering the means to come to terms with it and some how to live by. When Sammler makes a report of the crime to the custodians of law, their response is very interesting and repugnant to uphold the dignity of their profession. He urges the police to immediately arrest the pickpocket and put a man on the bus so that the crime is not repeated:

"We have to catch him first."
"You should put a man on the bus."
"We haven't got a man to put on the bus. There are lots of buses, Art, and not enough men. Lots of conventions, banquets, and so on we have to cover, Art. VIPs and Brass. There are lots of ladies shopping at Lord and Taylor, Bonwit's, and Saks', leaving purses on chairs while they go to feel the goods."
"I understand. You don't have the personnel, and there are priorities, political pressures. But I could point out the man."
"Some other time."²

What a pity that things such as ensuring the security

1. Ibid., p. 74
2. Ibid., p. 13
of the VIP's and the ladies, or covering the conventions which pose no immediate threat to the public life are of primary interest to take care of than those sordid occurrences which are physically converting the city into a jungle! The pickpocket certainly did not represent the idea of a revolutionary, nor was he for the "black guerrilla warfare." He is, in fact, one demonical force of the jungle, playing havoc with the life of the honest people like Sammler in the society. Since Sammler has seen the negro take away the belongings of an old man and throw the empty bag away, the pickpocket fears that he (Sammler) might put him into trouble. And therefore, before any harm is done to him, he wants to initiate Sammler into the code of modern value-orientation by impressing upon his mind the risk involved in such matters. Following Sammler he enters the lobby of the building, pins him down against the wall and displays his organ with "mystifying certitude. Lordliness." 1 This shocking encounter, though outrageous to Sammler's moral sense is of little magnitude in comparison to what he has already experienced during war period, but it continues to fester his imagination to reflect as to what has made the poor negro to display his genitalia as a symbol of authority and whether he is to be blamed for it:

"What had that been about? It had given a shock. Shocks stimulated consciousness. Up to a point, true enough. But what was the object of displaying the genitalia?... At any rate, there was the man's organ, a huge piece of sex flesh, half-tumescent in its

1. Ibid., p. 50
positions, tripling, quadrupling, polymorphous, noble
in being natural, primitive, combining the leisure
and luxurious inventiveness of Versailles with the
hibiscus-covered erotic ease of Samoa.¹

Though there are scenes of horror, boredom, drudgery,
feverish sexual competition, and moral profligacy as created
by the votaries of the hip-morality in the name of keeping
their individuality intact, yet the victims are not aware of
implications as to where such a hedonistic view of life will
lead to. And the significance is that a system, so morally
infected, will hardly create any adverse impact on Sammler's
moral consciousness since such a cult of sex, crime,
v violence and disorder has taught him to come to terms with
this paranoid view of reality through acceptance of the
facts of existence as they are.

Bellow employs the similar narrative technique to
create a level of understanding and realisation in Sammler
so as to make him fulfil his assignment as an individual in
relation to the society: he introduces a galaxy of characters
who, like Herzog's 'reality instructors', represent the
various dimensions of evil so pervasive in the American
society. The list includes Sammler's widowed-niece, Margotte
and her cousin Walter Bruch, his daughter Shula, Angela,
his nephew's daughter, her brother Wallace and Sammler's
psychopathic son-in-law Eison. But since they are the
extension of the existing evil in man, Sammler, through his
shared view of life, is strong enough to survive the assault
of their bourgeois passion of sin on his moral sensibilities.

¹ Ibid., pp. 32-33
pride and shown in its own right, a prominent and separate object intended to communicate authority. As, within the sex ideology of these days, it well might. It was a symbol of superlegitimacy or sovereignty."

Such painful perceptions and the threat unleashed by the forces of laissez-faire doctrines in moral, Sammler fears, may make the world see another collapse - this crisis of cultural and moral values is killing the very spirit of the puritanical view of life and changing the 'dark satanic mills'. "The dreams of nineteenth-century poets polluted the psychic atmosphere of the great boroughs and suburbs of New York." Sammler is not blind to the impending moral catastrophe of the time when, much to his dismay, he sees the metropolitan populace of the big cities like New York, Amsterdam, London feel encouraged to adopt the sexual ways 'of the seraglio and of the congo bush'. The dark screwy vision of Sammler makes him envisage the coexistence of things of desperate nature. He sees

"...the increasing triumph of Enlightenment - Liberty, Fraternity, Equality, Adultery! Enlightenment, universal education, universal suffrage, the rights of the majority acknowledged by all governments, the rights of women, the rights of children, the rights of criminals, the unity of the different races affirmed, Social Security, public health, the dignity of the person, the right to justice - the struggles of three revolutionary centuries being won while the feudal bonds of Church and Family weakened and the privileges of aristocracy (without any duties) spread wide, democratized, especially the libidinous privileges, the right to be uninhibited, spontaneous, urinating, defecating, belching, coupling in all

1. Ibid., p. 55
2. Ibid., p. 33
The various traits of evil are manifested in the value-orientation of the members of the new generation, a race of wild bohemians and narcotized moral degenerates out to demand freedom, but ironically sharing no moral responsibilities involved in it and thus verging on a sort of affirmation of their anarchic self for its apparent lack of regard for humanity in wider context and moral sentiments. But since Sammler has developed a vision to come to terms with his own nature and the outer world he does not feel disheartened over this idea of romantic liberation of the self that violates limits of human decency. And thus, he powerfully advocates for a limit even in matters of moral responsibility for promoting the interest of mankind on this 'planet', the earth. He does not support the idea that by escaping away to the planned colonies on the new planets in the space, man can improve the quality of life he lives here on earth.

Sammler's reaction to the scientists thought of colonizing the surface of the moon speaks of his being alive to the evil let loose by the forces of disorientation on the earth but it is the consciousness of his own humanity that brings him closer to the acceptance of the value of social concern which man, despite all his frailities, can attain on this planet, the rest being all utopian fantasies. If on the one hand the instincts of power and acquisitiveness are alive to fulfil Faustian longings, there, on the other hand, we see the world go as usual with its goodness which shows
man's regard for a life of moral responsibilities, order and discipline. If it is so, why to destroy the bliss of life as lived on this planet in favour of the imaginary which is yet to be lived and experienced?

"Underneath there persists, powerfully too, a thick sense of what is normal for human life. Duties are observed. Attachments are preserved. There is work. People show up for jobs. It is extraordinary. They come on the bus to the factory. They open the shop, they sweep, they wrap, they wash, they fix, they tend, they count, they mind the computers. Each day, each night. And however rebellious at heart, however despairing, terrified, or worn bare, come to their tasks."

The quixotic idea of the scientists and the intellectuals like H.G. Wells and Dr. Govinda Lal - the dream to explore the possibilities of colonising the moon for the future of mankind-is a pure piece of science fiction, which at moments, can make an appeal to the sensibility of a person like Sammler but in terms of its moral and psychological implications the whole project looks a futile and ridiculous waste of human intellect. Sammler is sore at the ambiguity of the scientific and the technological progress in the sense that on the one hand, they have drastically changed man's material life, but on the contrary, they have converted him into an automaton, being robbed of his individuality and, therefore, this passion for cultivating the planets in the space, Sammler fears, will neither produce better human beings nor will it change human heart. Sammler is not blind to the demands of life, its ugliness and brutal

1. Ibid., p. 146
monstrosities, but what he favours and advocates is certainly a life of moral certainties, order and responsibilities on this earth in regard to the attainment of one's wished-for goal. And thus, he is against the collection of funds from the schools and the slums to spend on the space voyage, rather the moral exigencies is to deal with other human problems such as hunger, privation, want and sickness which raise their heads to engulf the niceties of life.

Could man's plantation on the moon be a rational answer of the intellectual to the problems confronting the West today? What is at the back of the scientist's dreaming of human inhabitation is perhaps the image of man, man re-born and regenerated, redeemed of evil on a virgin land but they are totally blind to the fact that, if people like Wallace (who have already signed up with Pan-Am) are to be transplanted on the moon, what will be the fate of mankind in general? The enormity of evil which can turn this human earth into an Inferno will outgrow there with much more intensity and alarm in absence of any moral check or fear:

"As for the world, was it really about to change? Why? How? By the fact of moving into space, away from earth? There would be changes of heart? There would be new conduct? Why, because we were tired of the old conduct? That was not reason enough. Why, because the world was breaking up?"

That is, the change of locale will not solve the problem unless there is the change of heart.

Dr. Lal's view of biological science and expectations

1. Ibid., p. 284
of the creation of a new world on the moon. (he thinks it is
a 'rational necessity') could have a backdrop of the sordid
show of man's inhumanity to man during the partition period
in India and, therefore, he, as a scientist, is well aware of
man's biological compulsions. One implication of which is
man's helplessness to overcome those proclivities which
make mind gravitate towards evil. He is also aware of the
technological progress of the time which can ensure man's
survival in the midst of the impending dangers but Sammler's
reason for preferring a life on earth is different. It is
on the earth that man can attain the vision of fulfilment
and not elsewhere in abstraction. The earth presents sights
of both good and evil but even then it is the right place to
cultivate what is essential to the good of total culture.
Sammler's flat denial to undertake the trip to the moon,
when Wallace asks if he would like to travel to the moon, has
moral significance in the sense that any planet being
peopled by the specimen of humanity, as Wallace is, would not
materialise the idea of human happiness and progress.
Rather, its very purity would get polluted. Wallace asks,

"What about you, would you take the trip, Uncle?"
"No."
"Because of your age, may be?"
"Possibly age. No, my travels are over."
"But the moon, Uncle! Of course you wouldn't
physically be able to do it; but a man like you? I
can't believe such a person wouldn't be raring to go."
"To the moon? But I don't even want to go to
Europe," Mr. Sammler said, "Besides, if I had my
choice, I'd prefer the ocean bottom. In Dr. Piccard's
bathysphere. I seem to be a depth man rather than a
height man. I do not personally care for the illimi-
table. The ocean, however deep, has a top and bottom,
whereas there is no sky ceiling. I think I am an Oriental, Wallace. Jews, after all, are Orientals. I am content to sit here on the West Side, and watch, and admire these gorgeous Faustian departures for the other worlds. Personally, I require a ceiling, although a high one. Yes, I like ceilings, and the high better than the low."

Sammler's making admission that 'my travels are over' is revealing. His is the quest of some higher reality which is certainly not governed by individual existence. And thus, the 'travels' are metaphorical expressions of untrammeled romantic flights of the self into the region of the dark unconscious which never fascinated Sammler. He is well aware of the disadvantages of the surrealistic emphasis on the indomitable individuality and thus the travels never lose directions. He comprehends the moral significance of some order within oneself without which the dream of complete human freedom on earth can land man into moral dilemma: the idea of complete freedom implies the power of inventiveness and creativity in the absence of which it may run riot and destroy the very dream of social realities. Camus has rightly observed that,"Complete freedom, which is the negation of everything, can only exist and justify itself by the creation of new values identified with the entire human race. If the creation of these values is post-posted humanity will tear itself to pieces."2 That is, what generates man's vision is the consciousness of the good and bad in man and the philosophy of social concern founded on certain moral truths of life. Sammler is not blind to this

1. Ibid., pp. 183-84
2. The Rebel, p. 144
aspect of life and that is why he bears with the violence as unleashed by the votaries of a new generation of moral perverts and nihilists who have faith in instant self-gratification and take pride in existing without roots of social concern. They have a passion for being real and original but while making a bid to rise to a 'higher state', they are sunk in the pool of lecherousness, and thus, have no apparent taste for decency in morals and manners. Sammler comes in confrontation with a student-crowd comprising the young agitated spirits at the Columbia University where he is invited by Lionel Feffer to address a seminar on the British scene in the 'thirties'. Feffer, one of Sammler's readers, having a charming personality but not 'trustworthy,' is the organiser. Here what Sammler has to experience is all a show of moral depravity and sexual perversion in matters of intellectual sensibility, modern art and crime in that the young, like a beat, are divorced from the self and society and fly their personal flags like the anarchists to gratify their insane pursuits. Since Sammler is fond of Feffer, he agrees to address the young students. Feffer is a psychic case, and his physical description - "florid color, brown beaver beard, long black eyes, big belly, smooth hair, pink awkward large hands, loud interrupting voice, hasty energy," characterize the essence of life he has lived. It so happens that during the lecture, Feffer is called out to attend a telephone call and Sammler is shouted down by a figure of 'compact distortion' in filthy obscene language calling him

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1. Mr. Sammler's Planet, p. 38
an "...effete old shit? What has he got to tell you? His balls are dry. He's dead. He can't come." Consequently, the academic discourse ends abruptly and Sammler is taken out by a girl student. The trouble started when Sammler quoted Orwell that the Royal Navy protected the British radicals and Orwell in the eyes of this Columbia heckler was "...a fink. He was a sick counter revolutionary. It's good he died when he did. And what you are saying is shit." But what offended Sammler was not something personal but the will of the young to offend and a passion to be real which is indicative of the fact that this new generation is a victim of directionlessness and disillusionment, being rampant in American society. It has transformed them into savages who have no regard for nobler aspirations of life.

"How extraordinary! Youth? Together with the idea of sexual potency? All this confused sex-excrement-militancy explosiveness, abusiveness, tooth-showing, Barbary ape howling. Or like the spider monkeys in the trees, as Sammler once had read, defecating into their hands and shrieking, pelting the explorers below." 

Later on when Peffer meets Sammler he seeks genuine apology for the erratic and self indulgent behaviour of the students: "That's my generation for you! I don't even know if they were real students or just tough characters - you know, militants, dropouts." The experience is evidently

1. Ibid., p. 42
2. Idem
3. Ibid., p. 43
4. Ibid., p. 108
harrowing and unpleasant but not to the extremes so as to unsettle Sammler's level of moral consciousness. He has seen life from such close quarters that any confrontation with worldly reality and the assault of the disruptive and reactionary forces on his mind, can not generate feelings of pessimism and absurdity.

The sexual madness which is sweeping over the contemporary American society has thrown the members of the young generation totally out of gear, and as such, they behave like morally disenchanted beings whose one sacred passion in life, so feverishly pursued, is sex. This finds expression in Feffer's requests to Sammler to narrate his experiences with the negro in original so that he may be well conversant with the 'New York Idiom' and avert the usual dangers lurking in invisible corners in the night. But who can lose sight of the reality that Feffer's request to repeat the nasty encounter is all an excuse, the real purpose is to hear the details of this magnificent event for the apparent gratification of his hungry sexuality. Feffer got this information from Margotte, a member of this generation who shows a zest for 'modern sensibility', of the intellectuals. There is little magnificent about the negro's showing his private parts to Sammler, but to 'see this phenomenon repeated' is a powerful expression of the erotic and the grotesque curiosity of this generation for such nonsensical things:
"But what did he do, Mr. Sammler! Why won't you say!"
"What is there to say? ... It is not worth discussing. Simply nonsensical."
"Nonsensical? Are you sure it's nonsense? You'd better let a younger person judge. A different generation....
"In your own lobby, he pulled his thing on you? He flashed it?"... "He yanked out his cock" Didn't say a word? ... What the hell did he mean? How big a thing was it? You didn't say. I can imagine. It could be straight out of Finnegans Wake."1

Feffer is a vile sexual maniac, a prototype of those who are always on the look out for dragging a female into the hideousness of libidinal adventures to initiate her into sexual orgies and for whom the indiscriminate sexual encounte are the 'primum bonum' of life. The novelist draws him (Feffer) as a 'busy seducer' of young wives, who often takes pleasure in alluring a girl and initiating her to the pleasur of sex to 'fuck now and then.'

Walter Bruch is another character of the group to bring to Sammler's mind the core of reality by representing lecherousness and moral debauchery in human conduct. He is, as a matter of fact, a caricature of sexual perversion who derives pleasure of orgasm in simple touch of a woman's arms and even at the age of sixty, he cannot refrain from nasty habits such as masterbating in public. He tells Sammler that to love a woman's arm has become his hobby. He is often 'hung-up' on the arms of a young cashier in a drug store or in summer he is out to press himself against the women's arms:

1. Ibid., p. 121
"Uncle Sammler, you have no idea what it is for me in that round arm. So dark! So heavy!"
"No, I probably do not."
"I put the attache case against the counter, and I press myself. While she is making the change, I press."
"All right, Walter, spare me the rest."
"Uncle Sammler, forgive me. What can I do? For me it is the only way."
"Well, that is your business. Why tell me?"
"There is a reason. Why shouldn't I tell you? There must be a reason. Please don't stop me. Be kind."
"You should stop yourself."
"I can't."
"Are you sure?"
"I press. I have a climax. I wet myself."¹

His whole life has been a debris of emotional wreckage and psychological compulsion rotting in the hell of self-indulgence and moral defilement. As such, he has lost sense of discrimination and propriety to the degrees that even virtues such as compassion and pity look sterile and meaningless. When Sammler feels pity for living such a life of wretchedness and sinfulness draining the essence of life and talks of praying to God for his release from further falling into the abysmal pit of moral inequity, he laughs it out like a black humourist, saying, "Uncle Sammler, I have my arms. You have prayers?"²

Equally is Shulla a case deprived of moral steadfastness in life. Her only aim of life seems to be to live on the plane of animalistic sensuality. She is married to Eison but does not hesitate to seek company of a lover now

1. Ibid., p. 59
2. Ibid., p. 63
and then for the physical gratification which shows that she represents the promiscuity of her generation in the West. It is her beastly sexuality and vulgar habits to derive pleasure of the flesh that forced Sammler to arrange a separate accommodation. Strangely enough, Shula lives in separation even from her husband, the reason being, as she interprets, the gross sexuality and an extremely lousy temper of the husband. Shula is also a victim of intellectual pretensions, she tells lie to her father that she has read God, the Invisible King, a book by H.G. Wells, whereas the fact is that she has hardly given a reading to it: "I just couldn't read it. Human evolution with God as Intelligence. I soon saw the point, then the rest was tedious, garrulous."¹ Thus, the act of stealing away the manuscript of Dr. Lal so as to help her father complete his memoir is highly immoral and unacademic but it otherwise reflects her skillful outmanoeurings of her feminine charms. Her husband, Eison, is also painted as a lover of modern art but his paintings are offensive to moral sense to the point that his creation, in the words of the novelist, looks to be the product of "a frightening soul."

Wallace, Dr. Gruner's son, is not much different from Shula. He is a product of modern-hysteria and an extension of the neurotic fever of a capitalistic view of life and thus he represents various distractions in professional art

¹. Ibid., pp. 199-200
and the resultant crisis of cultural niceties and failures. It is learnt that he tried his hand at becoming a lawyer, an engineer, a physicist, a mathematician, a pilot, Ph.D. but could nearly become a homosexual, a gambler and a 'handicapped'.

As an established gynaecologist Gruner has amassed a huge wealth even by performing "abortions to oblige old Mafia friends."¹ But this life of affluence has not robbed him of his humanity. He could be wretched but not mean. He is kind and generous and 'a dependable man' in an age, Sammler had heard, when even doctors have turned moral perverts and make, "sexual gestures to their patients. Put women's hands on their parts."² And that is why Sammler does not want that people like Dr. Elya Gruner should abandon this human earth for finding an alternate habitate on the moon. While expressing the sense of gratitude for what Gruner did for Sammler and Shula, he impresses upon his mind that if "the earth deserves to be abandoned, if we are now to be driven streaming into other worlds, starting with the moon, it is not because of the likes of you."³ On hearing about Gruner's sickness, Sammler hastens to meet him in the hospital but, before he reaches there, Gruner dies and thus his death is a great loss to humanity in general and to Sammler in particular. What shakes Sammler to the roots is the indifference of Wallace, the son, and Angela, the daughter.

1. Ibid., p. 162
2. Idem
3. Ibid., p. 86
toward their dying father as, on point of preference, what is moral for them is the gratification of the insane pursuits of lascivious sexual orgies, and not what is human and moral. What is all the more shocking is that despite Sammler's advice that Angela should apologise to her father for her behaviour when he is on the verge of death in the hospital she does not consider it moral to seek reconciliation with the dying man. But Sammler is now no longer in the dark about such beastly traits of filial treason and infidelity becoming manifest in the daughter. His understanding of the shades of life he possibly could confront on this planet is clear and that is why the irresponsible acts of the younger generation can never unhang him from the path of morality. However, the cause is located and what Sammler feels is that they lack direction to overcome the beast in them. The agony finds expression:

"I only note the peculiarity that it is possible to be gay, amorous, intimate with holiday acquaintances. Diversions, group intercourse, fellatio with strangers — one can do that but not come to terms with one's father at the last opportunity." 1

Angela thus represents the valuelessness at its worst in contemporary reality. She has the force of sex-appeal but not the zest to subscribe to nupital fidelity which creates stability and harmony in life. It is her passion for sex that she sends money to defence fund for black rapists, she never feels shy to discuss her sexual

1. Ibid., p. 306
problems with Sammler and her father. That is why Gruner and Wallace draw on animal imagery to describe her inordinate passion for endless variety in sex: for her brother, Wallace she is a 'swine' and everybody is her lover, for her father she is a 'bitch' and 'a dirty cunt', "a woman who has done it in too many ways with too many men. By now she probably doesn't know the name of the man between her legs."¹ Her two visits - one with Sammler to a museum of modern art of Picasso and the second with her lover Wharton Horricker to Mexico expecting that the two would be married soon, are instances which suggest her strong sexuality and passion for living a life of fanciful pleasures. What fascinated Angela to take Sammler to the exhibition was the sexual implication of the art exhibits:

"Old Picasso was wildly obsessed by sexual fissures, by phalluses. In the frantic and funny pain of his farewell, creating organs by the thousands, perhaps tens of thousands. Lingam and Yoni."²

What happened to Angela during the Mexico trip at Acapulco is both comic and morally disgusting to suggest that "a sexual madness was overwhelming the Western world."³ This makes Sammler brood over the problems of the new generation. When Sammler asks what was so funny about the party, she explains to him:

"Well, it was a sex thing for the four of us."
"With other people? Who were they?"
"They were perfectly all right. We met them on the beach. The wife suggested it."

1. Ibid., p. 178
2. Ibid., p. 66
3. Idem
"An exchange?"
"Well, yes. Oh, it is done now, Uncle."
"I hear it is."
"You are disgusted with me, Uncle."

The romantic notion of the sexual sophistication of the new generation is limited to the exchange of partners in sex which, they hold, can bind man into bond of togetherness in an age when values are disintegrating and morals are mocked at. There were times, Sammler reflects, when poor professionals used to indulge in such lascivious activities for their living in bachelor parties or "tourists, sex-circuses on the Place Pigalla" but now he feels pained at heart to see ordinary people, housewives, students and office clerks indulging in such bizarre sexual encounters "just to be sociable" and for spiritual profiles. It is the fallout of liberal education which, ironically speaking, has failed to humanise the brute in man.

"And I can't really say what it's all about. Is it maybe some united effort to conquer disgust? Or to show that all the repulsive things in history are not so repulsive? I don't know. Is it an effort to 'liberalize' human existence and show that nothing that happens between people is really loathsome? Affirming the Brotherhood of Man? Ah, well - "

Thus Sammler's confrontations with evil in the contemporary society brings to his mind the image of man who is no better than a savage in case his feet are not firmly planted in earthly values such as love, of man, compassion, pity and generosity. Sammler does not feel inspired to have

1. Ibid., p. 159
2. Idem
a leap into the 'perfect society as claimed to be found on the moon by Dr. Lal. And therefore this earth, with all its imperfections, is the right place God has created for man to dwell, wherein he, being higher and more sublime a creature in the chain of beings, can create his own values to live by, provided he fully comprehends the fundamental relation of the 'being' with the other which is the third ontological dimension of the being, 'being-for-others'. Sammler's 'planet' is transubstantiated into Sisyphus's 'rock' against which he has to put his face to evolve a vision out of its stony silence, but of course, without losing his own humanity. Choosing withdrawal from the scene of quietism, Sammler has learnt, will bring no clarity. The illumination is now within sight. The planet is his fate which in broader context is, metaphorically speaking, the shared fate of mankind. Man is condemned to live life on this planet which opens before him possibilities for the full flowering of the 'being' keeping the fact in view that even 'possibilities' have their limitations and therefore human endeavour, if stretches beyond limits, will lose social identity. Sammler's precise faith in Camusian dictum is inconsistent with his idea of social concern and man's role of making it a reality. "a man's failure's imply judgement not of circumstances but of himself."¹

¹. The Myth of Sisyphus, p.66