CHAPTER - III

OBSESSED FORM OF SELF

LOVE SEEKETH ONLY SELF TO PLEASE,
TO BIND ANOTHER TO ITS DELIGHT,
JOYS IN ANOTHER'S LOSS OF BASE,
AND BUILDS A HELL IN HEAVENS DESPITE.

WILLIAM BLAKE,
"SONGS OF EXPERIENCE"

Man requires some form of potential vitality to make himself feel secure in a world of turbulence and turmoil, specially in the existential context. Each individual has his own sense of conception regarding this potential. The contingencies of existence could offer man this vitality in any form as physical prowess, intellectual skill, or even psychic comprehensiveness.

The novels in concern here are Iris Murdoch's The Flight from the Enchanter and Saul Bellow's The Dean's December. In both the novels 'power' or 'authority' is the external potential assigned to the protagonists. The two protagonists, Mischa Fox in Flight and Albert Corde in Dean consider their 'chosen' power-position as a form of security.

Power turns out to be a success or failure depending on the individual's means of securing this and in its proper
execution and conduct. Power gives man the freedom to exploit those that are weaker than himself or strengthen the weaker aspects of society or drown himself in its glamorous appeal to his own whims and fancies or politicize it altogether. These may be the broad aspects under which 'power' could be exercised upon the others.

In Murdoch's *The Plight from the Enchanter* Mischa Fox, unfortunately exploits his 'power' to his own benefits, destroying the individuality of the other characters. He makes most of them almost his entities and his power-wielding runs amuck all through the novel. However, Mischa has a firm command over what he does and does not easily yield to the illusory attention the other characters show him nor does he give up the dramatization of it so entirely. Strangely or paradoxically Mischa's magnetic power entices the other characters towards him while Mischa himself drifts away from them like a master who knows all that he surveys.

In Bellow's *The Dean's December*, power is not an obsession for the Dean and journalist, Albert Corde. Instead he makes an effort to utilise the force of power in a positive manner to express his own chosen, analytic resolution to contend a well-organized society. But Corde's chosen duty is discouraged for apprehension of his power by his contemporary
writer-critics, friends, family members and the Chicagoan public and Corde feels tentatively lost in their agonizing contempt for him and his writing career. Yet Corde manages to evolve out of the intellectual paralysis imposed upon him by the constant coaxing of his Self, and through the defiant articles through which he communicates to the world outside.

The contingent realities are another factor that brings the novels on a similar plane of thought-construction. The protagonists who are power dominated face similar distractions, dangers, difficulties, discontentments, distortions of existential contingencies, achievements and disillusionments. The two protagonists in their respective novels comprehend the illusory nature of existence for themselves, for the others as well as for the cultures or country to which they belong. But they stand apart and are made distinct by their constancy or fleeting temperament, purpose, positive resolutions or indecisiveness. Mischa Fox operates power more on a private circle while Corde's obsession lies with bringing about either a positive alteration or awareness among the citizens of his country.

In Flight, Mischa Fox's power is negative but awesome. Rosa Keepe, a prominent character, quite thoughtlessly and wantonly falls a victim to the power-crazed Mischa Fox. She is
either dogged or haunted by him. While initially she is enchanted by the protagonist's power politics, later, she finds his power a suffocating threat to her. It is then that Rosa Keepe sets herself in flight from this enthralling character. And though the reader cannot say positively if her evasive Self does identify itself precisely, one can positively say that her Self realises the two 'extremes' of her existence. One extreme being her victimization to Mischa Fox's power, her affairs being decided, run, and controlled by the Polish Lusiewicz brothers with whom she indulges, her negligence of Nina the dress-maker, her growing envy for the young girl - Annette Cockayne, and her despicable plight of being black-mailed by Calvin Blick; while the other extreme is her meagre show of strength to wriggle out of these terrifying harassments. Rosa Keepe's character is portrayed as a "loosely contingent" (Hoffman, "Murdoch, Reality" 49) person and the final pattern of her self-consciousness seems to be an endless struggle to carefully help herself out of his ruthless earnestness for domination and a personal release from all her pitfalls and negligences.

Mischa Fox's plight is quite contradictory, as much of the narrative is uttered by the author herself. However, the tone and voice seem to imply the shrewdness and intelligence of
a 'self'-criticising voice in opposition to the perverse and reckless ones of Rosa Keepe, Lusiewicz brothers, Nina, Annette Cockayne and Camilla Wingfield.

There is a certain animosity in saying that Fox is a questing protagonist. But when the novel opens Fox is already endowed with all accessories of power and selfhood by the writer herself. Mischa Fox is created as a character who has already achieved his 'ends' whatever they may be, Self or power or domination. The other characters alone, in this novel, are seen to writhe in the existential derisions. Besides, all the enchanting glory of power, Fox has the ability to comment on the drawbacks of the other characters in the novel, the capacity to detect the faintest of human weaknesses revealing a negativity in the power wielding Self of Mischa Fox. This could be perhaps because much of Fox's power-wielding is performed through his henchman Calvin Blick. However, Mischa Fox manages to form a network of relationships and each character seems to fall a victim to his towering selfhood. Hoffman rightly observes that:

Fox is immitigable power and wealth; he is the "enchanter" because of the evil strength of his will, which brings weaker persons under its domination. ("Murdoch: Reality" 51)

There is something treacherous about Mischa's powerful Self that gives a sadistic, terrorizing grin at each instance when
the other characters are trapped; ironically, Fox alone is left, both to flog and relieve these existential rudiments from their existential pettiness. He silently smiles at their vulnerability, doing or undoing them but never arresting these calamities, as though Mischa Fox were 'Fate' himself, and the other characters were destined to suffer at the hands of Fate.

As far as the feeling of security and honour that power gives to the individual is concerned, Mischa enjoys the full fruit of the two. And the other characters help this power maniac to flourish in their adoration for him. At most instances in the novel, the other characters are monetarily or socially or psychologically dependent on Mischa Fox, rather than Mischa Fox luring them. The treacherous quality of Mischa is seen only when these enslaved demons are indirectly exploited by Mischa. In some way or the other, Mischa is connected with the plight of all the characters in the novel. When these characters turn to Mischa for some favour he does it for them after much reluctance, be it good or evil. And when these characters turn against him, Mischa tries to oppress them by some means or the other as he cannot survive his authoritative self being challenged. Added to all this, these demonic slaves serve him with avarice for some secure feeling or favour or in turn exploit his power. Altogether there is a relative misuse of power in the novel.
If 'Self' need not always be used in the positive sense then anti-self or a negative self is what Mischa Fox enjoys in the novel. Mischa's negative Self invades the weaknesses, limitations and fallibilities of all the characters in the novel and like a parasite flourishes with a sardonic tendency. Mischa Fox is found in a chaos-ridden modernist world with a good deal of fantasy woven around him. The various negative contingencies that Mischa Fox unravels in the novel create a number of paradoxical situations in the novel. And much of the novel's consciousness or situations are built around the victimized characters than the victimizer himself, making the victimizer's ruthless Self literally visible and effective to the reader. To be more precise, the novel throws psychological insights mixed with social scandals of the plight of both the protagonist and the other characters dependent on him.

The legendary Mischa Fox appears on and off in the novel at times of some crisis or need of the other characters but cuts a paradoxical nature altogether. At times he seems to be God himself, or some kind of redeemer, Saviour, a priest (as the author herself describes him at one or two instances), a happy animal, victimizer, death, a stealthy exploiting politician, and a companion or friend (lost in the benign geniality of men like Peter Saward), a sensitive criminal who cannot bear being challenged, a silent refree who knows how to
manipulate the performance of his team. Even though Fox appears quite rarely in the novel, the reader is made to sense his diabolic or angelic presence throughout the narrative when each character analyses his or her contingent reality. Each of these characters express some kind of fantastic obsession with Mischa Fox, or fear or spite for him and at one or the other instance reveal tiresomeness about their vulnerable existence itself and a compelling desire to flee his apprehensive hold on their lives.

However, the entire fault does not lie in Mischa Fox's nature as the author herself fixes him in a multifaceted framework of characterization, and this refutes all charges against him as a totally adverse foe to the rest of the characters in the novel. Mischa is a complex character who seems to aggravate the other characters to their adverse positions. But in truth, Mischa aggravating them to fatalistic extents is merely apparent - the truth being his 'cold stillness' while it is the other characters who fantasize about him and deify him, blindly taking it for granted that Mischa Fox is responsible for their weaknesses, limitations and wantonness.

Mischa stands apart untouched by calumny or slander cleansed by his own clear mindedness and will at each instance.
Moreover, Mischa has a comment, a remark, a piece of advice or a kind of divine instinct or insight for every problem or problem-figure who appears before him. Apart from these positive aspects in him, Mischa is considered as a legendary, outsider figure whose arrival or disappearance is never made known to anyone. He is referred to as 'Fox' with an evident deal of awe, and is also known as a happy animal, who is capable of enormous cruelty. He, who hated anything independent, showed beastly patience and was always plotting according to the other characters in the novel. Mischa becomes aware of these endowments and makes these endowments his obsession almost like a dormant neurosis which cannot be undone from his persona. Richard Todd describes figures like Mischa Fox as fantasy-realistic heroes (Murdoch 54).

Mischa is a much discussed celebrity whose character is exposed to the reader through the consciousness of the other characters. Much of the consciousness/unselfing is brought forth through Rosa Keepe. If Mischa Fox is the enchanter, Rosa Keepe is chiefly the one in flight, whose unselfing reveals an endless fight from fantasy, fear, wantonness, and helplessness.

Fantasy is a central theme in most of Murdoch's works. The inevitability of the situation in which Rosa is compelled
to go in pursuit of Mischa Fox himself dawns on her, only when she visualises that moral value is essential for discovering the real from illusion. Murdoch herself claims that

\[
\text{We may fail to see the individual because we are completely enclosed in a fantasy world of our own into which we try to draw things from outside, not grasping their reality and independence, making them into dream objects of our own. (Kemp, "The Fight" 408)}
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Rosa Keepe builds an emotional illusion of queer love for Mischa and strives to bind herself permanently to this illusion. In the meantime she becomes oblivious to the fact that Mischa Fox although a symbol of fantasy, is individualistic by himself and steers himself clear of all such mishaps. Rosa Keepe fails to see that fantasy in any form arrests the leading of a moral life, and in order to lead such a life, an individual should learn to guard himself against all such fantastic illusions.

Besides cultivating fantasy for Mischa Fox, Rosa also allows herself to be literally dominated by the overdomineering Polish brothers, Jan and Stefan. Rosa Keepe is trapped in her own reckless sexual indulgences with them. Rosa considers herself as a kind of protector of the two young men and finally becomes a victim of their scandalous dominance and becomes the very epitome of depression and helplessness in the novel. Rosa
sexually entertains both the brothers and realises the helplessness of the situation only when Stefan moves into her household in place of Annette, exploiting her indulgence with him in a menacing manner. Stefan stealthily warns her in a whispering voice, that he is the "master" of her house (FFB 255). In the face such a threatening situation 

Rosa knew that she must go and see Mischa Fox. ...Where Mischa was concerned, Rosa was prepared to believe anything. When she felt she had to go to Mischa she was quite ready to acknowledge herself to be under a spell. It was as if the climax was come of perhaps years of preparation; and suddenly all the force of those years was to be felt in the pull which drew her in spite of herself towards him. She knew that even if at that moment Mischa were oblivious of her existence, yet he was drawing her all the same. She was reminded of stories of love philtres which will draw the loved one over mountains and across the seas. (FFB 257)

She chokes under the helpless burden of seeking Mischa's help and needs to be disenchanted of the stealthy 'Fox'. But the spell is not broken until she learns of Calvin Blick's secret mission of hunting her and pinning her down to the Lusiewicz brothers captured in his photographs, as he was instructed by Mischa.

In the final chapters, Calvin Blick leads her away from the trance of her illusion. She experiences a kind of annihilation when Calvin Blick unveils the 'halo' like mask
around Mischa. The illusory suffering of Rosa does end in quite a positive clarity of self-chastisement while she decides to leave Mischa on instructions from Calvin (or ironically from Mischa himself whose clearmindedness knows his own limits). Rosa leaves with the following final words to Calvin: "its odd...in the past I felt that whether I went towards him or away from him I was only doing his will. But it was all an illusion" (FPB 308).

'Fantasy' here is the enchanter. Rosa who is earlier enchanted by Mischa sees him as merely an embodiment of various emotional patterns that elude her own final destiny and direction.

Yet another point to be noticed is that Mischa is free from contingency and like some supreme power stands "... still, so he's hard to notice" (FPB 307) improvising his detachment from worldly idiosyncrasies. Mischa perhaps loathes the 'aggravation' caused by fantasy but remains relaxed and ominously silent unnerving them in his turn. He obstinately holds on to power, for his Self requires the contentment offered by such deification. It is this deification that renders him a greater hold upon the other characters felling them down to an undefying size, at even the slightest opportunity available. It is this avarice that grins upon the
reality of Mischa's Self, that makes him demonic as well as angelic or controversial in the novel. Commenting on the Self's obsession with power, Patka observes that normally the imminence of power isolates an individual and this explanation offers grounds enough to understand why Mischa isolates himself and prefers to exist in "the closed inwardness of introspective and intuitive practices" (Existentialist Thinkers 46). Mischa's unshackled 'Self' therefore naturally becomes obsessed with power and utilises it as "his most effective mode of communication with the inferior world of others" and creates his own ideal world of scruples, quality and superiority all from a mixture of the abstract, lifeless, void of the experiences of the others and also from the occasional inhuman or atleast diabolic expressions of his own Self (Sullivan, "Enchantment and the Demonic" 277).

'Fear' is an aspect which is woven around Mischa in comparison with his actual indulgence in dreadful exploitations. He is also said to have a counter half - a henchman called Calvin Blick, whom Rainborough refers to as "the dark half of Mischa Fox's mind" (FFE 35). All the characters seem to know Mischa and not know him too, like a mythical state of affairs. Even his age is a secret unknown to the rest - even to his henchman Blick as Rainborough observes:
One could hardly make a guess. Its uncanny. He could be thirty...[or] thirty five.... No one knows his age.... Where was he born? What blood is in his veins? ... And if you try to imagine you are paralysed. ... You can't look into his eyes. You've to look at his eyes. Heaven know what you'd see if you looked in.

Purely, on the levels of psychology, Mischa's "evil is an illusion created by the other 'inadequate' characters, in order to satisfy their need for vicarious adventure and enchantment" (Sullivan, "Enchantment and the Demonic" 278). Mischa too (apparently) encourages the claims established by these characters for he is aware that he has to feign to be evil at least in order to maintain his image and thus 'evil' here becomes a necessary consequence of power. Rainborough tells Annette,

There's only one thing that's exceptional about Mischa apart from his eyes and that's his patience. He always has a hundred schemes on hand, and he's the only man I know who'll wait literally for five years for even a trivial plan to mature. (FFB 134)

An almost animal identity attached to Mischa is that of an ominously patient beast that lies in waiting for its prey or opportunity. With reference to Mischa's eyes (described by Rainborough as something 'peculiar'), Kuehl says that "The enchanter's most enigmatic and compelling aspect is a mythic dimension symbolically conveyed through his gaze." Mischa has
one brown and one blue eye that seem to ensure his power with a stunning effect. It also gives the impression of dual countenance signifying omnipotence and omniscience like that of some deity, with his intermittent habitual withdrawal into darkness whenever the enchanted attempt to assess his Self, his looks - specially his eyes or challenge his power ("Murdoch as Magician" 350).

Besides Mischa's looks, his own observations, remarks and comments on various contingencies or experiences of the characters in the novel add an aura of 'cold distance' to his character. The characters do not get to any proximity of the Self of Mischa Fox. A power oriented personality shows an elusive display of Self and is never caught in its singularity by the enchanted characters. But Mischa Fox's words and spontaneous utterances are indeed quite arresting revealing the protagonist's balanced mind and individualistic Self. Mischa's words show a complete awareness of most matters in all their totality, his own Self steering clear off indulgence or unfortunate commitments in these crises. This could be yet another reason why Mischa Fox is looked upon with awe by the other characters "himself standing on the edge of the world, the abyss of future before him, above him the heavens, below him the whole mankind, behind him history" (Patka, Existentialist Thinkers 44), like a man who has achieved
complete self-evaluation and knows what he is, what the world is and what are its inmates. For instance, Mischa's comment on Rainborough's fascination for women is practical and honest - the glamour of women exorcised in all earnest to correct Rainborough's obsession.

Many women...have no form at all. They are like embryos in biological experiments... At best they are formless, at worst monsters. (FPE 142)

Mischa lectures to Rainborough against women to dispel the illusions he holds for women. He deciphers a good deal from the labyrinthine minds of his female associates which he shares with the amateur Rainborough. Mischa describes women as wise, free, siren-like, destructive and as the unicorn girl who are basically lovers of heart. This knowledge is Mischa's vital weapon and he in no context unduly commits himself to women. He knows and sounds like a "priest" to Rainborough when he tells him that, "you must tire a woman out, even if it takes years. Then you will see what she is" (FPE 143). Mischa has known Rosa Keepe, Annette Cockayne's mother - Marcia Cockyeyne and Nina. These women fantasize or fear or are obsessed with him or feel the pressure of a mixture of all these feelings for him .but Mischa keeps himself aloof with the mildest, non-committal gestures sufficient to convince them of his apparent interest in them. Mischa keeps Nina especially as a
clandestine mistress whom he visits now and then, never letting
her know his inner intentions.

Nina shudders in his presence and Annette notices
something of "anger, fear or both" (FFE 85) in Nina's face when
Mischa appears soft-pawed into their room. Nina realises that
she has no way to escape from this man who seems to have cast a
profound spell on her, whose intent eyes watched her like that
of "a man on the edge of a forest" (FFE 86). She flutters
about her work in his presence as quickly as a machine. The
hand that operates on this lonely women is Mischa himself who
makes her feel "like a puppet" (FFE 86). Nina is treated
almost as an entity and Mischa's avarice for power reaches its
maximum in Nina's case for he ties her down to himself alone.
It was important to him that she should be alone, available to
speak with him privately at any hour, that she should be able
to entertain his anonymous guests (FFE 153). Mischa's very
imposing attitude threatens Nina who plans her escape but is
unable to purge her crucified position on the cross to which
Mischa has her nailed. She bears the cross but
relentlessly gives into suicide as the only solution to her
inescapable fatality. Mischa's alternating sense of goodness,
clarity of thought and scheming practicality makes his Self
appear more demonic than the usual references given to the
Murdochian protagonists.
Mischa dances with Annette at the popular party he throws and watches in contemplation, the obtrusive show of human emotions and violence between Rosa and Annette. The focal point of this retrospective mood in Mischa is the power of self invasion, a marathon recollection of initial celebration, decorum and a final perdition. This view throws light on Mischa's discontented and disturbed state of mind in which he allows his guests to preserve the dead fishes in a bowl - symbolic perhaps of the irretrievable eccentricities of human existence, collectively placed before him for his inference. After the messy party Annette notices Mischa "watching the waves like a trapped animal", yet not completely depowered.

His initial display of power is shown in his first attempt to buy 'Artemis' from the Keepes for which he sends his mediator-henchman Calvin Blick. Calvin Blick, on the other hand, is no ordinary go-between but a miniature demonic figure who prances about in the confidence fed to him by his power - head Mischa Fox. This could be one reason why Calvin Blick often meets the Keepes, Rainborough and Annette, under some pretext with a sardonic grin and inclination for domination, instigated by Mischa Fox himself. At the same time Calvin Blick is so enslaved by Mischa that he declares to Rosa Keepe,
"Mischa did kill me years ago" (FFE 306). He also lets her know that his future is destined by Mischa and the plans are rather what Mischa would have for him than his own for himself.

According to Frederick Patka's views on the problems of existence of man in the world, "power is illusory and deceptive in the context of existential problems. It makes the possessor feel emancipated and autonomous" (Existentialist Thinkers 44). The power-fantasy about Mischa only tempts him to enslave all those who turned to him for refuge and help. In the increase of such perverse strength his own emotional isolation is dissolved and the boundaries of secrecy are further barricaded.

Every individual has some kind of fantasy-creating power in his mind and enchants himself first by the inflow of glory owing to this fantasy of power. Such an individual becomes an enchanter within himself, which is an enchanting extension of the Self, a certain substitute for the inadequate powers within him made transitory to the functions of an enchanter (Sullivan 280). Mischa, is 'demonic' and 'negative' where his insatiable lust for power is concerned and is unable to overcome the machine called 'power' that operates on him. He is aware that the web of fantasy has him entangled within itself and exploits it to his favour (Sullivan 286).
The controversial mixture of Self in Mischa is made evident by the author through an exemptional instance. There is Peter Saward in the novel who is an exemption to the illusions which tower above all the other characters. A significant conversation occurs between Mischa and Peter Saward after the ruinous party and this indicates Mischa's hypersensitivity to the otherwise loathful fantasy

'Everyone has been going mad as usual!
(Mischa said)
'You make them mad', said Peter
'...I don't make you mad,' (replied Mischa. (FPE 205)

Peter is dedicated to working on obsessively with some hieroglyphic scripts and his books alone enchant him. Peter has an unassuming nature and his relationships with the others are "selfless, loving and fearless". Unlike Mischa who needs to "place" people in order to control them, Peter needs no "taboos to ward off the possible powers of others. He is the only character who does not flee from his enchanter and with whom Mischa feels at ease. Mischa's relationship with Peter sets a fine example of Mischa's sanity and is also vindicative of Mischa's Self that has not lost total control of itself, though he utilises the power concept aggressively.

Mischa's triumph lies in wearing inconsistent, multiple faces with no one view of himself being correct. He explores
the minds of others seeing through them but he in turn remains an unexplored mystery. Every caller was interrogated, stripped and often rejected, but Mischa indulges in a perverse obligation to society. His command and ability to elicit information and confidence is remarkable and is also Murdoch's improvement or advancement made in the portrayal of power figures in her novels. Mischa's vision is omniscient and he displays great skill in amusingly comprehending the diverse states of mind of all his potential relationships, tackling them with utmost dexterity and skill.

R.C. Kane refers to Murdoch's power protagonists as catalysts to the other volatile personalities or common characters giving them a fine definition and form, and are those who take abundant advantage of these emotional refugees recoiling in their own silence (Murdoch 68).

In the last discussion in Chapter I the predominant aspect is not merely psychological at the personal level alone but also arises out of their interaction with the selves of the other characters. Contrary to this, Mischa is a stable protagonist who dismisses the many trifles of human existence as void or absurd. The problems in Murdoch's novel again are politicized, because of Mischa's power wielding energy infiltrating into the society.
In the current discussion, Albert Corde in Bellow's The Dean's December is a sober, conventional yet misunderstood protagonist inspite of having authority at his disposal. Albert Corde's authoritative position by itself becomes his prison for his motives, and his mode of operation as a Dean and writer is misinterpreted by the public as well as by a few of his family members. Corde is not a power-maniac as Mischa but he is swaggered by the complexities of the urban politics in Chicago and Bucharest and continues to remain shocked until the end of the novel. Though Corde is not power-obsessed, he loosens the reins upon his authoritative stand and highlights the indiscrepancies and criminal offences in Chicago. His authority is fantasy-free and not so overbearing or dominating as that of Mischa but his unreflective vanity as a journalist and his provocative articles in the 'Harper' are described by readers "as unaccountable acts of self-destruction" (DD 73). Besides being an academician and disciplinarian he appears to be 'overbearing' to the Chicagoan society for his critical articles on its degenerating values and demonic to the community of Black youths for bringing the Rickie Lester murderers to trial. Mischa, in Murdhoch's novel, has multiple faces in the eyes of the society but paradoxically Corde's profile as a journalist brings upon his suave self even more devastating results than the fantasy about Mischa. The various
cross-sections that form the Chicagoan society assess Corde from different angles:

Liberals found him reactionary. Conservatives called him crazy. Professional urbanologists said he was hasty... [The Dean, they say] should be congratulated for opening up these lower depths of [his] psychology to... [his] readers, giving the opportunity to look into the abysses of chaotic thinking of anarchy and psychopathology. (DD 186)

Corde's consciousness becomes the vital subject of the novel, discussed by characters like Dewey Spangler, and by the paralyzed intellect of the Dean himself. Corde's discordance lies in his inability to push the atrocities of urban existence into the recess of his mind. Instead, he struggles to pick and choose the apt way of existence in an incorrigible world of crimes and politics, a world in which an emotional Dean has no place.

Corde's character is gullible inspite of the shrewd academic role and intelligent authority he plays as a journalist. Corde has a happy married life with his wife Minna but stumbles like an unhappy, confused and sensitive man when his personal relationships turn slightly sour. These soured relationships pervade the mind of the Chicagoan outsider in Bucharest, with a sense of guilt for having been incomplacent. Corde visits his ailing mother-in-law Valeria in Bucharest and a feeling of compassion overcomes him as he recollects
Valeria's career and deflection. After Valeria's death, Minna, his wife, is angry and critical about Corde, for she thinks that matters such as death and grief are not important to a man like Corde whose life revolves on the axis of authority. There is a certain disappointment both in Corde and Minna as she says that he was not the husband that she believed she was getting married to. Corde's self-dissolution or unselfing runs at a slow pace in comparison with the firm or obstinate Mischa.

Dewey Spangler throws intellectual reproaches upon Corde and refers to him as 'mad'. This reference aggravates Corde's career as a journalist and Dean. Jo Brans is of the opinion that there is a certain incongruity in (the Self) of Corde which reveals more failures or disillusionments or the qualities of an 'untimely hero' who cannot adapt himself to the norms and needs required for social existence besides all his ridiculousness or ideals as the protagonist in the novel ("Interview with Murdoch" 435). Another point of failure in Corde as an authoritative self is his constant hypersensitivity to the growing animosity between him and his family members when he brings the Rickie Lester case to trial. Even as the novel begins, Corde is portrayed as being caught in a world of confusion. Corde is no puppet in the hands of power but an individualistic thinker who holds his own inner-debates (and
gives vent to them through his writings), unable to arrive at a compromise between "individual feeling and social obligations, between the tensions of the public and private spheres... of life" (Orr, Novel 1).

The radical student line reacts to Corde's Rickie Lester case brought to trial with Mason (Corde's nephew) at the base of the resistance movement against Corde. As the case flares up Corde is at a loss, unable to freely exercise the autonomy of his power to its maximum especially when it involves his own family members. However, Corde has no intentions of giving up his pursuit and is firm about going ahead. In this context, a certain noticeable disparity does exist in Corde's Self at the face of modern existence and its queer, unmanageable challenges. In comparison with Murdoch's Mischa, Corde is non-assertive and meek and therefore suffers from almost an agonized split between his inner-self and social strife. John McGowan's comment on the modernist Self explains Corde's insufficiency and lack of confidence to assert his power. In the modernist trend, he says, that the society's complexity transcends the human capacity of an individual to locate itself, or to grasp its implicit surroundings or contingencies in a perceptive manner or even to figure its own position in a perceptibly manageable external world or society (Soulful Self" 53).
The irony in Corde's Self, is his search for peace of mind which he believes he could buy himself by making a clean breast of his thoughts and opinions to others by exploiting his own authority. There is an inner-anticipation in Corde that his readers and listeners would arrive at a similar conclusion as his own, but unfortunately they don’t. Jonathan Wilson claims,

... by some will of necessity (as Corde) attaches himself to someone [or the other] who is guaranteed to bring Chaos into his life. ... [And] Albert Corde earns his right to be added to the list [either] by writing the articles that puts his career in jeopardy...[or] by despising the very institutions that have both offered and preserved for him the [very] orderly life that he had desired. ['Bellow's Dangling Dean" 166- 67]

In his observation about scientists Corde says that, "sometimes these hard scientists are far out, like a separate species. It makes them especially interesting to me" (DD 222) hinting perhaps at his own happy marriage that controversially leads him to the complexity of 'Bucharest' and later to Mount Palomar where he recoups the fading sense of his Self.

There is a certain deal of sarcasm or mockery (perhaps) when Dewey Spangler writes up about Corde in a double column print headed 'A Tale of Two Cities'. In the course of this write up, Spangler criticises Corde as to what would have surfaced, if not for Corde's hostility towards Psychoanalysis,
that is to say, that Corde indeed seriously required a psychoanalysis to purge him of all his misconceptions (both) of the society (and of his Self).

Mischa's balanced sense of power is held firmly intact by his own obstinacy as well as his scheming efforts. On the other hand, Albert Corde is a 'Dangling Dean' as Wilson claims, his very name implying his Self's vulnerability to 'emotional swaggering.'

Albert Corde, at certain points in the novel, shows signs of stress, weakness and 'human' limitations, though this very emotional principle becomes the media of communicating his unselfing to the reader. Through this unselfing he also reveals 'understanding' of the most perfect kind especially of the dilute standards of culture, policy and politics of Chicago and Bucharest. Though this awareness is about the two societies, it is a politicized insight rising from Albert Corde's Self that unmasks all disguises of the society, displaying the bare reality to its citizens. Corde, as Dewey says in the novel:

...is unforgiving.... [He claims that] what should have been an elite of the intellect became instead an elite of influence and comforts. The cities decayed. The professors couldn't have prevented that, but they could have told us [as the Dean himself wildly tries to do] what the human meaning of this decay was and what it augured for civilization. Scholars
who were supposed to represent the old greatness didn't put up a fight for it. They gave into the great emptiness. And from "emptiness came whirlwinds of insanity," he writes. (DD 298).

A displacement of such reality from the society into articles could be offensive to the elite society who, perhaps, are directly or indirectly censured. This perhaps is the reason why Spangler chides Corde sardonically in his criticisms.

Much of Corde's inaction is a result of the intellectual paralysis he suffers caused by the tyranny of the society. Corde himself is not lost, but feels lost in the denials of positive existence in the urban society such that each of his comments upon society is a reflection of "the intense experience of the absence of Self in the lost other, the lost community [and] the lost society" [Orr, Novel 12]. Corde agrees that Chicago was not all blight but 'fear' could not be rooted out of the Chicagoan minds which was another cause that made them move out, and he adds, "Also it was desolation that was left behind, endless square miles of ruin" (DD 165). Corde here seems to show the reader what his consciousness sensed at the lost 'Self' of the community in Chicago.

The Dean's sense of reality stands against the fading, diminishing awareness of the Self of the other. As far as a
city like Bucharest is concerned "...[Corde saw [that] you begin to lose contact with human beings and with the world. You experience spiritual loneliness" (DD 16). In the above reflections, Corde regrets the absence of Self in an absent world, devoid of the true significance of its own existence. The voidness of Chicago and Bucharest are seen to flicker at the fag end of existential vulgarity with no fixed identity for itself as an urban land with real positive capacities, though men like Dewey Spangler claim so.

Minna, Valeria, Dewey Spangler - each has learned to succumb or conform to what society demanded of them. But Corde monopolizes society with his writings if not with his 'person' (as does Mischa) and exposes their basic "maladjustment of reality" (Glenday, "The Consumating Glimpse" 154). Corde points out acutely how these people get attached to the bogus realities of life and make it their very conviction. Corde believes that the public was used to doom warnings and many evils in society are never identified and are carried on forever - the evils being either money or war or even science itself which experienced singular failure". Corde further says that

The genius of these evils was their ability to create zones of incomprehension. It was because they were so fully apparent that you couldn't see them. (DD 141)
The urban inhabitants have Corde - a citizen and dean, root out reality from the very consciousness of their society and from the depths of his own Self and place it in contrast to the fake realities the other characters hold on to. But these characters are used to living in fake realities and are not mature enough to learn or see through as does Rosa Keepe in Murdoch's Flight. Instead they condemn Corde's opinions as sinister and ridicule his otherwise deep emotional life specially "Spangler [who] waits in the background like a vulture, biding his time, waiting for the opportunity to get his information on Corde which he can use to finish him off as a public figure" (Glenday, "The Consumating Glimpse" 153).

The power selves of Mischa and Corde are in a certain way similar. Mischa often does harm to save the skin of those whose adoration he is confident about while Corde has Spangler behind him always. But Corde does not yield so easily to these threats, his very obsession being, not his own power (as does Mischa) but how well he could put his power to use (although besides his insights or unselfing Corde is duller and muter than Mischa). Mischa reigns over the enchanted, his own Self and activities but Corde has command only over his career. The language Mischa uses to comment on existence or its problems are responses to the problems of the other characters while Corde's observations are more open, often
general, meant for the Chicagoan public and even unguarded against their offense or wrath. In another context, Corde accuses people of being evasive to reality. He says that people do not come to terms with the reality of good and evil and as a result they live in a fantasy world of concepts thoroughly contented with them (DD 240).

Corde's Self intervenes much through the novel elevating him into a higher option of unselfing and letting him down against criticisms and incongruity of his thoughts and actions. However, Corde is firm about two things - one being his writings and the other, truth.

Corde's mind is fixed to a certain path or ideology and this leads him to conceive an uncontaminated Self. These pure moments are unhindered and pass off however into dissolute moments leaving Corde once again in the existential social milieu. And as Varenness observes in the novel, Albert Corde was not the sort of "Nervous Nellie" or "commonplace hysterical". "Some part of him was really shrewd; at moments he was acute, even hardheaded" (DD 204), specially where his articles were concerned. This urge in a writer to express unaltered feelings in all their originality' is made explicit in McGowan's explication that "...the only twist is that the writer is not seeking to portray truthfully the external world but the
internal one" ("Soulful Self" 425), something that results from not the external world alone, but a vision within. Such unselfing explains the reasons for the contingencies that throw the world asunder as well as help the individual see for himself that the spirit of beauty lies in the expression of truth. In turn, this truth helps him to see the fleeting remoteness of absurd existence and a dissolute Self.

Strangely, Corde has a critical eye for the oddities of life and for the undependable contingencies of existence. He holds power but is not lulled by its hum. Corde knows his individualism and prefers to adhere to it whatever references are used against him. He is unable to back out of the depth of Self in which he is already neck-deep in. The destiny of his individualism is however decided by the public or by men like Spangler who don't see that

It was an instinct with Corde - may be it was a weakness - always to fix attention on certain particulars, in every situation to grasp details,... [though]... not practical, sometimes it was... painful, but actualities could not be left out. (DD 22)

Corde's abiding stand to the above words lie in the fact that at times Corde never could be tuned to being a mere stereotyped 'Spangler' who knew how to please his readers. Instead, Corde holds on, owing to his delectable optimism regarding that life
was after all full of changes, flexible, and active. The
effect of this thinking carries the protagonist to the very end
of the novel where on the brink of the novel's close on Mount
Polamar with his wife Minna, Corde recoils to a more optimistic
unselfing.

At Mount Palomar, Bellow arrives at a compromise
between "Order and Chaos". He feels that there "...the living
heavens looked as if they would take you in. Another sort of
rehearsal, thought Corde" (DD 306). The Dean's is a quiet
return to the absurd reality of existence wherein his own
intellectual Self had consumed a considerable lapse of time to
see 'through the real heavens' symbolically where

...You saw objects, forms, partial realities.
The rest was to be felt. ... as if your being
was informed that what was spread over you had
to do with your existence. (DD 306)

Corde's sense of Self here is a certain conviction that to
exist is to be free. Corde has not been whimsical in the
novel, as a protagonist and carries himself through the novel,
as any self explorer would do through contingent realities. It
takes the Dean some time to arrive at certain specific truths
about life, man, power, marriage, politics, science and the
choice of freedom to decide whether one should act or in what
way he shall act at all (Patka, Existentialist Thinkers 90).
At Mount Polamar, Corde is seen to accept a suspension of his Self into what is real through the absurd.

Corde's Self seems all the more implicit in his utterances at various instances, as he, though misinterpretedly 'dumb' has a strong will of self-commitment that draws forth his Self from any diversion or distraction. It is evident in the novel that Corde's intellect has been quite downtrodden by criticisms but these comments do not dissuade him. As Kauffman writes in the context of self-attainment, (though against the modernist will to Self), that Self is a probability in existence to realise which one much possess the true or the real. This truth lies within each individual attainable through one's immediate sense of Self.

It was an oppression on the Dean to be treated with contempt by Mason, Detillion and Spangler. But Corde's Self acts out without constraint and quite spontaneously, all its impulsive feelings and attitudes as his Self gradually removes the detrimental aspects that belittle it. Corde, as he himself claims "had challenged this 'real-world' power without [sufficient] reflective preparation... He had left himself wide open" (DD 179). Therefore, Corde himself had yielded to the vulnerability around him, but his wisdom and intellect revive itself from what is irrelevant to the free suspension of Self
and try to adjust to a growing identity accessible through each experience gained at various instances. At one instance Corde feels the pulse of depression within him harassing or aggravating his 'mystery moods' of thoughts, intelligence and wit, such that he feels that his heart was narrowed down to the size of a ladder crammed with such emotions as - "fire, death, suffocation put into an icy hole or instead, crackling in a furnace". Corde's greatest difficulty lay in terrible option of "How to choose between them!" (DD 212).

Corde is torn between the 'order' of his Self and the distortion of existential calamities. At each point Corde makes an effort to retrieve himself much against the criticisms and sarcasms lavished against him. Initially, Corde seems lost in a conglomeration of emotions rendered asunder between love, marriage, depression, personal inaction, and in being an incongruous foreigner in Bucharest, a social critic of Chicago, realising the need for human universality by understanding the need of any other man. Perhaps it is Corde's personal and social commitments that bring in all the difference between the negativity of Mischa and the intelligibility of Corde. Mischa exploits the members of society to retain his power, Corde is oblivious to what his powers can buy him for his Self is obsessed with the thoughts of bringing in radical changes in the society for the better.
Corde believes that he has performed well on the whole with his personal associates, acquaintances and relationships and yet his simple failures seem to make him a symbolic representative of the pitfalls and failures of Chicago and Bucharest. The dean's Self lies suffocated by the deep-rooted crimes and illusions of the urban society and his problem lies in finding some new way out of this society-imposed cramming of the mind. He had all the while stood in search of a panacea for the society, an adnodyne for his own limitations comprehending that

...Cities were moods, emotional states, for the most part collective distortions, where human beings thrived and suffered, where they invested their souls in pains and pleasures, taking these pleasures and pains as proofs of reality. ... he had made an effort to find out what Chicago, U.S.A., was built with.... At least he was beginning to understand why he had written those articles. Nobody was much affected by them, unless it was himself; so here was the emptiness before him, water; and there was the filling of emptiness behind him, the slums. (DD 216)

At the close of the novel, Corde is found waiting on a new, free state of existence that has just begun to inspire his unselfing. Corde symbolically, again, says that he almost minds coming down anymore, meaning to say that he has already slid enough on the rugged path of a 'Chicagoan existence'. Here was a different dean realising the extreme passions and
irrationality of human existence, the 'emptiness of it' striking him with a new connotation, which he does not want to lose once again.

Mischa Fox silently trades his power for adoration and stands aloof at a secure distance while each character in the novel tries to befriend him confronted by the crucial stress of existence. On the other hand, Albert Corde, the Dean, plunges into the midst of hostilities swindling the controversial position of a journalist but suffering the agonies of a world of realities 'realized within' and 'misplaced without'. Albert Corde makes fresh judgements on subjects, and discovers new versions of what is real, but earlier had no means of competence to fix himself against the objections raised to his exposure of contemporary reality.

Even as the novel closes Corde is not so concerned about affirming his personal sense of loss. Rather, he gives greater importance to affirming how the potential of urban lands have been disengaged from utility, how rationalisations as to their cause and effect could set them right. This attitude of theorizing the handicaps of a land lies in direct contrast to Albert Corde's character/Self at the personal level. Similar to Herzog's life, Albert Corde too has a private and a civilian Self; where inspite of the private man's
bearing of closed feelings, 'the citizen' acting on behalf of the needs and necessities of the society is greater and more impressive (Opdahl, Novels of Bellow 19).

Corde's Self is in deep anguish for a while when he commits himself to his journalism and in response receives abandonment by the public and despair within his mind for getting too committed or dedicated to the purpose he was set against. At that instance, Corde plays the role of a defensive legislator deciding for the multitudes in Chicago. But his guidance is misinterpreted. Corde has taken the issue, sifting it not merely as a social critic, but through his very soul. As Corde claims:

*It was no easy matter to put such things through. But there was no other way for reality to happen. Reality didn't [simply] exist 'out there'. It began to be real only when the soul found its underlying truth.* (DD 262)

Corde has observed the various contingencies that occurred in the society. He is aware that these contingencies lack continuity and cannot be viewed in their wholesomeness unless they are analysed through a medium or base that is 'Self'.

Albert Corde has no such henchman as Calvin Blick and is a hard core realist who is thoroughly unwilling to let the urban world flourish in their deaths, dreads, obsessions, crimes, failures and indifference. Corde imparts his opinions
after he carries these crucial problems for an inner-debate and only later he discusses them with the others in all too human motives. Corde's Self has a certain set goal which he considers as almost synonymous to duty. Once the Self has made its choice, then the aim of the choice should be performed unflinchingly even when on the threshold of threats. As far as Corde is concerned, he performs his 'duty' in all perfection under all conditions of defiance in a daring manner as a matter of dedication to his chosen duty.

Mischa's power and Corde's authority are goals set for the two protagonists by their creators (novelists). Both Mischa and Corde are found role-enacting in a profoundly calamitous social milieu, both with remarkable strength of free-will, and resolution. Apart from the structure of their Self and the exhaustive unselfing or personal debates, the novelists categorize their standards of "choosing one's Self" (Patka, Existentialist Thinkers 82). Mischa attains mastery over his Self and about the contingent realities of existence, while Corde suffers "despair and dissipation" (DD 82) after which a certain perseverance effects itself upon him in a rather unlimited though unqualified way.

D.H. Jefferson observes that what is characteristic in Mischa is his sense of balance - of wit and perverse obsession
with power, and a certain form of subdued sympathy (which comes to the rescue of the protagonist's moral fulfilment) for the other characters, specially when he spies them in their despicable predicament. The protagonist closely views their manoeuvres and frustration and performs his 'ritualistic powers' upon them as the need of the hour requires him or compels him to do. However, the novelist is bent upon rendering an all-positive-power figure with his entire characteristics invested in deep concern for his fellow-characters. The valid bits of commentary Corde offers makes him all the more independent and exclusive in his stance. Glenday's opinion of Bellow's Corde claims that

Corde has used his Harper essays to exclaim against the erosion of human principles, specifically in Chicago prisons, though more extensively throughout American and Western Society.... Corde is the most physically aware of all Bellow's characters, the most open to life's press of images. (Saul Bellow 150)

Journal articles perhaps are remote ways of communication specially when the address is made to the inhabitants of that very city, adverse to the public's self-esteem in which it gloats. Corde gives wide and minute details of Chicagoan predicament at large, and firmly believes, that this scrutiny could rescue the sanity of the city from all its irretrievability and excavate "the real being of a dissembled world" (Glenday, Saul Bellow 150).
All of Corde's and Mischa's pitfalls, inaction and procrastination help them only to highlight the morbid sickness that pervades the other characters. When the novels close, there is an optimistic note that suggests a state of freedom unbound by psychic sicknesses and dubiousness and is rather expressed as a release of Self.

Bellow depicts Corde's Self against the backgrounds of Bucharest that is 'void' and 'cold', and Chicago in all its treacherous vitality. Corde in all his grave seriousness makes censures about Chicago and Bucharest, Science and Culture, Existence and Self, Depression and Decay, and considers the cities as deplorable lands renowned for notorious vandalism. All minds that read Corde's articles converge and judge them as convictions arising out of personal disintegrity, too vulgar for the superiority complex of urban acceptance and dismiss them as cowardly conclusions of hasty prejudices and bias. Corde's is a plight of a single Self explaining what was what and who was who.

The fundamental yearning in the two protagonists is a perennial approach to rectify the contemporary background in the social, existential predicament of the other characters involved in the novel. Though Mischa enjoys the concomitant force of power, still, his power consensus is negative as the
execution or implementation of it is diminished by the ruthlessness he shows, trivialised by his petty pursuits after 'Artemis' or 'Rosa', whereas Corde is exasperated by the irreversible affliction of modern life and his rooted evocation to purify the urban society.