CONCLUSION

Literature has a deep relationship to social and intellectual history both as documentation and symbolic illustration. It must deal with social reality in a direct and an indirect way for the revelation of the direction of cultural movements and point out the inadequacies and the flaws, prevalent in a materialistic culture. Bellow feels that if the infinity of material resources can feed trifle desires, it can also create, “literature of beauty, irony, affirmation and despair” (Spiller 5). Bellow’s contribution to literature is marvelous and his achievement in fiction is miraculous also. As Earl Rovit says:

In my attempt to expose the underlying substance of his work as a whole, I may appear at times to denigrating his success. Nothing could be further from the truth. Bellow’s achievement, it seems to me, is so impressive and so relevant to our contemporary needs that only the most-rigorous analysis and evaluation can suggest its prime importance or point to what I believe to be its most enduring qualities. And that his work possesses such qualities what I shall try to demonstrate (5).

Talking about his place in the literary world, Venkateswarlu remarks, “Whatever may be the vicissitudes and eccentricities of literary reputations, contemporary literary world would be poorer without Bellow’s enigmatic presence” (179). Doubtlessly, Bellow is a keen observer of life and his contribution is noteworthy. Pirjo Ahokas throws light on his contribution saying, “A brilliant observer of all segments of the modern psyche and society, Bellow has contributed considerably to reshaping American fiction into a rich, multi-ethnic tapestry” (36). With his excellent wit and observation, Bellow
goes deep into the intricacies of man’s mind and the prevailing surroundings of society. He has given effective expression to these predicaments in his fiction.

Bellow keeps profound faith in art, which plays a significant part in the world. Man has to deal with so many aspects of life in society and art helps in connecting him to multi-dimensional society. An artist should thus work with dedication toward humanity and utilize his art in the defence of man. It is he who connects the inner and outer world comprehensively. As Sidney Finkelstein remarks:

Though only some art is social-minded, all art has social significance. No matter how purely internal an artist’s exploration may be, the inner conflicts he reveals are engendered by real conflicts and problems in the world outside him. The difference is that a social-minded art is created with awareness of the connections between “inner” and “outer”, while the artist lacking such awareness sees the outer world as mysterious, unreal or incomprehensible, turns inward for reality, and finds this also mysterious. Yet in its sensitivity, this art serves as a social document, recording among often bizarre, murky and pessimistic conclusions, the existence of a real problem in people’s minds; a psychological situation that is socially and historically created regardless of what the artist himself believes to be its origin (211).
That Bellow too emphasizes the use of art for life is amply illustrated by Daniel Fuchs who believes that:

The central thrust of Bellow’s fiction is to deny nihilism, immoralism and the aesthetic view. He wishes to make art possible for life. Where the artist-hero sought isolation, the Bellow protagonist longs for community and ironic distance gives way to the nearness of confession as we are on a personal standard (Quoted in Hall 545).

An artist is a spokesman of the public, and Gerhard Bach’s observation about Bellow’s fiction is that:

Since the Nobel Lecture, the directness with which he addresses the real needs and preoccupations of man in urbanized, technology-worshipping and commodity-ridden world expresses as much an acceptance of the public role of spokesman as the apparent desire to bring all the authority connected with it to bear (106).

Since the publication of his first novel *Dangling Man*, in 1944, Bellow’s development as a novelist is in ascendance. “From the perspective of his recent works, it is clear that Bellow’s development has led him far away from his modernist stance in the early works” (Kim 18). A novelist perceives the world minutely. He sees the sufficiencies and deficiencies here and there. With his deep perception, his intention is to impart the reader something valuable – a
product beneficial in different directions. Bellow too is desirous of projecting a variety of goods in his novels. As Ada Aharoni rightly remarks:

Bellow intends his novels not only to be read and enjoyed, but also to help spread a new climate of engagement and responsibility towards humanity, life, and society. He conceives his fiction as a new trend, departing from the adulation of the self-pitying, apathetic, and passive cultural climate fostered by some modern writers (47).

Bellow believes that the purpose of writing is to provide entertainment and a message for the reader. By observing the dual action, Bellow is of the firm view that man can responsibly discharge his duties towards humankind and society. In this way the aim of fiction is realized completely.

All of Bellow’s fiction addresses the intellectual, cultural, social and spiritual problems of the historically troubled modern world. Indeed, Bellow tends to regard the novelist as an imaginative historian who is able to get closer to contemporary facts. “Due to his wide and eclectic reading, Bellow is capable of synthesizing the most diverse intellectual trends and moments. Also apparent in his works is his vast knowledge and command of Western literature and literary traditions” (Ahokas 30). Without any surprise, then, the typical Bellowian protagonist is an intellectual hero who can never relinquish his faith that the value of life depends on its dignity, not on its success. As Clayton observes:

His humanity and compassion radiate from every novel; his interests are the interests of this culture – he knows where we’re at; his skill is
credible – in particular, his ability to describe experience in a human voice so that the texture of the experience comes through and his ability to convey the philosophical moral complexities of human life without losing that life itself... he stands as a spokesman for our culture, as a defender of the Western cultural tradition. He can define Darkness but never enter it; he can examine cultural nihilism but never share it (3).

Bellow admits that materialistic pursuits work for the degradation of society but he hopes that man, by being conscious of past experience, can reclaim himself and emerge from a hostile environment to a hospitable one. The hostile circumstances that Bellow’s protagonists experience do call upon “the subconscious world to counterbalance the conscious results of materialism” (Spender 51). He also lays stress on the “idea of a burden, a task, a pressure of disparate outer things seeking to realize themselves as inner significance” (Spender 51).

America, no doubt, is commercial but Bellow “does not worship commercial America” (Fenster 21). He feels a need to question the contemporary trends emerging as superfluity of attractions and excitements – world crises, which produce states of mind and attitudes towards existence that artists must take into account. Bellow is concerned with the strong ties of tradition and culture, replaced by superficiality. He is of the view that literature should answer the problem of quantity with improved quality. Literature, in his view, should not be an endless documentation of the dispossessed in American life without hope and redemption.

Bellow highlights the experience of intellectual souls who expose the coarse materialism of highly advanced societies. They seek self-knowledge by
facing and suffering the pressures of a mass culture and understand others by linking themselves to them. Bellow feels:

As a novelist, it is good part of my job to attempt to formulate, as dramatically and as precisely as I can, the pain and anguish that we all feel. Now more than ever, it seems to me it becomes the writer’s job to remind people of their common stock of emotions, of their common humanity of fact, if you will that have souls (Epstein 3).

His emphasis on emotions projects the potentials of feelings which remain unexpressed in urban society. His act of unfolding these unexpressed emotions helps people in connecting with one another with love.

His protagonists’ victimization is due to external pressures or materialistic deliberations. They then withdraw from society, become introspective, and finally overcome their sad predicaments with renewed thought to join others in a hostile society. They do so by learning the art of accommodation to a mass culture—a culture that prevents them from emotional involvement. Bellow attempts to bring to light the realities of life—love, compassion, freedom, anxiety, guilt and a willingness to yield to them. He feels that man can surmount the hostility syndrome of the modern technological age but his indecision and lack of will to do so alienate him. It is through the channel of fellow-feeling that he can overcome such a syndrome and see the possibilities of meaningful communication with others. Bellow believes that this way man can not only rid himself of isolation but also counter mass society. Thus in a mass culture of dejection and suppression, his protagonist passionately yearns for a transcendent meaning so that he may “lead a meaningful life in the emotional and spirituals barrenness of our
As a spokesman of American culture, Bellow voices its uncertainties, its complexities, its paradoxes. He takes a stand against cultural nihilism, against the Wasteland and against the denigration of human life in modern society. He rejects the tradition of alienation in modern literature and emphasizes the value of brotherhood and community. It is the thread of brotherhood which binds one another and it is the duty of each one of us to keep this linking-thread intact. Bellow is particularly hostile to the devaluation of the separate self. He values individuality highly. Yet in novel after novel he is forced to discard individuality, not simply because the individual is insignificant in the face of terrible forces, but also because individuality is undesirable, a burden which keeps the human being away from love. The state of grace which his protagonists approach is the state of anonymity which is the polar opposite of the individuality Bellow loves and wishes to defend; but it is a state which enables him to keep faith in the human being and in the possibility of his union with others. These contradictions can best be understood by understanding their origins in his characters. They feel guilty, unworthy of living; they defend the human being in order to defend themselves. Thus darkness and the struggle to escape darkness describes the psychic condition of his heroes before they describe the human condition. Bellow is a psychological novelist before he is a social novelist or moral spokesman. And the solution to the contradiction over individuality too is more psychological than intellectual. His heroes find that only by becoming unburdened of their guilty selves and entering the shared condition of people can they hope to become worthy. The loss of individuality and the sense of nothingness of individual life are what Bellow wishes to combat. In this way he affirms the possibilities of meaningful individual life.

Resisting the wasteland outlook of the earlier modernist tradition in the early stages of his career, Bellow has used his writing as well as his fictional
heroes as vehicles for exploring affirmative solutions. Caught up in a spiritual crisis, the typical Bellow hero usually seeks transcendence from his despair and alienation. As Malcolm Bradbury points out, "Bellow has grown more apocalyptic; a doubter of concepts, he has grown more conceptual and abstract" (33). His affirmation is always realized against the central wasteland metaphor. "This metaphor in Bellow's fiction serves a dual role; it projects the contemporary zeitgeist and also provides a framework through which his own regenerative vision is developed" (Neelakantan 25). He thus employs the metaphor of the wasteland as a medium for arriving at affirmation.

In the modern age man falls the victim to guilt, anxiety, desperation, dejection, illusion and suffering. This condition can best be understood in the context of Freudian psychology. As Freud points out, suffering threatens us from three directions:

... from our own body which is doomed to decay and dissolution and which cannot even do without pain and anxiety as warning signals; from the external world, which may rage against us with overwhelming and merciless forces of destruction; and, finally from our relations to other men. The suffering which comes from this last source is perhaps more painful to us than any more (120).

The suffering of Bellow's protagonists can usually be traced to their dissatisfaction with their present condition but after a period of suffering and their capacity to overcome it they arrive at some measure of self-understanding in their quest for identity. Suffering is valued then, as a means of arriving at humanity and acceptance of responsibility for other human beings. Bellow's novels thus reflect his deep concern with the value and meaning of suffering.
Recognizing the difference between hopeless suffering caused by injustice and natural suffering which is inevitable, he negates suffering without cause. Affirmation does not lie in masochism but in revolt against unjust suffering. He does not regard suffering as a means of ultimate affirmation, but believes in what one learns from the experience and acceptance of unavoidable suffering. To suffer for the sake of others is of redemptive value to one and participating in the suffering of others adds value to one’s life. It is suffering in which people are bound together. Bellow believes that shared suffering unites people. If we want something from others, we must expect to give up something and what we get in return is the affirmation of what we believe in. Suffering in Bellow’s novels has a peculiar Jewish flavour. He highlights the Jewish experience in such a way that it stands for the experience of all modern men. “The Jewish experience as is known to all, refers to their profound suffering and meaningless persecution” (Naresh Guha 248). Since suffering and alienation that characterizes the Jewish experience become everyone’s condition in American culture, the Jew becomes a symbol of the modern predicament itself. Bellow’s protagonists draw their moral perspective from the painful experience of the historical Jew who despite his suffering and alienation was able to preserve his dignity and humanity. For Bellow, the Jew symbolizes the alienated individual who inspite of his existential anguish, possesses the ability to learn the value of a selfless commitment towards others. In his view, the Jew with his dignity and humanity represents the hopes and possibilities of the modern age.

Bellow’s Jewish sensibility plays a vital role in the construction of a world-view that genuinely explores the possibilities open to man, despite the pressures that have come to change the quality of life in modern times. His world-view is valuable to mankind in that it helps man to make a clear estimate of his condition. The process of affirmation in Bellow’s fiction is invariably realized through a powerful depiction of characteristic strains, trials and
distresses of the modern world. The important point is by no means the final picture of life, and his vision goes far ahead. In fact, Bellow’s ultimate affirmative reality is like the perennial flow of the ultimate reality of life itself which is not static but must continue inspite of the countless hurdles on its way. So also, Bellow has faith in the affirmative nature of ultimate affirmative reality. He envisions this reality like the everlasting and continuous flow of water. The flow of the river into the ocean is thus likened to man’s linkage with society. After attaining this unique linkage, man realizes that he is responsible not only for the shape and content of his own life but also for the momentum and well-being of society and mankind.

Bellow shows how his protagonists in despair and dejection alienate themselves from society and after experiencing isolation and achieving recognition, strive for a connectivity with community. This is one of the greatest motivational forces of his protagonists. The conception of isolation and connection with community in the social system and the means by which it is achieved are similar in nature. The protagonists experience a coherent sense of self, defined by a code of values of life and then attach themselves to society. The underlying pattern in Bellow’s novels is the worldly archetypal heroic travel which in itself radiates the problematic connection between self and society. All Bellow’s heroes, from Joseph in Dangling Man, to Abe Ravelstein, are concerned with the search for a new identity and with the necessity for social responsibility. His protagonists emerge successful after undergoing a process of inner transformation that eventually permits them to reconcile their hard-earned identity with a personal connection with community. “Even Adam who had God Himself to talk to, asked for a human companion” (MDH 82). In the course of his pursuit of an individual identity, the protagonist wishes to be unattacked and aloof. He is inconsiderate towards others. Such an ambition is selfish and materialistic in nature. Responsibilities are incurred with involvements but he does not like to be involved in any. He is afraid of losing his freedom. He desperately struggles to keep his freedom at all costs but is gradually constrained by his circumstances. In Bellow’s fiction freedom emanates from
responsibility but responsibility does not emanate from freedom. He strongly believes that true freedom does not lie in rejecting relationships but in the acceptance of binding relationships. In Bellow’s world, the demands of responsibility are colossal and cannot be brought forth by a rigid code of moral values, but infringe upon only a contracted range of human relationships.

In Bellow’s world of interpersonal relationships, a new life free from the feelings of alienation is not to be found in new places and new conditions but in a new free self, developed by establishing relationships with others. Through meaningful relationship the protagonist feels the need of the ‘other’ and this need acquires priority over the requirements of the self. The protagonist, growing in such an awareness, struggles to lead a fuller life. While struggling hard in search of a new life, the hero partly searches for an authentic spiritual father through whose inspiration he arrives at self-recognition. It is the spiritual-father who leads the hero to his goal by making him realize the necessity of discarding his egotistic self and performing a role of responsibility towards others. The success or the failure of the hero is based on his choice of his spiritual-father and his acceptance and practice of values takes place as it does in the father-figure. Moreover, the hero must strive towards fatherhood and accept the sense of responsibility that accompanies it. His assumption of parenthood and involvement in the lives of others clearly indicates his moral development. Bellow’s protagonists, ultimately, understand and realize these aspects of life.

The hero is overtaken by contradictory drives within himself – his fulfillment of selfish desires and selfless obligations towards others. Gradually he is made to realize the qualities within himself that help him in understanding the conflicting demands of his moral and materialistic self. He takes a strong decision to confront himself and change for the better. This leads to the movement of his materialistic self towards a selfless commitment to others. He finally affirms the values that Bellow has always intended for his propagation.
Although the process of change is painful yet Bellow’s protagonists change and prioritise the values that help them to lead new lives among others, as is evident from the reconciliation that Albert Corde in *The Dean’s December*, Benn Crader in *More Die of Heartbreak*, Harry Tellman in *The Actual* and Abe Ravelstein in *Ravelstein* arrive at. Bellow firmly believes that man can change and become a better human being despite the vicissitudes of life. Man has always been changing and this has always been integral to his life. It is this change for the better that sustains life with the hope of a bright future, through community life.

The transcendental element has always varied among man. Likewise, the degree of transcendence among Bellow’s protagonists also varies in accordance with their personal affirmation Nonetheless, Bellow’s heroes move from withdrawal to commitment, from selfishness to selflessness and eventually declare their humanity towards other people. The shift from egotistic desires to love, responsibility and obligation towards others helps his protagonists to establish a more meaningful nexus with others.

Each of Bellow’s novels is concerned with the hero’s decision to fulfil his quest for a new life. This yearning takes him on a journey into the self. He realizes that he must first live with himself before he can hope to live with others. It is through experience and self-analysis that he rejects the unattainable goals and understands the necessary lesson of sacrificing of his own desires. Doing so he grows in stature and accommodates himself to the needs of others. Although, such heroism results in personal loss, for he has to sacrifice his personal desires to cater to the needs of other people, yet he is finally in possession of a self that is quite different from the one he had at the onset of his quest. Life is not a bed of roses. Man cannot act on his own in all spheres. If his actions and activities are directed with his own vested interests, they may go against the interests of others. If he views his actions as stepping-stones for himself, they may be barricades for others. What is useful for him may be harmful for others. His yearning for perfection may be imperfection for others. Man is not
perfect. If it had been so, this world would have been utopic – a world without any problem of self, any strifes in society and any wars among nations. Man's imperfection is a hard and harsh reality but with the acceptance of his imperfections, he can move towards a better life through a process of self-chastisement. His protagonist gradually realizes that “it is in striving that the self exists and not in the end, not in the realized goal; that man is a becomingness and not being and that in this fact lie his hopefulness and freedom” (Helen Weinberg 28). Victim of hostile circumstances, whims of others and even his own foibles and failings, his protagonist comes face to face with the belittling and “dwarfing forces of modern society” (Wisse 93). He struggles hard in the face of these forces and eventually aspires to lead a meaningful life in civilized society. The aim of the writer is to help society in keeping civilization alive and preserve it “from destroying itself” (Candes 272). To keep the civilization alive, Bellow emphasizes the need of morality. He sees it as a great binding force that can enable man to move in society with discipline and control. As Marcus Klein rightly observes, “Morality is simply the name of the discipline. The story to be told, consequently, is of the hero who becomes heroic either by rising to acceptance of obligations or descending to it” (252). Thus by passing through the chastening process of moral commitment, the hero arrives at self-realization:

The self-realization is achieved through essentially Jewish terms. Bellow, like other contemporary writers, is responsive to the present experience by selecting subjects and locales though apparently remote from that experience yet very close to it through their inner quality … Bellow takes for creative use what is valuable in the Jewish experience, that is, the rich Jewish moral insight, the typical, ethic of hard work, integrity, acceptance of responsibility, forbearance in distress (Alter 74).
Bellow firmly rejects the modern concept of the absurdity of human existence. “Instead, his protagonists – sensitive, observant, intensely individualistic intellectuals – although sometimes despairing and alienated, are never totally so. Their struggle is for a kind of spiritual balance to enable them to exert the will and imagination necessary to control their lives” (Stine 80). Bellow is optimistic and believes firmly in the possibility of maintaining selfhood. As Bryfornski and Carmel remark, “His strongly felt belief in the possibility of maintaining selfhood in a world that levels individualism is a major theme throughout his work. His heroes, who personify his optimism, are some of the most memorable in contemporary fiction” (68). His protagonists always brood over their past, converse about their families and relatives and strive for the revival of their old culture and its values. Commenting on Bellow’s characters, Venkateswarlu writes:

His characters think about their past all the time. They talk about their parents, cousins and uncles – the family structure, in other words, figures prominently in his work. And also they crave for old country culture and values in their search for security, sustenance and spiritual fulfillment in gentile America (176).

Bellow even draws the reader into his protagonists’ struggles with self and society, for:

In developing his characters Bellow emphasizes dialogue and interior monologue, and his prose style features sudden flashes of wit and philosophical epigrams. As his protagonists speak to themselves and to others, the reader is drawn into their struggles with self and society” (Matuz 25).
This conversational style lends great strength to the particular events of his novels. Commenting on this, the critic Leslie A. states:

Since Bellow’s style is based on a certain conversational ideal at once intellectual and informal, dialogue is for him necessarily a distillation of his strongest effects. Sometimes one feels his characters' speeches as the main events of the books in which they occur: certainly they have the impact of words exchanged among Jews, that is to say, the impact of actions, not merely overheard but felt, like kisses or blows. Implicit in the direction of his style is a desire to encompass a world larger, richer, more disorderly and untrammeled than that of any other writer of his generation (104).

His heroes undergo a sense of renewal by rejecting alienation and nihilism in favour of community living, and by progressing from existential despair to affirmative life. This transcendental progression culminates in a higher form of life which reveals to them a sense of “Divine humanity”. Bellow asserts that the manifold problems of the world such as crime, poverty, oppression, injustice, inequality and the like can be solved by establishing a relationship with people. A fine balance between social and private can thus help in realizing and maintaining nobility of the self.

There is no gloom or depression in Bellow’s fiction and his writing is also devoid of bitterness. He writes with full fidelity toward humanity and without any hatred for human failings in this imperfect world. By presenting the lives of his protagonists apparently in disorder, Bellow makes us aware of modern man’s dilemma and brings home the urgent need for a community life
that is governed by feelings of love, compassion and brotherhood. Bellow believes in man’s capacities and capabilities to redeem himself. Inspite of the uncertain lot of man in the present-day impersonal world, Bellow refuses to accept man’s inability to lead a worthy life.

The gathering of common people in the form of a crowd without any specific relationship with one another is a public phenomenon. It is this public phenomenon which represents the invisible kinship of all human beings. No one can escape this existential truth of kinship of one person with others. Bellow’s protagonists participate in public gatherings before they acknowledge their allegiance to the common people. They pretend to be extraordinary men and withdraw from ordinary life into their “self-invented realities”. Certain unexpected happenings ultimately compel them to come out of their isolation to join public gatherings, walk in public places, visit public institutions and participate in public ceremonies. In these places, they come across ordinary people and face the truth of ordinary life. This truth of ordinary life wipes out their egos and makes them aware of their commonality. Sukhbir Singh comments on how “Bellow uses the public phenomenon as a metaphor for man’s inevitable affiliation to other human beings” (76). Man thus cannot help attaching himself to other human beings. And with the help of this public phenomenon Bellow attempts to find answers to his own question: “when will we see new and higher forms of individuality, purged of old sickness and corrected by a deeper awareness of what we all men have in common?” (“Bunuel’s Unsparing Vision” 112).

Before arriving at any conclusions about Bellow’s vision of life in his later fiction, it is pertinent and necessary to have a glimpse of his vision in his earlier fiction, for although the vision of a writer doesn’t change drastically with the passage of time, yet there is certainly a gradual development that is in keeping with the values and ideas of changing times.
Joseph, the protagonist of Bellow’s first novel *Dangling Man*, joins a large gathering of friends and strangers at a party in Minna’s house. He becomes aware of certain human defects for the first time. He notices Abt’s harshness towards Minna and realizes how the true forms of human nature can be viewed in such gatherings. As a result, he begins to doubt the authenticity of the ideal constructions that he has drawn from his bookish knowledge, in order to insulate himself from the ordinary realities of life and submits his resignation to the Inter-American Travel Bureau for induction into the Army. It is only then he tries to establish a meaningful dialogue with the external world that he realizes that “goodness is achieved not in vacuum but in the company of other men, attended by love” (*Dangling Man* 75). His interaction with other men helps him in dispelling his pretensions and acknowledging that he has not acted well in his isolation. His participation in society thus relieves him of his isolation and enables him to achieve recognition by connecting with his community.

Like Joseph, Asa Leventhal, the Jewish protagonist of Bellow’s *The Victim*, also has a tendency to keep away from ordinary life. One evening Leventhal comes out of his apartment for a walk in a nearby park. The park is crowded with people and is noisy. Suddenly Kirby Allbee, a gentile, comes out of the crowd and meets Leventhal. Holding Leventhal responsible for the loss of his job, he harasses him and seeks his help in finding another job. Leventhal denies the responsibility for the loss of Allbee’s job. He gives two reasons in his defence. Saying that he always manages to get away with his past mistakes which of course is pretension and that he has no relationship with him. Allbee persists with the accusations but Leventhal does not bother to understand them. Therefore, Leventhal disowns any responsibility for Allbee’s ruin. There is another encounter outside Leventhal’s house when Allbee again comes out of a crowded restaurant. After all, Allbee represents the world of ordinary people which threatens to engulf Leventhal. Leventhal now feels defenseless. He turns
to his friends for help. He pleads his innocence and persuades them to protect him from Allbee. But after deliberations with friends, he soon acknowledges that “it is necessary for him to accept some of the blame for Allbee’s comedown” (The Victim 102). Finally, toward the end, he accepts Allbee’s accusation and his fault. But he still hesitates to accept his human relationship with Allbee. One evening when Leventhal enters his room, he finds Allbee there with a prostitute. Enraged, he forces Allbee to leave his apartment. It is only afterwards that he manages to get a glimpse into human truth:

But when he sat down for a moment on the bed, all the comedy of it was snatched away and torn to pieces .... The truth was probably far different. He had started out to see what had happened with her eyes and had ended by substituting his own, thus contriving to put her on his side. Whereas, the fact was that she was nearer to Allbee. Both of them, Allbee and the woman, moved or swam towards him out of the depth of life in which he himself would be lost, choked, ended. (The Victim 224).

For a moment, he accepts his relationship with humanity through both of them. His momentary acceptance of his relationship with other people redeems him from his superiority complex and fear of insecurity. After several years he meets Allbee in an overcrowded Broadway theatre. He now faces him on equal terms without any sense of superiority or insecurity. Thus Leventhal overcomes his encroachment by accepting his kinship with others in society.

Tommy Wilhelm in Seize The Day, is also overtaken by his fear of drowning in the vast ocean of ordinary humanity. A victim of his superiority like Leventhal, he too has cut himself off from society and lives in isolation.
His is a "pretender soul" which hates the "true soul". He creates a semblance of dignity to hide his inner confusion and wears a hat and smokes a cigar to look fairly well to others, including his father. Owing to his pretentions, he doesn’t share his feelings with ordinary people and thus alienates himself. In his desperate bid to escape the truth of human life, he makes one mistake after the other and is consequently buried under them. He commits one final mistake by giving his last seven hundred dollars to Dr. Tamkin to buy lard‐shares from the stock market. He gives him money with an understanding that it would not only see the latter through crises but also bring him security. Wilhelm loses his money. He walks out of the stock market in search of Dr. Tamkin. He finds himself in the crowd of people. The inexhaustible current of people pushes him into a nearby funeral parlor and he finds himself among the mourners. Experiencing a revelatory moment on seeing the dead body of an unknown person, he sees in the dead the ultimate reality of human life, the finale of all human strivings. He slowly moves closer to the dead body. This makes him conscious of his own human connection with the anonymous body and through it win living humanity. He weeps for the dead, "first softly and from sentiment, but soon from deeper feeling" (Seize The Day 125). The act of his grieving in public over the death of an unknown person kindles a flame of love in his heart for other unknown people. In weeping for the dead, he weeps for himself and for all living people from whom he keeps away under the false pretext of superiority. In getting rid of his "pretender soul" and encompassing his "true soul" – "the inescapable self" – he thus establishes his relationship with his fellow human beings.

In Henderson the Rain King, Henderson is a rich man who suffers from meaninglessness and fear of death. He yearns for a meaningful life. There is a ceaseless voice in his heart which continuously cries out, "I want, I want, I want, oh, I want ..." (Henderson the Rain King 15). He finds himself unable to silence this voice. Finally he takes a flight to dark Africa in search of an
answer. He comes across two tribes there – the Arnewi and the Wariri. After his complete failure in the Arnewi, Henderson along with his guide, Romilayu, reaches the Wariri tribe, the tribe of King Dahfu. Here Henderson’s participation in the public ceremonies brings him close to death. At the rainmaking ceremony, people gather to see the King and a half naked woman playing with the skulls of the King’s ancestors, without fearing the penalty of death. Henderson too joins the crowd. As soon as the game is over, Henderson wants to know the opinion of the King about the game of skulls. The King tells him that it is normal and one day his own skull will get air. Dahfu’s frank admission of the inevitability of death deeply influences Henderson. He finds that the King is not afraid of death. Becoming fearless like King Dahfu, he offers to lift the huge statue of “Mummah”, goddess of the clouds, knowing well that he would have to die in case of failure. He lifts the huge statue of “Mummah” and his victory brings rain to the tribe after which he is given a superheated sour water bath, to initiate him into a new life.

During his temporary stay with the Wariri, King Dahfu subjects him to lion therapy, for its liberating effects on his sick mental life. But he does not feel fully recovered. Then he participates in “Hopo”, the ceremony, in which Dahfu joins the tribe men to catch the ceremonial lion, a supposed incarnation of his father’s soul. While chasing the lion, the King encounters the lion and he is killed. When the King is dead, Henderson runs away from the Wariri, carrying with him the cub, which is supposed to embody the soul of Dahfu. On the way back, he tells Romilayu that “the sleep is burst, and I’ve come to myself” (Henderson the Rain King 306). Henderson’s participation in public rituals among tribal folk cures him of his sick spirit and now he feels fit enough to live among his fellow human beings. His love for the anonymous child in the plane on his return also symbolizes his new-found humanity. He thus returns home renewed in spirit and ready to make a new start among his fellow beings.
Herzog’s problem in *Herzog*, is to understand his self, find order and seek harmony in life. He recovers his ordinary human self when he pays his visits to the courtroom and the police station where people from all walks of life appear every day for some personal or social reasons. He tries to shape his life according to ready-made ideas. He reads books such as *The World as Will and Idea* and *The Decline of the West*. He is still unaware of the truth of human nature. After reading the ideas given in these books, he considers himself an extraordinary person and so isolates himself from community. His first wife, Daisy, tries to confine him due to her classical tastes and he divorces her. But the awareness of the truth of common life comes to him only when his second wife, Madeleine, divorces him and starts living with his closest friend, Valentine Gersbach. Her betrayal shatters his ego and breaks him. He then decides to set everything right for himself. He tries to resolve his intellectual confusions by writing letters to public heroes and even to the dead. He goes to court to consult his lawyer about the legal possession of his daughter where he happens to hear the proceedings of a criminal trial about the merciless murder of a child by its mother and her lover. The trial moves Herzog to imagine Madeleine and Gersbach murdering his own daughter in a similar manner. He soon picks up his pistol and sets out for Chicago with the intention of killing Gersbach, but when he reaches there, he is surprised to see his enemy bathing his daughter lovingly. This incident brings about a change in his perception of life. Encountering the reality of human nature, he finds it contrary to what he had imagined. He realizes that there can be potential goodness in a wicked man like Gersbach and potential evil even in a good man like him. With this realization, his illusion about the nature of man is shattered through the realization that:

… a man is somehow more than his “characteristics,”
all the emotions, strivings, tastes, and constructions
which it pleases him to call “My Life.” We have
ground to hope that a life is something more than such a cloud of particles, mere facticity: Go through what is comprehensible and you conclude that only the incomprehensible gives any light (Herzog 266).

One more incident gives him another shock and contributes towards his refinement. While driving his daughter to the museum one day he meets with an accident. The policemen search him as they would a common man, arrest him for keeping an unlicensed pistol and lodge him in jail with commoners. Surrounded by ordinary people, he behaves like an ordinary man, loses his egotism gradually and regains his bond of relationship with others. He thus returns home with a new outlook.

Like Herzog, Charlie Citrine in Humboldt's Gift, is also an egotist. He also thinks of himself as “a marvelous noble person” (Humboldt's Gift 46). His nobility is put to test when he is overtaken by the “nagging rush” of social and metaphysical realities. He pays a visit to the poker parlor where he comes in contact with Cantabile who is the embodiment of the anarchic social conditions in America. Cantabile systematically tortures Citrine at gun point with the intention of extracting money from him. Unable to control him on his own, Citrine turns toward the common people who can tolerate the social agitation. Like other common people, he takes recourse to low life knowledge in order to prevent Cantabile from harming him, patienty yields to Cantabile’s authority and finally gets rid of him without letting him cause any serious harm. In like manner he gets along with Denise, a beautiful though fierce woman, but also struggles hard to overcome his feelings of guilt and responsibility towards his late friend Von Humboldt Fleisher partly by praising Humboldt and ridiculing himself and partly performing the ritual of his burial again. The ritual of reburial is followed by the sprouting of spring flowers in the graveyard, which
symbolize Citerine's rebirth into a life that is free from either egotism or anxiety.

Thus, it is through the recognition and reclamation of their love and Jewishness alone that Bellow's protagonists counter the modernist sensibility which in its characteristic pessimism sounds the death of traditional values and beliefs. In no sense then, is Bellow abstracting himself from the pressures and burdens of modern life. On the contrary, his fiction demonstrates that it is still possible to meet life without seeking recourse to postures of alienation. Unable initially to relate themselves meaningfully to society, Bellow's protagonists gradually come to learn that it is only love and a sense of responsibility towards community that can rejuvenate their spirit. After experiencing isolation and struggling hard for recognition, they therefore attempt to reconnect to the community of which they have been and still are an integral part.
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