

VOYAGE OF DISCOVERY: *HERZOG* IN PERSPECTIVE

蔡 源 煌

(作者為本校西洋語文學系兼任副教授)

摘 要

「何索」一書之結局，說者紛紜，莫衷一是。有的認為其結局並未交代主角心理已趨正常；有的則持相反意見辯稱該書結尾主角已然神智清明。本文特就此項批評爭議細加探究，透視主角之心路歷程，並以主角芝加哥之行為轉捩點，明確表示此行不僅使主角萌發新的意識體認，同時使他更進一步瞭解知識份子之良心與責任。文中以英國心理學家 R. D. Laing 所揭櫫的「本體性不安」觀念闡明何索失去心理平衡之癥結所在。除了心理分析之外，本文並詳細追溯何索對於西方思想家如黑格爾、尼采、海德格等人之質疑，成功地探討了何索對這些思想的取捨以及該項取捨對於何索精神新生之意義。

One must still have chaos in oneself to be able to give birth to a dancing star.¹

What we want, I think, is not added confusion but a mental experience that gives a sense of moving from disorder to order, to a moment of poise. . . . Seeing life in some way reflected in a guise that implies order gives a heightening of energy, of relief. It's a liberation. *Not*, I should emphasize, because of particular "solutions" offered, but because the process is an image of the possibility of meaning growing from experience—an image, that is, of our continuous effort to make sense of our lives.²

In his near-delirium, Herzog covers the world with his frenetic letters: he writes to the newspapers, to the people in public life, eager to sell them his ideas, which extend everywhere, including social, political, and religious arenas. He writes letters to the pastor in a Wall Street church about the social injustice of skid rows existing; to the President about taxation and automation aggravating unemployment problems; to the Commissioner of Police Department about police force and civil order; to the Secretary of the Interior about domestic oil reserve being used up. In his own words, his "thoughts are shooting out all over the place."³ The early Herzog often holds his ideas with such an intensity that he fails to recognize they spring from his own disturbed emotion. Ultimately, he realizes that his random associations—fleshed out merely by his private indignation and "unearned bitterness"—are an indication of misguided intellectual consciousness, and in the end feels renovated when he ceases writing those letters.

In his wide-ranging concerns with ideas, culture and society, however, Herzog

renders a vivid portrait of himself as an intellectual: he cares “only about the very highest things . . . about belief” (185). Yearning deeply for relevance and use—“The occupation of a man is in duty, in use, in civility, in politics in the Aristotelian sense” (94), says Herzog—he regards Adlai Stevenson’s campaign for the Presidency as a sign of intellectuals gaining ground in society, and has to attribute Stevenson’s loss to people’s mistrust in ideas. In his fantasy letter to Eisenhower he describes himself as an intellectual *per se*: “So let us say that he is a thoughtful person who believes in civil usefulness. Intelligent people without influence feel a certain self-contempt, reflecting the contempt of those who hold real political or social power, or think they do” (161). Therefore, Herzog comically joins “the objective world in looking down on himself”; he appropriates Eisenhower’s and others’ sharp criticism of the intellectual as an “egghead, a bleeding heart, or a nut of some kind” (161).

All this may attest to the “Anti-Intellectualism in American Life”—to use Hofstadter’s term. And yet, hostile as the modern American people and environment are, intellectuals are partly responsible for this prejudiced, stereotyped impression.⁴ As Sandor Himmelstein, the unintellectual, acquisitive lawyer, charges, intellectuals are those “effing eggheads who can’t answer their own questions” (81). As far as this spiteful characterization is concerned, Herzog is a ready example: he suggests that an intellectual loves to talk in metaphors, tends to look upon life as a “subject” to be contemplated, and often allows his far-fetched “universal concerns” to abstract him from the ordinary, communal life.

Faced with both his own problems and anti-intellectual environment, Herzog, nevertheless, represents some glimmer of hope, or saving grace, if we may call it that, for the intellectual. One salient hope emerges from the fact that he is fully aware of his own insufficiency as an intellectual. His joining the objective world in looking down on himself also shows some degree of self-knowledge and awareness of his own limitations. He knows the intellectual trade is a “delirious profession” (a term he borrows from Valéry) “in which the main instrument is your opinion of yourself and the raw material is your reputation or standing” (77). As Herzog indicates here, the fact that intellectuals live by ideas calls into question the intellectuals’ responsibilities. In the trade of intellect and ideas, one should be held accountable for one’s opinion. When the enlightened Herzog lectures Asphalter about reality and illusion, truth and lie, he pinpoints the elusiveness of truth. Granted the intellectuals’ reliance on words for the conveying of ideas, their proclaimed truth is a personally constructed, or composed, view of things, events and people ensuing from their effort to construe and conceptualize reality. Indeed, any truth as presented and defined in linguistic formation betrays a subjectivity for which one should be

held accountable. Consequently, any intellectual—as the renovated Herzog sees it—should aim at *les mots justes* which truly carry the weight of the human situation, instead of pursuing the “powerful imagination,” the ingenuity of intellectual construction in the glorification of nightmarish, apocalyptic visions, or surrendering himself to the camp of the so-called out-siders to brandish unrelenting criticism on society or escape present reality in utopian fantasies.

Although I have so far treated Herzog as if he were an archetype of the intellectual, I am aware that I am dealing with an individual intellectual. However, Bellow’s delineation does suggest that an individual case may fit, by extension, many cases. “Wouldn’t it be amusing,” Bellow states, “if I wrote a book about a man who, going out of his mind, is writing letters to everybody. And then I discovered that hundreds of thousands of people were doing just that—always had been doing that.”⁵ To the extent that Herzog’s frenzy may point to “what affects so many people,” he is no doubt meant to be both an individual character and a type.

In his study of Bellow’s early works, Maxwell Geismar calls Bellow the “Novelist of the Intellectuals.”⁶ Certainly this label is apt, for not only his early works but also the later ones, including *Herzog*, *Mr. Sammler’s Planet*, and *Humboldt’s Gift*, can be classified as “intellectual novels”—novels of the thinking man. Bellow’s concern with thinking men is so salient that Howard M. Harper, Jr. argues: “*Herzog* represents an amplification of Bellow’s earlier ideas.”⁷ We may even add that these ideas and concerns persist through Bellow’s more recent works, *Mr. Sammler’s Planet* and *Humboldt’s Gift*.

Bellow’s concern with intellectuals has much appeal for John W. Aldridge, who hails *Herzog* as the major novel of our age, because “it takes intellectual sophistication as its very subject and demonstrates that the life of the mind can in fact be as important and exciting a source of creative vitality as the life of the groin. . . . [It is] uniquely expressive of ourselves and our condition as intellectuals.”⁸ Even Bellow himself says in a *Paris Review* interview:

To me, a significant theme of *Herzog* is the imprisonment of the individual in a shameful and impotent privacy. He feels humiliated by it; he struggles comically with it; and he comes to realize at last that what he considered his intellectual “privilege” has proved to be another form of bondage. Anyone who misses this misses the point of the book.⁹

However, we are faced with many difficulties in dealing with Herzog as an intellectual, for he admits that he has been “in a state”: “Some people thought that he was cracked and for a time he himself had doubted that he was all there” (1). Indeed, the novel presents such an “ambiguous situation,” into which Herzog claims

he is plunged, that critics even become skeptical about Herzog's intellectual competency. To be sure, as Robert Dutton observes, one of Bellow's central concerns is an intellectual who "is suffering from self-doubts concerning his own social relevance," and "lacks confidence in the value of self."¹⁰ Nevertheless, Gabriel Josipovici goes even further in concluding that "*Herzog* emerges as the work which Herzog, the fictional hero of that book, found it impossible to write."¹¹ I will later discuss my reservations about Josipovici's judgment; for the time being I merely assert that in treating Herzog's ambiguous situation, any doubt as to his intellectual competency is premature. Of course, one may argue that Herzog is insane and therefore conclude that he is unable to pursue further his scholarly work. In that case, the novel, as Josipovici sees it, amounts to the eradication of an intellectual's "creative vitality." My answer to this view is simply that the degree of Herzog's sanity, or even of his productivity, does not aptly measure his intellectual perceptions. Herzog insists throughout the book that his state is—and I feel it is—a temporary derangement. And besides, such books as R. D. Laing's *The Politics of Experience, The Divided Self*, or Foucault's *Madness and Civilization*, argue that there is only a thin line between madness and perceptiveness.

A corollary to the controversies over Herzog's degree of sanity emerges eventually in a variety of arguments about the novel's ending; and the central issue, notably, lies in whether the novel presents a resolution of some sort, and consequently, whether Herzog's transformation is convincing. In the words of Marcus Klein, one of its first reviewers, the ending is "a little suspect, only a baiting of a resolution."¹² Besides, the structural arrangement—the Berkshires setting which begins and ends the novel—has drawn many critics to a negative interpretation of Herzog's ordeal. For instance, Daniel B. Marin argues that Herzog's final "affirmation" is merely that of "the conditions in which Herzog has lived and will continue to live."¹³ It is true that "the bitter cup will come around again," but, in focusing on this single aspect of the cyclic nature of Herzog's condition, critics fail to see the book in perspective.

During the past years critics have re-evaluated the resolution and Herzog's transformation. For instance, in his *Saul Bellow* (1965), Tony Tanner says Herzog's mental movement is from "corrosive restlessness to a point of temporary rest," adding: "But a counter-movement grows increasingly strong—a desire to re-engage simple reality, a yearning for a reprieve from this excess of solitary cerebration."¹⁴ Later, in *City of Words* (1971), Tanner revises his earlier stance, indicating that the ending of the novel "can appear as a capitulation to the entropic forces, or it may be seen as the beginning of a more truly human adjustment to the mysterious process

and rhythms of existence. As in other comedies, the possibilities of dual perspectives are allowed, indeed encouraged, to the end.”¹⁵

Tanner’s latter statement is, of course, a more faithful reading of the novel. Indeed Bellow’s *Herzog* is a portraiture of an “intellectual ninny”—it allows the possibilities of dual perspectives. *Herzog* is both the *alazon* and the *eironeia*.¹⁶ *Herzog* reminds us repeatedly that his change is that of heart, of outlook, which points to an innerscape whose transformation is largely ideological and so, not as obvious as a physical change. However, Bellow’s intention of delineating *Herzog*’s change of heart, of outlook is unmistakable. In an interview with Jo Brans, Bellow states that *Herzog* “decided to go through a process of jettisoning or lightening. That’s how I saw the book when I was writing it.”¹⁷ Despite the circular structure of the novel, which encourages the misleading interpretation that *Herzog* is taken “back at the original point” after he has gone through all his mental reenactments, *Herzog* nevertheless “finds himself to be his own most penetrating critic” (Bellow’s words in the same interview) and divests himself of all his false eggheaded habits. In this connection, even *Herzog*’s dismissal of certain ideas, though it gives the impression of an ironic anti-intellectual stance, is necessary for his change of outlook. The essential fact is that *Herzog* is faced with the chaotic reality of his world and his equally chaotic identity. Getting rid of his false intellectual habits, *Herzog* at the same time sheds his false personae and gets down to the core of his true self. Hence, Bellow’s remarks, recorded by Alvarez in *Under Pressure: The Writers in Society*, fit *Herzog* perfectly. The artist, Bellow says, has

inherited a romantic tradition which forces him into the position of nay-sayer and Promethean or undergroundling or destroyer of himself, or any number of roles that he feels absolutely obliged to play out. . . . I don’t really know that it is a question of the individual artist pitted against the situation, the total situation. I think that’s rather too ambitious and makes life impossible for the individual and leads him to self-destruction. A certain amount of self-destruction we must undergo, I suppose, to destroy former falsehoods and burn ourselves clean. I don’t believe in a kind of apocalypse that calls for the demolition and knocking down of everything that stood before.¹⁸

The most articulate critic to treat the resolution and *Herzog*’s transformation is perhaps Forrest Read, who states that “The resolution, if the novel has one, is less a finality than a quality. One of the arguments about the book will be whether the conclusion brings us back to the beginning, so that *Herzog* pauses after full circle before another bout; or whether he gets himself and others sufficiently out from under his skin so that he can open himself to whatever will come and not be stampered. . . . If the book is circular, it is spiral, for in the last pages *Herzog* is either

upon a new level, or down in the quotidian, or both: For him they have at last become one and the same. Herzog never stops living, and Bellow keeps it open.”¹⁹

The book indeed features the “education” of its fictional hero, and more—it presents Herzog’s self-therapy, ridding himself of the trauma he has suffered from his marriage with Madeleine and their final estrangement. And most significantly, it is about the reorientation of an intellectual who tries to get rid of his “subjective monstrosity” and “open himself to what will come.” His ordeal and reconstitution also suggests that the self is not given full-blown and ready-made but is to be made in the course of existence and in the context of relationships.

Although Herzog has been “in a state,” he is indeed his own most penetrating critic—certainly Bellow wants it to appear so. Herzog’s state of mind, in a word, is “chaotic,” but he is far from an incompetent intellectual. On the contrary, as Herzog tells us, “Much of my life has been spent in the effort to live by more coherent ideas. I even know which ones” (279). In fact, in his quibbling and battling against modern Western ideas and thinkers, his challenges more often than not are accurate and perceptive. Perhaps he is so overwhelmed by the pain and evil in his personal life that, as experiences swarm into his mind, he is fully absorbed and the “nonbalance” in his perceptual schema impedes him from achieving a significant and coherent synthesis. In turn, Herzog assumes the comic mask of a jester, mocking his own failure to achieve the conceptual synthesis which is indispensable in intellectual construction. He interrogates himself cynically, “‘Synthesize or perish!’ Is that the new law?” (322) Noting his own failure, he paraphrases Woodrow Wilson’s vice-president: “What this country needs is a good five-cent synthesis” (207).

When Herzog confesses that “Hegel was giving him a great deal of trouble” (6), he reveals not only his misapprehension of Hegel’s theories, *viz.*, the concept of mind as the source for both construing experience and expediting social and moral activity, but also his difficulty weaving together all the strings of his thoughts to emulate the grand synthesizer, Hegel. Interestingly, Bellow links Herzog’s failure to synthesize with the fictional hero’s capitulation to a “polarized” conceptual framework based on his sexual frustration. In autoreminiscence, Herzog senses that “It’s the hysterical individual who allows his life to be polarized by simple extreme antithesis like strength-weakness, potency-impotency, health-sickness” (208). The simplistic antithesis clearly exposes the inadequacy of his schema in the mistaken effort to see things in binary opposition. Moreover, this gratuitous view of things derives from his obsession with the “sexual disgrace” forced on him by Madeleine and her lover. He seems to believe that the antithesis, as he lists here, is a measure of success or failure in the man-woman relationship—the power of fulfilling the other

sex's demand, of performing sex well. He laments that this area in particular is where "the all-powerful human intellect employs itself when it has no real occupation" (219). This erotic obsession even underlies and colors his experience with the people around him. For instance, he hears his inner drive murmuring "quack, quack," thinking of Ramona's sensual body. He unashamedly tells Zelda (Madeleine's aunt) and Ramona that with Madeleine he has always been a flop. On the other hand, he is in no way willing to reveal to the male characters his inability to gratify Madeleine's sexual demands. His explanation of Mady's assault on him in the bedroom one night as they both crept into the bed naked, is unsatisfactory to Dr. Edvig. As he has evaded Edvig's demand for a real answer, Herzog deliberately holds back any hint at his impotency—in the narrative, he interrupts his letter to Edvig to dwell on another subject: travesties of Martin Buber. Later, when he talks about the same incident with Gersbach, the latter accuses him of being "damn evasive." Understandably, he refrains from telling Gersbach the truth, because the latter, though a cripple, is virile enough and "too big for anything but the *truth*" (61).

Reflecting on the cause of his divorce, Herzog's answer is completely sex-oriented. When Zelda delivers Madeleine's complaint that he is selfish, Herzog has this hilarious monologue with himself: "Ah, that! He understood. The *ejaculatio praecox!*" (40) In the first chapter of the book, he goes to Dr. Emmerich for a physical check-up. After Emmerich examines his prostate gland and assures him that he is all right (Emmerich advises that he take a young lady to the country, the seashore to spend a holiday), Herzog cannot refrain from his excitement. He has sex with Ramona and performs in the "simple missionary style" (201), and assurance of his sexual potency makes him feel most like a convalescent.

This sex-oriented dialectic, allegedly resulting from his frustrating experience with Madeleine, is coupled with other undesirable effects of the marriage upon his intellectual capacity. His relationship with Madeleine, almost six years of nuptial unfulfillment followed by a final estrangement, is an education, not only disgracing him sexually, but also marking the deterioration of his intellectual perceptions, especially his love of apocalypse. In his first book, *Romanticism and Christianity*, the product of his first marriage with Daisy, who is orderly, systematic, and frugal, though not intellectually challenging or combative, he devoted a section to Romanticism and Apocalypse. At that point, his involvement in apocalyptic imagination was presumably not overdone, but he begins to show "a taste and talent also for danger and extremism, for heterodoxy, for ordeals, a fatal attraction to the 'City of Destruction'" (6).

Moreover, the results of his second marriage with Madeleine also include the

worsening of his isolation. As an insulated intellectual, however erudite, he tends to think life is a subject for scholarly study, not different from other academic projects. Ironically, his nearly four-year stay in Ludeyville, a village not even registered on the gas station map, removes him further from the communal realities. After the marriage, by burying himself in the ruined house at Ludeyville with Madeleine, he becomes the caretaker of the house. He is tied up in all kinds of repair work, mowing the lawn, fixing the storm window so that he has been "going under" (121), and reducing his intellectual productivity. During the first stage of his stay there, he—as Madeleine taunts him—"hasn't cracked a book in months" (121).

The phrase "going under," I think, is a forceful echo to Nietzsche's Zarathustra, and hence points to the homeopathic, metaphorical ordeal Herzog undergoes. Despite Herzog's quibble with Nietzsche about crisis ethics and frenzy of destruction without survival, Herzog has pinpointed his ordeal exactly in Nietzschean terms, and also in Jean Wahl's terms, "transcendence downward" for which Herzog has a more fashionable word: "trans-descendence" (176). Herzog believes that transcendence upward in this post-Romantic, post-Holocaust era is impossible; meanwhile, his trans-descendence answers his need of "more contact with life." In this connection, his transcendence downward is also an answer to Heidegger's "Second Fall of Man": "the fall into the quotidian, ordinary" (49, 106).

Before we explore further this philosophic theme, it is necessary to "straighten out" Herzog's relationship with Madeleine and Gersbach. The marriage with Madeleine has proved to be a "catastrophe" to Herzog. With the divorce on the tenth of March, Herzog has undergone periods of distraction and lost his balance. Writing fantasy letters to everybody under the sun, "He was so stirred by these letters that from the end of June he moved from place to place with a valise full of papers" (1). All this frenetic letter-scribbling and restless roving are the result of his urge "to explain, to have it out, to justify, to put in perspective, to clarify, to make amends" (2). Apparently, Herzog is under the illusion that "total explanation" is possible and necessary. It is true that Madeleine's insults hurt him so much that he wants to explode, to have it out; however, his motives soon cancel themselves as he thrusts further into his wild mental odyssey, for he cannot justify—as he knows, personal history bears little relevance to others. By and by, his "explosions" become "implosions" (328), because his venomous intent to get even with Madeleine drives him crazy. His "explosions" are further marred by his clumsy way of putting his troubles into "highminded categories"; worst of all, spurred by his indignation against Madeleine and the people around her, he slides into scolding and invective in such a manner as to implicate the whole society. Even his attempt to "make amends" turns

out to be vengeful, as his letter to Shapiro clearly indicates.

Indeed, notwithstanding his effort to put his troubles in perspective, he is entrenched in his "stupid eggheadedness" (58). For example, he is so naive as to think that in writing these letters, helter-skelter, he has "filled the world with letters to prevent their [Madeleine and Gersbach's] escape. . . . I conjure up a whole environment and catch them in the middle" (272). These, he cannot but admit ultimately, are merely incensed verbal "constructions." In dodging into intellectual games of chasing after reality with language, Herzog shows his helplessness in dealing with Madeleine and Gersbach.

Given that Herzog uses a lot of psychoanalytic terms in describing his state of mind, it may be necessary to approach his troubles psychoanalytically. For this purpose, I find R. D. Laing enlightening and helpful. Herzog picks up Dr. Edvig's appellation of him as a "reactive depressive," who tends to "form frantic dependencies and to become hysterical when cut off, when threatened with loss" (53). Herzog is threatened with a loss, which apparently represents the threat of "non-existence," and therefore he suffers from what Laing calls an "ontological insecurity."²⁰ Herzog also states that he must "preserve himself" (107) from Madeleine's devastation. To some extent, Herzog may be justified, because the threat of non-existence is real. The irony is that Herzog's realization of the danger he is faced with, the annihilation of his Self, comes only as a hindsight—it has not occurred to him as real and menacing until Madeleine is fetched to police headquarters while Herzog waits for his brother Will to bail him out on the charge of unlicensed firearms. Only then does he see in Madeleine's eyes the verdict "For cowards, Not-beings!" (304). To heighten the dramatic tension of the confrontation and the "reality" of such a sentence of non-existence, Bellow portrays Herzog's ignorance of the threat posed by Madeleine: on his way to Harper Avenue where Madeleine and June live, Herzog tries to repudiate the notion of Madeleine having ever given his photo to the police stations as "sheer bunk, bunk and paranoia, the imperiousness of imaginary powers that once impressed him" (254); but in the end Herzog's repudiation emerges as much too wishful, because Madeleine "did give his photograph to the Hyde Park police . . . In case he prowled around the house" (300).

According to Laing, an ontologically insecure person uses two chief manoeuvres to preserve security: one is an outward compliance with the threatening other; the second is an inner intellectual Medusa's head he turns on the other.²¹ Throughout the estrangement, Herzog cherishes the illusion that his passive compliance can bring about a reunion; meanwhile, he cannot help seeing Madeleine as something dehumanized, depersonalized. He twists and combines proverbs to suit his own purpose:

“A bitch in time breeds contempt” (3). Interestingly enough, this is a reverbalization of his sex-oriented indictment that Madeleine’s “confidences would include his sexual disgrace” (99). Indeed, what disturbs him most is his cuckoldry. His bitterness is so insurmountable that he mocks even Madeleine’s theatrical presentation of her social selves—for instance he caricatures her genuflection in the church aisle as a mechanical action. In his detailed description of Madeleine’s dressing scene, she acts much like a machine or a human engine: she cuts her bangs as if she were shooting a gun. Herzog’s tactic of changing Madeleine into a thing, an object (an It) is most obvious when he compares her to a candy, probably echoing Proust’s *madeleine* (sweet biscuit or cookie) in *Swann’s Way*: “And she, as sweet as cheap candy, and just as reminiscent of poison as chemical sweet acids” (299). For the same reason, he would never spare Gersbach, her adulterer. Gersbach’s handicapped gait is compared to the undulation of a gondolier; besides, he is a *shofat*, a judge in Israel, an ancient king—an indication of Herzog’s depersonalizing Gersbach for fear that the latter can judge him, especially as a sexual failure. Herzog chooses to assign Gersbach to the remote ancient, not to give him a place in the present because of the self-styled Buber expert’s part in his cuckoldry.

However, as Laing illustrates, an ontologically insecure person, while seeking to turn the threatening other into a thing, an object, thus nullifying any danger to himself by secretly disarming the enemy, also depersonalizes himself: “The more one attempts to preserve one’s autonomy and identity by nullifying the specific human individuality of the other, the more it is felt to be necessary to continue to do so, because with each denial of the other person’s ontological status, one’s own ontological security is decreased, the threat to the self from the other is potentiated and hence has to be even more desperately negated.”²² Thus, the depersonalization of other and of one’s own self seem to be two sides of the same coin. As Herzog tries to depersonalize Madeleine and her adulterer, he at the same time depersonalizes himself. And it is noteworthy that his own depersonalization is closely related to his intent to dismiss from memory his awkward situation. The attempt is unsuccessful in the long run, because there is no denying that it has been *his* situation, and his schizophrenic dismissal of it simply creates temporarily comforting illusions.

In dealing with his sexual disgrace, Herzog also suffers from the dissociation of sensibility. Clearly, Herzog tries to dodge in every possible way the awareness of Madeleine’s adultery. For instance, Herzog is upset when Asphalter brings up the subject and virtually faints away on hearing it. His repulsion, however, does not mean that he is totally ignorant of the illicit love between Mady and Gersbach. His feigned innocence is a mere mask and therefore his attempted communication

is even more taxing because he knows what has happened and yet tries to ignore it. His attempt to cover up is hilariously futile. While mocking Gersbach's fervor about Martin Buber's theories, especially those propounded in *I and Thou*, Herzog reveals the adulterous relationship in an outburst of anger: "By means of spiritual dialogue, the I-It relationship becomes an I-Thou relationship. God comes and goes in man's soul. And men come and go in each other's souls. Sometimes they come and go in each other's beds, too" (64). He is compelled to admit, resentfully, that he himself is responsible for the mix-up: he calls himself "the great sinner" for having provided Gersbach easy access to Madeleine. There is even some pathos under the comic travesty of Buber because, restrained as he is from revealing publicly his sexual disgrace, Herzog cannot but appeal to high-minded ideas to transmute his frustration.

Another case of concealing his sexual disgrace can be seen in his letter to Shapiro. As he scribbles his fantasy letter to Shapiro, Herzog is taken, through mental regurgitation, back to Madeleine's flirtation with Shapiro. He recalls that he was suffering some "depressed feeling he couldn't account for" (73), and would rather go for the chairs, to escape into "the stony deaf security of the cellar" (74), than face the scene. In the last analysis, he could not stand Mady's licentious pass at Shapiro; nor can he stand the depression that marks his reminiscences. He gives up the letter, simply because it raises too many painful thoughts. Before abandoning the letter, however, he admits that even then "Nothing seemed especially hidden—it was all painfully clear" (74). So his ignorance is not at issue, but rather his evasiveness. In fact, his feigned innocence is, at most, part of his habit to "make a quick understanding slow" (139).

All his life Herzog has lived under the illusion that evasion of unpleasant reality is necessary for his survival. Under the humiliating harassment of such a reality-instructor as Sandor Himmelstein, who turns out to be Madeleine's accomplice in blackmailing him, Herzog develops a schizophrenic dissociation from present reality, wishing that he were "a deckhand bound for Duluth" (85). Certainly, a most amazing aspect of his evasion of reality is that even with such a delicate issue he has no difficulty finding a use for his "stupid eggheadedness." He employs his ideas as an instrument for evading reality, derealizing the events which pique him, and of course he may easily find justification for his evasiveness: quoting Spinoza, he says, "man's desire [is] to have others rejoice in the good which he rejoices, not to make others live according to his way of thinking—*ex ipsius ingenio*" (123).

As Herzog is evasive with reality, so is he with his own soul and feelings. He won't express any deep feelings to Ramona because, he says, he suffers "confusion" with women and has to be more careful. He divorced his first wife and turned to

his Japanese mistress before he chose Madeleine. The aftermath of his traumatic experience with Madeleine still surrounds him. He cannot open his heart to Ramona because he is "not through with love and hate elsewhere" (67). In fact, what is haunting him, in terms of Laing's categories, is the dread of engulfment, which "is felt as a risk in being understood (thus grasped, comprehended), in being loved, or even simply in being seen"; and according to Laing, "The main manoeuvre used to preserve identity under pressure from the dread of engulfment is isolation."²³

Early in the book, Herzog looks at himself and considers that he looks "terrible, caved-in" (18)—the phrase itself not only refers to his gaunt look, giving way to pressure and stress, but is a nice pun on his self-enclosedness and isolation. His detachment from Ramona and Libbie is characteristic of his fear of engulfment, the fear of being understood, loved, and his inability to pursue and fulfill personal relationships. Obsessed with his "unfinished business," no sooner he arrives at Libbie's summer house at Martha's Vineyard than he writes a note of apology ("Not able to stand kindness at this time. Feelings, heart, everything in a strange condition," 98) and leaves abruptly. He also wants to explain to Ramona he cannot commit himself to her right now because of his "unfinished business." He thinks that "From many points of view, Ramona truly [is] a desirable wife" (67), but his feelings for her are complicated by his latent fear of engulfment. He styles Ramona the woman "with a knife in her garter," and "*La devordora de hombres*" (313). The appellations represent somehow his projected fear of Ramona, which is understandable to a large extent, for he has suffered tremendous confusion with women and, above all, has experienced the threat of annihilation in his last marriage. And Ramona, who certainly knows Herzog better than he does, makes it more difficult for Herzog to yield to her, even though he needs her.

Clarification of his relationship with Madeleine and the impact of their marriage upon Herzog helps account for his sexually neurotic symptoms. However, as indicated earlier, Herzog himself is also responsible for their final estrangement. He is egotistic and self-centered; even worse, egotism underlies the wide-ranging concerns of his frenetic letters. He takes things to his heart, and his indignation often brings "his heart to a boil" (51); meanwhile, he converts the personal into the public or *vice versa*. He is tempted to relate his distress to that of others and make hasty generalizations about social injustice in order to unleash personal criticisms. A movie about rural India might remind him of his own mother, dead for twenty years now, who "too had been a poor woman," and also of his daughter for whose custody he is eager to sue. His egotism manifests itself even in the nursery rhymes he composes for June, which are self-referential and self-explanatory about his attitudes

toward Madeleine; in his words, "You must aim the imagination also at yourself, point-blank" (118).

Self-centeredness is indeed the motivating force of his "explosion"—his desire to communicate, to have it out. Despite his awareness that his personal history bears little relevance to others, he gratuitously believes that the story of his particular existence has appeal for others. And in this respect, he commits the error of what Hegel calls the "Free Concrete Mind," namely, misapprehension of a universal through the tunnel vision of his personalist stance (123). His ego is brought to the fore as he states his motivation of relating his personal history: "If Herzog ever knew the loathsomeness of a *particular* existence, knew that the *whole* was required to redeem every separate spirit, it was then, in his terrible passion, which he tried, impossibly, to share, telling his story" (156-157).

In transmuting his personal experiences into universal concerns, he cherishes the illusion that he is the crucible, as if he were bearing upon himself all of mankind's suffering. In his distress and restlessness he thinks of social injustice, of the necessity of even distribution of wealth. His letter to Monsignor Hilton, who converted Madeleine, is apparently another example of his need to explain, to justify, and yet he transforms a cheap synthesis of his own situation into a statement about public conditions, in the disguise of a *bien pensant*: "Living amid great ideas and concepts, insufficiently relevant to the present, day-by-day, American conditions" (106).

Besides using ideas to evade reality and to express unadmitted self-referential inclinations, Herzog uses them to indicate an unacknowledged death-wish. He agrees with Freud in speculating that "repressed traumatic material [is] ultimately traceable to death instinct" (280). Significantly, his notion of death is associated with mother Herzog and his childhood memories. The first notes Herzog scribbles are his retort—which comes too late—to his mother's "exhibition" of death. His mother had rubbed her palm until a small ball of dirt appeared, to show Herzog that man is made of dust and destined to return to it; nevertheless, Herzog chose "not to read this text," which disclosed the inevitability of death. At his mother's death, he escaped into the kitchen, poring over Spengler's *The Decline of the West*. All in all, he defies the common notion of death as the end of life, and hence in his retort to his mother, he presents human existence as endless cycles of life and death. He seems to believe that the cyclic alternation of life and death in view of the whole of human history would remove the threat of death; however, he is more deeply disturbed, when he gets down to a close-up view of individual life, by the fact that where there is life, death prevails. Consequently, he reformulates his dictum in the second note as "No person, no death" (3). Simply stated, it signifies an urge to escape life, and so,

death. A similar rationale is found in his criticism of Proudhon's renunciation that "God is *the* evil": Herzog refutes the murdering human imagination which "starts by accusing God of murder," and then, he postulates his own escapist proposition, saying "It's easier not to exist altogether than accuse God" (290).

Herzog's evasion of death in ideas evinces merely an "infantile terror of death" (266), conducive to anything but meaningful contemplation. He feels that "perpetual thought of death was a sin" (33), but he keeps reacting to this "dying in fantasy" (96). Ultimately, he comes to realize that all this rambling and "dying in fantasy" are symptomatic of his "childish disorder." So he starts to resist his fatal attraction to death by appealing to Spinoza's "will to live" (96), which, he argues, is the precondition of stability in a human being. The "will to live," or the acceptance of both life and death is perhaps closer to William Blake than Spinoza. Earlier, Herzog quotes Blake's "Proverbs of Hell" (*The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*): "Drive your cart and your plow over the bones of the dead" (33). This reconstituted outlook implies Herzog's understanding that life should not be impeded by the haunting of death. Life is not to be shunned or repudiated, but rather to be *lived*. He comes to an enlightenment when he says: "Life was life only when it was understood clearly as dying" (182). It is indeed a sagacious realization that life, ever since the first moment, if looked at in "historic" (in a Heideggerian sense) perspective, is a process of dying. The Blakean acceptance of death, then, is a necessary step into the void of death and indispensable for achieving complete knowledge of life.

In this connection, Herzog's rambling rumination on death undergoes a drastic reversal: death is no longer the incomprehensible after his Chicago trip. His dictum "No person, no death," then, points metaphorically to the idea that the certainty of death is the very condition of recovering himself. In other words, this fatal attraction to death is not only a necessary step forward in Herzog's transcendence but also a process leading to his "second birth, into the hands of death" (249) if seen in "reverse perspective" (Nietzsche's term). Despite his variance with Nietzsche about crisis ethics and other matters, Herzog echoes Nietzsche in saying:

Since the last question, also the first one, the question of death, offers us the interesting alternatives of disintegrating ourselves by our own wills in proof of our "freedom," or the acknowledging that we owe a human life to this waking spell of existence, regardless of the void. (After all, we have no positive knowledge of the void.) (314)

Herzog's descent into the void begins to loom large at the courtroom and culminates in his Chicago trip. Or put differently, the courtroom is the anteroom to the void that awaits him in Chicago. The dark setting of the courtroom and the stifling atmosphere in the corridor offer a preview of Herzog's descent into the

symbolic underworld. It prepares for the philosophy of the maturer, soberer Herzog: good and evil are no longer metaphors—they are “facts”—and annihilation is real. In effect, he *sees* the violence done by the epileptic mother to her child. As he leaves the courtroom, the most frightful scene still haunts him; he relives, or enacts in his mind, the scene of the child-murder: “The child screamed, clung, but with both arms the girl hurled it against the wall. On her legs was ruddy hair. And her lover, too, with long jaws and sooty sideburns, watching on the bed. Lying down to copulate, and standing up to kill. Some kill, then cry. Others, not even that” (240). He is still haunted by the courtroom scene (“the perverts, thieves, victims in court, the horror of the Montecalme Hotel and its housekeeping rooms” 243) as he arrives in Chicago.

Depressed by the courtroom scene and over-reacting to Geraldine Portnoy’s information that Gersbach once locked June up in his car when he had a quarrel with Madeleine, Herzog leaves abruptly for Chicago to see his daughter. But in linking the incident revealed by Portnoy with the violence of the mentally-ill mother and her boyfriend’s indifference to the child murder, Herzog again is reacting out of egotism. After all, he is playing his turn of imagination (or phantasmagoria) chiefly as a monad. Arriving in Chicago and falling deeper and deeper into its “structural nothingness”—both a descent into the void and a gravitational fall into the quotidian or the ordinary—he is compelled to emerge from his powerful imagination and phantasmagoric enactments, no longer a monad: he does not really *know* how June gets along with Gersbach until he sees him bathing her. The “reality of it, the tenderness” of the bathing scene shatters his unmotivated horror.

Significantly, his impulsive trip to Chicago marks the nadir of his descent into the void and nothingness of death. As he drives to Hyde Park, near Gersbach’s residence, he perceives that *his* Chicago is “massive, clumsy, amorphous, smelling of mud and clay, dog turds; sooty facades, slabs of structural *nothing*” (259). And then, he experiences a strange homogeneous relationship between the void of Chicago and himself. There he “did in fact feel at home. He was perhaps as midwestern and unfocused as these same streets. (Not so much determinism, he thought, as a lack of determining elements—in the absence of a formative power)” (259). Later, he makes it clear that this perception has much to do with his own feeling of replying to a situation and transforming it into a projected world:

In these days of near-delirium and wide-ranging disordered thought, deeper currents of feeling had heightened his perceptions, or made him instill something of his own into his surroundings. As though he painted them with moisture and color taken from his own mouth, his blood, liver, bowels, genitals. In this mingled way, therefore, he

was aware of Chicago, familiar ground to him for more than thirty years. And out of its elements, by this particular art of his own organs, he created his version of it. (278).

Undoubtedly, Chicago becomes a "homogeneous map space" of his mindscape; indeed, his Chicago trip involves his confrontation not only with the void and nothingness he sees in the city, but—by extension—with himself. Interestingly, this latter dimension is presented in a metaphorical process of death-and-rebirth that marks his transformation.

In Chicago, he goes through a ritual of death. Even while he is occupied with mental violence, fantasizing strangling Madeleine, it is his own death, not hers, that he experiences. "Into his mouth came a taste of copper, a metabolic poison, a flat but deadly flavor" (255). At the house on Harper Avenue, once his own residence, as he ponders whether to kill or not to kill, watching Madeleine and Gersbach from the window sill, he again encounters his own death. When he abandons the idea of shooting them, he feels as if he were a man rising "from the dead": "His breath came back to him; and how good it felt to breathe!" (258).

So with this journey, death is no longer the incomprehensible, the subject of his chaotic speculation. Furthermore, as noted above, Herzog's intuition with death is associated with his memory of his mother, and so, of his childhood past. Although Herzog is afraid that acute memories of childhood are symptoms of disorder (33), he cannot get rid of his "insidious blight of nostalgia" (141). Even Mady taunts him with nostalgic inclinations: "You'll never get the surroundings you want. Those are in the twelfth century somewhere" (124). Nevertheless, his memories attack his mind constantly "like a terrible engine" (132). To justify "doting on his memories," he even proclaims himself "the nemesis of the would-be forgotten" (134). Put in this context, his Chicago journey has another purpose: it is also a journey through his own past. Admittedly, the voyage is one of self-discovery. In his late father's house, now inhabited by his stepmother, he finds his photo taken when he got his M. A.:

His younger face expressed the demands of ingenuous conceit. . . . [He was] un-European, that is, innocent by deliberate choice. Moses refused to know evil. But he could not refuse to experience it. (245)

Through introspection, he comes to realize that he can refuse to know evil, but he cannot refuse to experience it, e.g., the courtroom scene, notwithstanding his deliberately chosen mask of innocence. Remarkably, his epiphany—as he looks at his own picture—is one of self-discovery: he sees his illusion of innocence. Significantly, early in the novel, Herzog seems clairvoyant in naming the implication of his later encounter with his own true self: "The good are attracted by men's perceptions

and think not for themselves. You must cleanse the gates of vision by self-knowledge, by experience" (86). Admittedly, he no longer lacks experience now, for the courtroom scene earlier and his fall into the void of Chicago have heightened his absorption of the tremendous power of evil.

As Tony Tanner argues, the whole book constitutes a "mental regurgitation . . . back to a point at which life can be resumed . . . through memory."²⁴ Herzog's Chicago trip, then, occurs at the turning point. Immersed in the chaos of Chicago and himself, he begins to realize that any particular existence already comprehended is "not the whole story" (266), which comprises both the comprehensible and the incomprehensible. Paradoxically, it is always the glimpse of the incomprehensible that heightens human perceptions. Therefore, Herzog is aware that, here in Chicago, he embarks on the "start of true consciousness" (266). He realizes that his intellect and consciousness have not been fully employed, and he is required to find a "real occupation" for his intellect.

With this illumination, Herzog has gone through a marriage of heaven and hell. He concludes that life can't be simply observed as a picture; it requires man's active participation. It is no mere subject to elaborate on. Besides, the desire to *know* can only be complete when one is sensitive enough to perceive man's "amphibian" nature, to see him as capable of both good and evil—e.g., Gersbach the adulterer bathing June. Herzog's embracing of both good and evil helps him attain truth; as he observes earlier, "truth is true only as it brings down more disgrace and dreariness upon human beings, so that if it shows anything except evil it is illusion, and not truth" (93). Herzog left New York as a monad, projecting all the nightmares he witnessed at the courtroom on his daughter; now at the height of his trip to Chicago, watching Gersbach bathing June, he realizes that the "buffoon" is not as bad as he made him out to be. Only then does it dawn upon him that "The human soul is an amphibian, and I have touched its sides. Amphibian! It lives in more elements than I will ever know." Here, like Buddha and Lao-tse, he experiences "all the best and all the worst of human life"—"Everything horrible, everything sublime, and things not imagined yet" (258).

By nature and discipline, Herzog is not a realist, but a romantic. He reads Hegel and Spinoza, Shelley and Keats, and most importantly, as he wanders from place to place, he carries with him a pocket edition of William Blake. His Chicago trip turns him into "the mental traveller" going through the Blakean marriage of heaven and hell, good and evil, energy and reason. Significantly, his second book is to deal with the social ideas of the Romantics: as he explains to Zelda, "his study was supposed to have ended with a new angle on the modern condition, showing

how life could be lived by renewing universal connections; overturning the last of the Romantic errors about the uniqueness of the Self; revising the old Western, Faustian ideology; investigating the social meaning of Nothingness" (39). In this sense, Herzog's ordeal, unmistakably, provides a testing-ground for the ideas he is to explore in his second book.

Back in the Berkshires from Chicago, he experiences a moment of stillness, deciding that he will have nothing more to do with those angry, ridiculous letters. More importantly, his "sentiment of being," which is characterized by his non-assertiveness and passivity, implies a logical and inevitable step in "universal connections." The scene which constitutes the fictional present—the first and the last sections—of the novel, like *his* Chicago, works by topological analogy to reveal Herzog's innerscape. In "the poetics of space" of his wrecked house at Ludeyville, one gets not only a glimpse of Herzog's ruined, desolate mental picture but also his attempt at "universal connections," a Blakean acceptance of Energy. The opening page even indicates that Herzog is able to perceive the stars as "spiritual bodies," as elements. His passivity prepares him for the infusion of cosmic energy into his Self (a notion proposed by Pierre Teilhard de Chardin and shared by Herzog). His being half-blind, carefree toward the objects surrounding him, as M. Gilbert Porter observes, is a positive sign that "He has achieved the state Keats called . . . 'negative capability,' the capability of being in uncertainties, mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact and reason."²⁵ The non-assertiveness certainly outweighs his earlier inclination to proselytize, to force his ideas upon others. As Herzog claims, he is "better now at ambiguities" (304), and, to borrow Trilling's remarks on Keats, he has combined in himself "the knowledge of the world of circumstances, of death . . . and the knowledge of the world of self, of spirit and creation."²⁶ Certainly, the "bitter cup" of life (as Stevens describes it in "Esthétique du Mal") will come around again, but Herzog, to be sure, is prepared to begin again, not as a cracked being, but as "the man who knew what it was to rise from the dead" (185). Back from the void of death he hangs momentarily in between life and void: "This rest and well-being were only momentary difference in the strange lining or variable silk between life and void" (326).

Besides, it is significant that his penetration into "the social meaning of Nothingness" should start with his experience of the violence and evil witnessed in the courtroom, symbol of social justice, and culminate in his Chicago trip, which is highlighted by his temporary arrest on a charge of unlicensed firearms. The scene in police headquarters, like the courtroom scene earlier, is somehow an epitome of the titular justice system. The whole thing begins with a car accident, but there is

no traffic charge against him; instead, he is booked for a misdemeanor carrying an unlicensed weapon. Interestingly, his father's revolver is more a harmless relic to be kept for sentimental reasons than a fatal weapon. In police headquarters, Herzog experiences the indifference of the law machinery and its dehumanizing procedures. Against his wish that June be sent home by his friend Asphalter, Herzog is coerced into confronting Madeleine, simply because the police want to make sure whether she has ever filed a complaint against Herzog. As Herzog asks if he has to post a bond, the sergeant who books him waves his hand toward the wall, saying nonchalantly, "Plenty of bondsmen sittin' here" (294)—without promptly giving Herzog permission to call his brother Will. After all, Herzog may have rightly suspected that the police have in a way joined forces with the reality-instructors in driving him into the entropic whirl.

Herzog's projects of "overturning the last of the Romantic errors about the uniqueness of the Self," namely the preposterous claim that one can achieve selfhood or self-realization in solitary confinement, severed from all human ties, and "revising the old Western, Faustian ideology" are intimately related. Earlier he scribbles himself a letter, indicating that threatened with loss after his divorce, "a Faustian spirit of discontent and universal reform descends on" him. Implied in his Faustian conceitedness is, of course, his belief in ideas as a panacea to all sorts of problems. Nevertheless, the loss of perceptual equilibrium impairs severely his intellectual perceptions. Hence, his ordeal is to force him to embark on a mental journey to reconstitute his Self and seek the proper employment of his ideas and intellect.

Reminiscing on his unfinished book, Herzog "couldn't say definitely that he would not finish his study. The chapter on 'Romantic Moralism' had gone pretty well, but the one called 'Rousseau, Kant, and Hegel' had him stopped cold" (203)—the latter of which reveals that Herzog is stopped by some specific issues, *viz.*, issues surrounding knowledge, truth, and the self. Significantly, all three philosophers who constitute the title of the chapter that "had him stopped cold" are concerned with the role mind plays in the construction of our conception of reality, of our primary certainty. According to Hegel, whose *The Phenomenology of Mind* Herzog intends to re-evaluate in his unfinished project (119), mind is the clue to interpreting reality as well as the objective source of social and moral activity, a position which is shared by Kant.²⁷ That is, the same conditions as make man intelligent make him social and moral. Morals, law, society are all necessary to complete the full evolution or realization of a human being.

And yet one wonders how on earth Herzog—who calls himself "A strange

heart. I myself can't account for it" (14)—can approach his own mind as the clue to interpreting reality, let alone as the objective source of activities. All in all, this is what Herzog's ordeal has to come to: Know thyself. Hence, it is easily understood why Herzog takes so much to his heart Rousseau's declaration, "*Je sens mon coeur et je connais les hommes*" (340). The simple dialectic of the statement makes it clear that to know one's own heart is a desideratum to the knowledge of man. Self-knowledge, then is a preliminary step: unless he "cleanses the gates of vision by self-knowledge, by experience," it is impossible for Herzog to resume his task.

Rousseau's statement is an index to the theme of self-knowledge, with which Herzog may open his heart to experience and replenish his mind with intelligence necessary for social and moral activity. At last, Herzog realizes the danger of solipsism, entrapment in self-isolation, indulgence in the illusion of self-development. He is aware that "In a society that was no community and devalued the person," he must seek a new self, because the human identity is still undoubtedly something of value. In fine, Herzog has to be himself, to be the marvellous Herzog, to be a human being, capable of both construing experience and conducting social and moral activity.

His new self will, then, have to seek for community and utility, not for seclusion and isolation. He must recognize that man is in every sense a relating animal, sentenced to personal relationships which he has to follow for mutual dependency and benefit. In other words, human dependency is not a sin to be lamented; quite the contrary, it remains the only sign left of mutual attachment among men. With this understanding, Herzog ultimately advocates his theory of mutual employment and brotherhood:

I really believe that brotherhood is what makes a man human. If I owe God a human life, this is where I fall down. . . . The real and essential question is one of our employment by human beings and their employment by us. (272)

Throughout the novel, Herzog says repeatedly that he is in the course of a change, a change of heart, of outlook (165, 188, 201). His change has culminated in a state of negative capability, and he has also purged the threat of non-existence imposed by Madeleine: "For perhaps the first time he felt what it was to be free from Madeleine" (313), and most important of all, for the first time, he becomes "foresightful" (310). He is lighted up—"Those strange lights, Herzog's brown eyes, so often overlaid with the film or protective chitin of melancholy, the by-product of his laboring brain, shone again" (313). In fact, he writes to Ramona in one of his last letters saying that he senses even more positively "The light of truth is never far away" (314).

With his brightened vision and clarity of mind, he comes to conclude that “after all, the human intellect is one of the great forces of the universe. It can’t safely remain unused” (311). To find a real occupation for his intellect, he has to accept what Trilling calls “moral realism”; to be an intellectual worthy of the name, he has to achieve not only sincerity and authenticity of expression but also responsibility for his ideas. Herzog is all for the true *bien pensant*, which originates in duty and commitment, for an intellectual may be free to express his own views, but as Herzog ruminates, expression without a sense of responsibility is freedom which “doesn’t have any content. It’s like a howling emptiness” (39).

Therefore, Herzog inveighs against the crisis ethics which see civilization as always in a critical moment, and thus entail the Spenglerian concept of doom of modern civilization following the fate of their ancient counterparts. By and large, the crisis ethics bring about the intellectuals’ antagonism to civilization, and a kind of “simpleminded historicism”: “the modern form of historicism which sees in this civilization the defeat of the best hopes of Western religion and thought” (106). In turn, when this fatalistic thinking becomes prevalent in Europe, it breeds such existentialist jargons as *Angst*—anguish, dread, fear—alienation, etc. Obviously, Herzog knows quite well what he opposes, ranging from Ortega y Gasset’s “cultural fascism” which assumes that “the deterioration of language and its debasement [is] tantamount to dehumanization” (76) to Dr. Edvig’s “Protestant Freudianism” (58). For the newly inspired Herzog, intellectual perceptions as such are always too pure to have a direct bearing upon the communal reality, and therefore, champions of this kind of powerful, apocalyptic imagination always adopt a purely “aesthetic view of modern history”; “What they love is an imaginary situation invented by their own genius and which they believe is the only true and the only human reality” (304).

The more contact Herzog has with life, the easier it is for him to purge all of his “unearned bitterness” shared by some contemporary thinkers. Significantly, despite his quibble with the German philosophers—Nietzsche and Heidegger—his discovery seems to derive from his response to the work of these two predecessors. His theory is largely founded on his rejoinder to both of them. Herzog’s second note in the novel (“No person, no death”) is later echoed by a rejoinder to Nietzsche: “No survival, no *Amor Fati*” (319). Whatever harsh ordeals present civilization and human beings have gone through, some glimmer of hope remains. In a word, Herzog’s philosophy, if he has one, is that of survival in the chaotic modern world, not sheer frenzy of destruction. That is, the “constructive rationale” of Nietzsche’s negative perspectivism should focus on survival rather than disintegration; it should aim at our surviving disintegration. Similarly, Herzog’s cross-examination of Heideg-

ger's idea of Man's Second Fall is not so much concerned with the validity of the theory itself but with the depth of one's fall into the ordinary. "The strength of a man's virtue or spiritual capacity is measured by his ordinary life" (106), says Herzog. The early Herzog goes after reality with language but imprisons himself in a monistic schema and self-seclusion, and hence his linguistic formation must fail to capture the subtle, multi-dimensional human life. In this light, Herzog's re-interpretation of Heidegger represents a plea for plunging deeper into the quotidian, for more contact with life to enrich his mind as a social and moral being.

The now sober Herzog knows exactly that "Things are grim enough without these shivering games" (317), and the advocacy of apocalyptic imagination only occurs where human intellect is wrongly occupied and energy misguided. Suffering and pain, according to the new Herzog, are "mere junk," and indulgence in them can only numb one's true wakefulness; besides, they mar the hope of man's potentiality in his subangelic position.

Back in Ludeyville, he writes Mermelstein, the professor at Berkeley who has "scooped" him in some of the subjects to be included in his second book. He wants to tell Mermelstein that he is welcome to do whatever he likes with these materials, particularly those regarding pain and suffering, heaven and hell championed by the Romantic imagination. At last, Herzog decides that he will never return to these subjects in his book. "I am willing without further exercise in pain to open my heart. And this needs no doctrine or theology of suffering" (317). For the same reason he opposes what Kierkegaard says in *Sickness unto Death*, namely, that "truth has lost its force with us and horrible pain and evil must teach it to us again, the eternal punishments of Hell will have to regain their reality before mankind turns serious once more" (316). All this indicates Herzog's illumination as to the proper and constructive use of the intellectual imagination. Under the stress of death, the early Herzog feels as if thinking is the only proof that he is alive, and he succumbs to extremism and apocalypse as a result; now he pledges that he will "never expound suffering for anyone or call for Hell to make us serious and truthful" (317).

As I noted earlier, after so harsh an ordeal, Herzog is able to sit down with Asphalter and lecture the latter about what he knows of truth and reality. He retorts that Asphalter's "encounter" with death—for which Asphalter follows the teaching of the Hungarian psychoanalyst Tina Zokóly, who in turn is influenced by Heidegger—is merely a game of "playing dead." It is "cultivated," not real. Herzog's sober lecture further underlies his observation that as intellectuals try to grasp reality and truth, they should beware of the trap of their constructions, for they often take

such constructions for reality. For the enlightened Herzog, truth is punitive in the sense that man is apt to lie, is inclined to indulge in illusions, and precisely because of this, language is indeed a dangerous gift of man. For an intellectual to use this instrument properly, he has to bring to his consciousness not only the elusiveness of truth, but also the possible entrapment in linguistic formation. As Herzog rightly challenges Spinoza, "Random association, when the intellect is passive, is a form of bondage. Or rather, every form of bondage is possible then" (181).

The early Herzog yields to the bondage, imprisoning himself in solipsism without knowing it. He ironically binds himself in illusion as he seeks to bind Ramona (for love) and Madeleine and Gersbach (to tax their conscience). All these, in Herzog's words, are part of "his method of preserving equilibrium—the Herzog gyroscope" (285), his habit of "circling among random facts to swoop down on the essentials" (10), a method which has no further utility now. Knowing his childish withdrawal from reality, he congratulates himself on not having "the means to get too far away from our common life." He promises "to share with human beings as far as possible and not destroy my remaining years in the same way." And he feels eager to *begin* (322).

As an intellectual, Herzog has made a mental journey to the realization of the impossibility of an easy synthesis, and the intellectuals' separatism and indulgence in "strange notions, hallucinations, projections" (322). At this point, one may wonder whether Herzog will pursue further his scholarly work. The prospect is indeed not as bleak as Gabriel Josipovici sees it. If we take the ending seriously, and above all, his possible union with Ramona, we assume that Herzog will continue his studies, for Ramona has constantly reminded him that he has "to pay his debt for the great gifts he had received, his intelligence, his charm, his education, and free himself to pursue the meaning of life, not by disintegration, where he would never find it, but humbly and yet proudly continuing his learned studies" (184).

In this connection, Gabriel Josipovici may have gone too far in arguing that "It is clear by the end that Herzog will never write the sequel to his book, *Romanticism and Christianity*." This speculation is indeed too extreme, because it is clear that "*Herzog couldn't say definitely that he would not finish his study*" (203) and that "*There are parts of my book I'll never return to*" (315, italics mine). Herzog has come to realize what he should avoid, for instance, the grim touch of pain and suffering. He also declares that he will discard the pursuit of Absolutes (323), for it may lead to more highminded mistakes. As he earnestly wants to tell his dead mother in his moment of peace and clarity, "Some of my oldest aims seem to have slid away. But I have others" (326).

All in all, Herzog has achieved the state of negative capability not only toward his surroundings but also toward the use of language and intellectual talent. He writes to God that he will do His will, taking it and Him "without symbols" (325). There is absolutely no indication of Herzog finding himself unable to write; on the contrary, as his note to God clearly states, he wants to take God's will and other matters without the mediation of symbols and metaphors, which often batter meaning into senselessness and do not help in capturing the real.

Readers agree that *Herzog* contains little physical action; or rather, all the action takes place in Herzog's mind. The fictional present comprises the first and the last sections of the novel; the picture that confronts the reader is of Herzog lying motionless in his Recamier couch, reaching the decision that he will no longer write his frenetic letters. The still point, if we may call it that, is "terminal in terms of the book." It is not only the terminal point of a series of restless dodgings and movings but also a point of departure marking "the start of true consciousness."

NOTES

1. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, "Prologue," 5, in *The Portable Nietzsche*, ed. and trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Viking, 1968), p. 129.
2. Robert Penn Warren's remarks in an interview with Frank Gado, in *First Person: Conversations on Writers and Writing* (Schenectady, New York: Union College Press, 1973), pp. 76-77.
3. *Herzog: Text and Criticism*, Viking Critical Library Edition, ed. Irving Howe (New York: Viking, 1976), p. 13. Henceforth page numbers will be given along with the quoted passages.
4. Melvine Seeman, "The Intellectual and the Language of Minorities," *American Journal of Sociology*, 64 (July, 1958), 25-35. One of the interviews Seeman includes in his report indicates: "If there is anti-intellectualism in our community, I feel frankly we are to blame. If we can't throw off our infernal need for preaching and dictating, they have a right to damn us, and we have no answer but our human fallibility."
5. Jo Brans, "Common Needs, Common Preoccupations: An Interview with Saul Bellow," *Southwest Review*, 62 (Winter, 1977), 1-3.
6. Geismar, "Saul Bellow: Novelist of the Intellectuals," in *American Moderns: From Rebellion to Conformity* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1958), pp. 210-224.
7. Howard M. Harper, Jr., *Desperate Faith* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1967), p. 51. Bellow's interest in the intellectuals, or the life of the mind, can be seen in his own essay "Where Do We Go From Here: The Future of Fiction," rpt. in *Saul Bellow and the Critics*, ed. Irving Malin (New York: New York University Press, 1967), pp. 211-220, and in Ronald Weber, "Bellow's Thinkers," *Western Humanities Review*, 22 (1968), 305-313.
8. John W. Aldridge, "The Complacency of *Herzog*," rpt. in *Herzog: Text and Criticism*, p. 361.
9. Gordon Lloyd Harper, "Saul Bellow: An Interview," *Paris Review*, 36 (Winter, 1966); rpt.

Voyage of Discovery: *Herzog* in Perspective

- in *Herzog: Text and Criticism*, p. 361.
10. Robert R. Dutton, *Saul Bellow* (New York: Twayne, 1971), pp. 119, 122, 123.
 11. Gabriel Josipovici, "Bellow and *Herzog*," rpt. in *Herzog: Text and Criticism*, pp. 413, 414.
 12. Marcus Klein's review of *Herzog* in *The Reporter*, 31 (October 22, 1964), 54. Similar views are held by Howe in his review of the novel in *New Republic*, 151 (September 19, 1964), 33; Theodore Solotaroff, "Napoleon Street," rpt. in *Herzog: Text and Criticism*, pp. 472-480. Cf. also John J. Clayton, *Saul Bellow: In Defense of Man* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1968, 1979), p. 229.
 13. Daniel B. Marin, "Saul Bellow," in *Dictionary of Literary Biography, Vol. II: American Novelists Since World War II*, eds. Jeffrey Helterman and Richard Layman (Detroit: Gale Research Co., 1978), p. 46.
 14. Tanner, *Saul Bellow* (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1965), pp. 89-90. Keith Michael Opdahl, *The Novels of Saul Bellow* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1967), p. 144, argues that, in the novel, *Herzog* "convincingly changes, does so in a clearly developed action, and in the process unites the letters, his memories, and the present events." Brigitte Scheer-Schazler, *Saul Bellow* (New York: Frederick Ungar, 1972), p. 103 observes that "Reminiscing for *Herzog* means a reliving of his former life to find a new attitude toward the past, to himself, and therefore inevitably to the present . . . He reaches the 'present' a wiser man."
 15. Tanner, *City of Words: American Fiction 1950-1970* (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), p. 300.
 16. I borrow the terms from Frye's *Anatomy of Criticism* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1957), pp. 39-41, 172-176. Bellow asks the reader to join him in seeing *Herzog* as an *alazon* (romantic hero) who, though disturbed and egotistic, sheds his eggheadedness to become an effective intellectual. On the other hand, the *alazon* has his corresponding ironic part: *Herzog*'s self-buffooning invites us to see him as an *ieron* figure. The latter further points to the comic aspect of the novel. See Sarah Blacher Cohen, *Saul Bellow's Enigmatic Laughter* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1974), pp. 143-175.
 17. Jo Brans, 10-11.
 18. A. Alvarez, *Under Pressure: The Writers in Society* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1965), pp. 176-178.
 19. Forrest Read, "Herzog: A Review," *Epoch*, 14 (Fall, 1964), 81-96, rpt. in *Herzog: Text and Criticism*, pp. 434-435.
 20. R. D. Laing, *The Divided Self*; I use the chapter "Ontological Insecurity" rpt. in *Psychoanalysis and Existential Philosophy*, ed. Hendrik M. Ruitenbeek (New York: Dutton, 1962), pp. 41-69.
 21. *Ibid.*, p. 52.
 22. *Ibid.*, p. 57.
 23. *Ibid.*, pp. 47, 48.
 24. Tanner, *Saul Bellow*, p. 93.
 25. M. Gilbert Porter, *Whence the Power? The Artistry and Humanity of Saul Bellow* (Columbia, Missouri: University of Missouri Press, 1974), p. 158.

26. Lionel Trilling, "The Poet as Hero: Keats in his Letters," *The Opposing Self* (New York: Viking, 1959), p. 42.
27. See J.B. Baillie's introduction to his translation of Hegel's *The Phenomenology of Mind* (1931; rpt. New York: Humanities Press, 1977), pp. 12-54; and Richard Norman, *Hegel's Phenomenology: A Philosophical Introduction* (New York: St. Martin's, 1976), 67-85.