

CHAPTER - V

HERZOG'S ACCEPTANCE OF THE INSPIRED CONDITION

Bellow is concerned, throughout his literary development with the diminished stature of the individual in everyone's perception but his own:

"It's obvious to everyone that the stature of characters in modern novels is smaller than it once was, and this diminution powerfully concerns those who value existence. I do not believe that the human capacity to feel or do can really have dwindled or that the quality of humanity has degenerated. I rather think that people appear smaller because society has become so immense." (Kunitz: 1955, page 73) Bellow's considerable achievement as a writer has been to portray, against the unquestionably dwarfing forces of modern society, the honest, often successful struggle of the individual striving to define himself as a man within a narrowing range of active possibilities.

In style *Herzog* combines the two main impulses of Bellow's fiction: realism and romance. Like *Dangling Man*, *The Victim*, and *Seize the Day*, it conveys the sense of a real sufferer hedged in by circumstances and neurotic attitudes; like *Augie March* and *Henderson the Rain King*, it possesses an exuberance and a sense of infinite possibilities: The combination is possible because this is not the novel of a sufferer in the city but of a sufferer who contains the city within him. Moses Herzog calls himself a "prisoner of

perception" (Bellow: 1964; 72), but actually perception is his prisoner. He sees only what he needs to see, and we see only what Herzog sees.

Herzog is a novel about a man freeing himself from a paralyzing obsession with his ex-wife. Almost all of the action takes place inside Moses Herzog's head as he spends a week and a half in feverish thought going over the break up of his marriage and all its contingent elements: betrayals, lies, child-custody problems, alimony, untrust-worthy shrinks, bad friends, deceitful lawyers, conspiring relatives.

The opening line of *Herzog* gives us an indication that things may, in fact, be changing for Bellow's burdened and struggling heroes. "If I am out of my mind it's all right with me." (Bellow: 1964 : 1) thinks Moses Herzog, which seems to be good news as it certainly has not been all right for the five heroes who have preceded him in Bellow's canon. From Joseph thought Henderson, a craziness induced by crisis (and vice versa) rends Bellow's heroes to quite devastating effect, but although Moses Herzog suffers in much the same way as his forebears (almost everyone he knows cheats and betrays him), he seems to be enjoying himself. As he himself puts it, "Moses, suffering, suffered in style" (P. 16)

The frame of the novel "Herzog" is the ecstatic reminiscence of Moses Herzog, a college professor, as he temporarily lives at his country home in the Berkshires. Like Augie March, Herzog does his

internal labour: the novel consists of the compulsive reworking of the past by a man who has been deeply hurt. The action which Herzog remembers – the actual present of the novel – is also simple and direct. He decides at the end of the school term in New York to flee from his mistress, Ramona, to some friends at Martha's Vineyard. Once there he decides to return immediately to New York, where he continues the letter writing, which has lately become his compulsion. He spends the following evening with Ramona, visits a courtroom the next day, and then flies to Chicago, where he comes close to murdering his ex-wife and her lover – his best friend. He takes his daughter June to an aquarium the next morning, has an auto accident, and appears before a police court for carrying a concealed weapon. He then flies to the Berkshires, returning the novel to its beginning. The past events, which he remembers as he travels also, form a straight forward. Story, although they are revealed in fragments. He had divorced his first wife and married the beautiful and neurotic Madeleine, settling with her in the Berk shires to write a book on the Romantics. She had insisted that he could save their marriage only by moving to Chicago and taking their friends, the Gersbachs, with them. Once there she insisted that Herzog see a psychiatrist, saw him herself at the doctor's request, and then one fall morning announced her decision for divorce. Herzog went to Europe to recover from his misery, returned to New York worse off than before, and discovered that Madeleine and Gersbach were lovers even before he moved them all to Chiago.

Each of these story levels repeats the hero's confrontation of an evil in the past – the pattern of nearly all of Bellow's novels. Herzog in the Berk shires remembers the evil he had seen in New York and Chicago, where he remembers the evil he had seen even earlier. In part because of the distance he finds in this triple remove, Bellow once again moves closer to issues and ideas he previously qualified. Herzog is larger than life not because of caricature – although there are some elements of it in his characterization – but because of the intensity of his emotion. More like Willard than Grebe, feeling all the pain and conflict of the other protagonists, Herzog confronts almost every issue raised in Bellow's previous fiction. That he does so in a novel that is realistic rather than picaresque or fantastic makes his struggle a victory over the elements that caused Bellow to abandon "The Crab and the Butterfly." Herzog carries masochism to lengths far greater than Wilhelm, attempts to kill not a cat or a stranger but people close to him, and at the same time arrives at the clearest affirmation in Bellow's fiction of the views that might save him. He makes a complete decision for social services, finding his salvation in a practical, hard-headed manhood, and an unqualified avowal of faith in God, telling us that "this was by no means a 'general idea' with him now." (Pg. 266) Although twenty-five years and six books separate Herzog from Bellow's first short story, "Two Morning Monologues," Herzog embraces the two general views which Bellow then contrasted – the reliance on an inner vision and the determination to act in the social or external world.

If Herzog embraces both the internal and the external, however, he creates a problem by doing so. This issue revolves around the question, as Herzog puts it, of “whether justice on this earth can or cannot be general, social, but must originate within each heart.” (Pg. 219) Herzog is divided on this question. When he writes a letter to Eisenhower he tells him that “to Tolstoi, freedom is entirely personal. That man is free whose condition is simple, truthful – real.” He suggests that society is a distraction from more important issues. Man must meet his fate, as Joseph tried to do, by discovering the self which is real or autonomous. But Herzog also tells Eisenhower about Hegel who “understood the essence of human life to be derived from history. History, memory that is what makes us human, that and our knowledge of death.” (162) Herzog rejects both of these ideas at the time because he is “bugging” but his mention of them in the same breath defines the issue which Herzog confronts and embodies. Herzog wants to “renew universal connections” – to lose himself in something larger than personality – and he defines competing individuals.

As dramatized in the novel, the division between the social and the personal is also an aesthetic one. Herzog’s own emotional conflict between the passive and the active corresponds to the division in his thought. In part because Bellow assumes a point of view close to Herzog’s – purposely blurring the distinction between narrator and protagonist – our questions about Herzog are questions about the novel’s art. Like many personalist novels, Herzog appears to be the

subjective confusion of a passive hero – a novel that is formless. What action or story exists is obscured by the brilliant letters and disconnected memories which fill the book.” Overcome by the need to explain, to have it out, to justify, to put in perspective, to clarify, to make amends,” Herzog writes to everyone – from Marshall Field and Co. to God himself. Bellow reveals a great deal of Herzog’s past by these means, but he clearly offers them for their own sake: they are at once intellectual play and a brilliant critique on the values and problems of our society. They seem to be a tread upon which Bellow strings spectacular thoughts and events – a concept which, like that of the dangling man or the victim, threatens to remain static.

There is some question whether Herzog ever changes: circling back upon itself, the novel seems to portray a state of mind rather than a story or a significant event. Thus most critics recognize that Herzog finds peace at the end, but reject it as insignificant or unconvincing. Irving Howe writes that Herzog contains a “superbly realized situation but hardly a developing action” and Marcus Klein argues that the ending “is a little suspect, only a baiting of a resolution.” Tony Tanner recognises a movement from “corrosive restlessness to a point of temporary rest,” but holds that we are inside Herzog’s mind for the bulk of the novel” – going over things, witnesses of this endless, silent self-examination. It is not systematic: like his life it is mismanaged and pattern less.” (Irving Howe, *New Republic*, 151) (September 19, 1964), 23. Marcus Klein, *The Reporter*,

31 (October 22, 1964), 54. Tony Tanner, *Saul Bellow* (Edinburgh, 1965), 88, 89.

Although the novel gives this effect, it does contain a definite form. Herzog convincingly changes, does so in a clearly developed action, and in the process unites the letters, his memories, and the present events. Bellow finds form first of all in Herzog's struggle to reject personalism, which he has abandoned at the novel's beginning but which he continues to embody. Herzog defines his rejection and struggle in terms of the contemporary intellectual scene. Our general belief that the modern age is a wasteland, he says – the view that God is dead, society corrupted by size and technology, and the individual overwhelmed – has given rise to a disastrous withdrawal from the world to the private self. We have embraced subjectivity, aestheticism, emotionalism, and personalism in an attempt to save the self from the "void". Herzog too, had reacted to this nihilism, though he had assumed he was combating it. Believing that "the strength of a man's virtue or spiritual capacity is measured by his ordinary life," Herzog had retired to a private life in the Berkshires in order to demonstrate the reality and the practicality of spiritual virtues (106). "The revolutions of the twentieth century, the liberation of the masses by production," he believed, "created private life but gave nothing to fill it with. This was where such as he came in." (Pg. 125) Everyone had claimed that "you must sacrifice your poor, squawking, niggardly individuality – which may be nothing anyway but a persistent infantile megalomania, or (from a Marxian

point of view) a stinking little bourgeois property – to historical necessity.” To assert the value of the individual against this view, Herzog had “tried to be a *marvelous* (in italics) Herzog, a Herzog who, perhaps clumsily, tried to give out marvelous qualities vaguely comprehended (93). Herzog sees that his intention had been just another case of the self driven inward by a difficult and apparently meaningless world. It had been note confrontation of the void but flight from it.

But Herzog turns inward as well as out ward. It is an affirmation of society, it is also an affirmation of “the inspired condition,” or man’s highest subjective experience. The modern world demands our participation, but it also gives special significance to our highest values. “To live in an inspired condition, to know truth, to be free, to love another, to consummate existence, to abide with death in clarity of consciousness... is no longer a rarefied project.” Herzog’s spit between the passive and the active finds its parallel in the division in the novel between a traditional structure, recording Herzog’s struggle with personalism, and a subjective structure, growing almost unconsciously out of his character. Here too conclusion grows out of the protagonist’s experience, and especially out of the evil he confronts – an evil which belongs to existence rather than society, and which is Herzog’s basic problem. Although this story contradicts Herzog’s affirmation of society, it exemplifies Bellow’s growing ability in his fiction to contain and use the ambivalence he feels. He does this in Herzog not by metaphor,

comedy or characterization – although Herzog is at once a meek and a difficult, aggressive man” – but rather by Herzog’s own achievement of a hard-headed attitude toward the world. More than in anything else, Herzog earns his salvation by the practical acceptance of the mixture and ambivalence either in himself and his faith. This too, Bellow makes clear, is related to our intellectual scene. Like those around him Herzog had assumed that the world was in crisis and that desperate measures were needed to cope with it. He comes to see that this erroneous view leads to cures that compound the problem. Even a writer such as Nietzsche, he says, had “a Christian view of history, seeing the present moment always as some crisis, some fall from classical greatness, some corruption or evil to be saved from.” Our retreat from society, our sensationalistic celebration of dread, and our acceptance of violence and obscenity as philosophic truth all derive from our feeling that “we have to recover from some poison, need saving, ransoming.” (54) Herzog is aware of our danger, but he rejects the modern sense of crisis to insist upon a modest, level headed perspective. Herzog rejects personalism at the same time that it affirms it, bearing on a central division in our thought, but it is most of all the story of an impulsive man who simultaneously achieves the homely virtue of common sense and the uncommon virtue of religious faith.

By embracing society and *its* values, Bellow comes closer *in Herzog* than he ever has *in* unifying his drama and *his* character’s thought. That some of Herzog’s experience and almost all of Bellow’s

technique carry implications that contradict this stated theme, however, reflects the conflict that still exists. The most dramatic evidence of this split lies in Herzog's position as a new man. He withdraws from the city to find peace at his country home-which he has established as a symbol of his evasion of society and evil. Cured of passivity, personalism, and solitude, he finds joy while thinking about himself, alone, "lying under the open window *with* the sun *in* his face" (313). He has embraced moderation, but his state is ecstatic. He has dedicated himself to social issues, but he enjoys the small sensations of nature rather than the sweep of social forces. His solitude, his absorption with himself, and his internal source of strength ally *him* with those early American personalists, the Romantics. Like Thoreau he has temporarily withdrawn from society to live alone in nature, where he achieves the joy and simplicity that Augie and Wilhelm only dream of in their cities: "The stars were near like spiritual bodies. Fires, of course; gases-minerals, heat, atoms, but eloquent at five in the morning to a man lying in a hammock, wrapped in his overcoat" (1).

Herzog is a divided novel because its art reflects this happy isolation rather than Herzog's new social affirmation. Herzog's view that "the *whole* was required to redeem every separate spirit" requires an aesthetic different from that which Bellow uses (156). It is true that Bellow laughs at his emotional hero, and that a large number of characters appear, testifying to the color and power of the *whole*, but the value of the novel lies not in the general scene but in Herzog, a

brilliantly unique character. *Herzog* finds its subject and structure in the protagonist's quest for insight into himself, and the external events are largely memories—a subjective experience. So too with Bellow's use of time: in that the past overshadows the present in the novel, time is subjective and events are given value by Herzog's emotional needs. Bellow shapes many scenes around Herzog's awareness of the real motives beneath external and social poses, and even the letters, which carry private thought into the public realm (and which are never mailed), give rise to thoughts and memories which are franker and more subjective than the written words. The letters, in fact, may be viewed as a device permitting a novelist to write about the private life of a passive character.

What is true of Bellow's technique is also true of the novel's content. However much Herzog pleads for social service, the novel is about his internal and private experience. Herzog never participates in social service himself, and he embraces that goal in part because society provides him personal justice. He decides to go to Chicago because of the emotional intensity of the evil he views in the courtroom, and he decides not to murder because he sees Gersbach washing June in the bathroom. He proves his new manhood in his private relations with Ramona, and his thought and affection at the end are directed toward family—toward June and his brother Will—rather than toward social issues. Herzog embraces society, but he speaks of it in terms of brotherhood and spiritual community rather than as institutions, causes, or customs.

Because all of Bellow's heroes feel the same ambivalence toward the world that Herzog feels toward his past, this cycle illustrates and summarizes the form and the meaning of the other novels as well. Each of Bellow's heroes finds the climax of his story -and a sense of great release-in a confrontation with death. Joseph's final walk in the Alley is associated with the ancient figure of his dreams, and his subsequent request for induction-itself a confrontation of death-brings relief. Leventhal awakes to find his life in danger, Allbee about to die, and, at the end of their struggle, a sense of completion. Augie too undergoes such an experience in his fight with Basteshaw in the lifeboat and his violent breakup with Thea. Wilhelm breaks down before a corpse and Henderson witnesses Dahfu's death. In each case the hero vacillates before a threat or ordeal and then confronts the source of that threat in the death scene. In each there is a pattern of resistance, embrace and release-reminiscent of Leventhal's description of the swinging door. In all of them the hero identifies with the dead person and comes close to doing violence himself. Although each of these scenes takes its specific meaning from the novel in which it appears, they all point to a single meaning. Even specific chapters and sections within Bellow's novels end on a note of calm after the hero has confronted a lesser form of evil or death.

Herzog does not resolve his problems, but Herzog's acceptance of the "inspired condition" is a significant advance in Bellow's struggle with them. One may break out of personality not only by turning outward to society, but by turning inward to a universal truth

approached through private imagination. As Dahfu says, nature is a mentality and the imagination a source of truth. Herzog's acceptance of his imaginative vision resolves the other heroes' fear of subjectivity at the same time that it opens the novel to a reality larger than Herzog's consciousness. As Herzog gazes upon himself, his feelings are narcissistic, but they are also full of the mystery of his being. What appears to be self-absorption is really, as in Whitman's poetry, a celebration of the human species and the transcendent Self. Herzog's last letter is a joyful acceptance of the Self-a welcome and well-earned affirmation after his masochistic thrashing. "I look at myself and see chest, thighs, feet-a head. This strange organization. I know it will die. And inside- something, something, happiness. ..Thou movest me!" That leaves no choice" (340). Herzog sees himself as an object of wonder he would grant to all. He is imperfect, confused, self-de-structive, but his being dwarfs the imperfections of personality. He may continue to turn inward while talking of civility-the image of him lying there talking to himself is somehow definitive-but his acceptance of himself may be the prerequisite to social service.

That Herzog's acceptance of the "inspired condition" is qualified, however, is all important: the visionary is real but mixed- valid, but not to be blindly trusted. Herzog's explicit affirmation of society and faith derives from his ability to live with ambiguity and paradox. He has discovered his interest in the external world by turning inward, has affirmed community by ceasing to write letters, has affirmed the inspired condition by examining society, and has found joy by

returning to pain. He is a Moses, who cares deeply about religious faith and a Herzog, or prince, who is interested in society, duty, and power. But he is most of all a man who has accepted the identity that lies within this division.

**An Epistolary Road Map for a Modern-day Moses: The
Kierkegaardian Strait Gates in Saul Bellow's Herzog**

"He who loves God without faith reflects upon himself, he who loves God believingly reflects upon God."

- Soren Kierkegaard, Fear and Trembling

"I am going through a change of outlook", confides Herzog to Ramona, his "true friend" (Bellow: 1964 : 15), with whom - and whom alone - the protagonist seems to have kept open his communication channel in the midst of deafening noises. Yet to what extent Ramona has succeeded in receiving and decoding Herzog's message remains questionable, though her responses certainly sound both enthusiastic and supportive. For, while Herzog realizes, self-critically, that he has intended his previous metaphysical conceptualizing to help him enter "into a secret understanding with life to spare [him] the worst" by "flirting a little with the transcendent" (189), Ramona, ironically, still presents herself as just another "reality instructor" offering arguments and advice that add to Herzog's "misfortunes... as a collective project" (93). Indeed, from a Hegelian synthesizer, a "befuddled Idea merchant[s]" with a "compulsion to joust with Big Ideas, to one-up the best that has been thought and said" (Pinsker: 120, 118), to a Bellovian hero with "a purely receptive attitude of mind" engaged in "the Heraclitean listening

to the essence of things" (World 8, 9), Herzog's change is "a change of heart - a true change of heart!" (Bellow: 201), one that is existential by nature.

The form of the novel, in this sense, further suggests Herzog's existential condition. In his study of Saul Bellow, Tony Tanny observes that monologue, not dialogue, constitutes the predominant mode of narrative in Bellow's "own work, from his earlier stories to his latest novel," and that Herzog, by comparison, "is the silent monologist par excellence" (445, 453). Enacting the protagonist's intense "lasting inwardness... incommunicado in the most crowded urban conglomerations in history" (Tanner: 1971 : 446), this monologic discourse serves to bring to the fore a human situation, a certain way "to exist," meaning, when traced to its "original Latin, *existere*,.... 'to stand out from' or 'away from' or 'apart from'" (Scott: 1978 : 13). As a manifestation of isolation, it takes the form of letters in *Herzog*, letters that are written but never sent - letters that record Moses Herzog's change from his despair at "this great, bone-breaking burden of selfhood and self-development" (92-93) to his being "pretty well satisfied to be" (340). It is these letters, as Sidney Finkelstein asserts, that provide "the means through which Herzog works out his own solutions, which turn to a vaguely religious existentialism" (265).

As such, these letters, although arranged in a seemingly random sequence, can be seen as constituting an epistolary road map for a modern-day Moses, whose change outlines a mental as well as

emotional trajectory informed of Kierkegaard's philosophy. Following Herzog's itinerary through these letters, one detects a tripartite progress, one that parallels the Kierkegaardian paradigm of the aesthetic, the ethical, and the religious. It represents, as Scott existence - three distinct ways in which [Herzog faces] himself and his world" (34).

Herzog's letter writing, with all its intensity and passionate engagement, presents an existential act in that it reifies the protagonist's inwardness, foregrounding what Kierkegaard designates as "the despair which is conscious of being despair" (FTSD 180). This "conscious despair" functions as a bridge linking the aesthetic and the ethical. Not a "break but a transfiguration", it constitutes "an imperative requirement" for "a higher form of existence" (E/O 233, 197). Viewed in this light, Herzog's aesthetical stage - one marked largely by "the despair which is unconscious that it is despair, or the despairing unconsciousness of having a self and an eternal self" (FTSD 175) - is not articulated but only briefly reflected and interrogated in these letters.

No one can describe the life of an aesthete more accurately than Herzog when he writes, in a letter addressed to himself, "until lately, you led a life of innocent sloth" (68). Not without a satirical overtone, the phrase "innocent sloth" euphemizes what Kierkegaard calls "neutrality" (E/O-II 173), a stance that finds its expression in "a sophisticated and romantic hedonism" (MacIntyre: 338). Thus incurred, then, is the absence on Herzog's part of "any great commitments of

goals of purposes" (Scott: 35). In his "self-examination", for instance, Herzog comes to the realization that

he had been a bad husband - twice... To his son and his daughter he was a loving but bad father. To his own parents he had been an ungrateful child... To his country, an indifferent citizen. To his brothers and his sister, affectionate but remote. With his friends, an egotist. With love, lazy. With brightness, dull. With power, passive. With his own soul, evasive.
(4-5)

The aesthetic in Herzog, to paraphrase the above passage in Kierkegaardian terms, "is that by which he is immediately what he is" and, as a result, "he constantly lives in the moment" (E/O-II 182, 183). Moreover, one particular guise in which the aesthetic appears in Herzog is, to use Scott's words, "the detached intellectual who, as it were, takes a stand outside the world, giving himself to nothing but purely theoretical and speculative issues" (35). Both Herzog's early studies (his Ph.D. thesis, his articles, and his book *Romanticism and Christianity*) and his later research plans are, in fact, Hegelian syntheses intended to systematize the world by manufacturing a

new sort of history, 'history that interests us' - personal, engagee - and looks at the past with an intense need for contemporary relevance... a history which really took into account the revolutions and mass convulsions of the twentieth century, accepting, with de Tocqueville, the universal and durable

development of the equality of conditions, the progress of democracy. (5, 6)

An aesthete, Herzog indeed is, as his self-diagnosis describes, "narcissistic... masochistic... anachronistic" (4), reflecting upon himself only, no matter what. As such, his portraiture is rendered in apt details by H.J. Blackham:

One who lives in the aesthetic, plays emotionally and imaginatively with all possibilities, renounces nothing, commits himself as little as possible in vocation, marriage, belief, enjoys a literary interest in all faiths and customs and relationships, comes and goes in his wishes and desires of the moment, and is subject to fortune and misfortune. One who lives in the intellectual, claims to rise above the world of change and chance, to regard and judge everything from the point of view of the eternal, with detachment, to put everything in its place in the system, coordinated and understood. (10) (Blackham: 1961 : 10)

But Herzog's life as an aesthete will soon be overtaken and overshadowed by the despair, which is caused by "the gap between actuality and expectation, between what he did and what he might have done" (Pinsker 125). In fact, the novel begins with Herzog's mind at war with itself due to the chaos in his personal life and his increasing distrust in his Hegelian project (3-6). His overwhelming "need to explain, to have it out, to justify, to put in perspective, to clarify, to make amends," and his realization that "I cannot justify" (2,3), signal, then,

a point of transfiguration where the aesthetic and the ethical stages of Herzog's life are juxtaposed side by side. On the one hand, one finds that "the reason why the man who lives aesthetically can in a higher sense explain nothing", as Kierkegaard contends, "is that he constantly lives in the moment, yet all the time is conscious only in terms of a certain relativity and within certain bounds" (E/O-II 183). On the other hand, it is this consciousness of his own limits that forces Herzog to face the reality and, more importantly, to choose. "When a man despairs he chooses", asserts Kierkegaard. "He chooses himself, not in his immediacy... but... in his eternal validity"; therefore, "the act of choosing essentially a proper and stringent expression of the ethical" (E/O- II 213, 170).

Herzog's ethical stage, in this sense, begins with his "despair in thought" (Kierkegaard E/O-II 198-199), a despair that is articulated through his letter writing. No more than an aggregate of fragmented and disconnected lines addressed to himself with a pathos bordering upon lunacy, the first letter nevertheless ends with a firm-sounding note, "Choose one" (3). Such an imperative, from Herzog to himself, suggests what Kierkegaard calls the "willed despair" (E/O-II 217), which highlights the existential dimensions of Herzog's letters and letter writing. For, "when one has truly willed despair", as Kierkegaard remarks, "one has truly chosen that which despair chooses, i.e., oneself in one's eternal validity"; and for Herzog to write, in this sense, is to engage the world on his "own behalf" (E/O-II 217, 173). And existential thinking, as Scott puts it, is

facing the concrete actualities of one's life, undertaking to think through all the questions they raise about the meaning of one's humanity, and doing this in as profoundly serious a way as possible. Existential thinking, in other words, is not the detached cogitation of an uninvolved spectator, but the passionate exploration of one infinitely concerned, and absolutely engaged, by the object of his thought which is nothing less than the meaning of his own selfhood. The reality which an existential thinker lays hold of is a reality which has cost him something, a reality which he has suffered through and endured... this is the cardinal principle of Kierkegaard's thought - which means that there is no other route into his ideas except that which leads through the circumstances of his life. (26-27)

In addition, to choose oneself as a result of "willed despair" is to express "the whole personality ... [related] to the absolute" - with "absolute" being "I myself in my eternal validity", which is realized by way of a withdrawal or isolation from the world in the form of unsent letters; and by so doing, Herzog is able to act "not outwardly but in himself", thus putting himself, rather paradoxically, "in the most intimate connection and the most exact cohesion with a surrounding world" (E/O-216, 218, 245). Furthermore, what distinguishes Herzog's determination to "choose one" is his passion, his mental and emotional intensity. More than anything else, writes Kierkegaard, it is "the energy, the earnestness, the pathos with which one chooses" that "announces [one's] inner infinity" (E/O-II 171).

That being so, Herzog's first letters, while demonstrative of his determination to choose, are saturated with fear. "There is something inside me", Herzog writes. "I am in his grip. When I speak of him I feel him in my head, pounding for order. He will ruin me" (11). Through the mouths of Russian Cosmonauts who, projects Herzog, "have been lost; disintegrated", he sends out his message of "SOS - world SOS", which is immediately decoded into a direct and explicit personal appeal in a letter addressed to his friends: "I need help in the worst way. I am afraid of falling apart" (11). To choose, for Herzog at this stage, is to fear, since to exist on his own behalf means to move away from the familiar, reassuring systems of conceptualization, to become "more and more an individual and less a mere member of a group" (Copleston 335). Such a move, or change, brings Herzog resultantly face to face with a void, an emptiness, and forces him to confront the unknown, the uncertainty, and the absurdity of the present. Be that as it may, this fear does not so much freeze Herzog in his transfiguration as it constitutes a "key experience on the margins of the ethical ... through which one may come to censure oneself as an individual"; for fear, as does despair, "point[s] in the same direction" (MacIntyre 338). Being the "state which produces a qualitative leap from one stage in life's way to another" (Copleston 348), fear as such is characterized then by a concomitant critical consciousness on Herzog's part of his fear in various guises, followed by a courage of effort to overcome it. Writing a letter to Daisy, for instance, Herzog "noted with distaste his own trick of appealing for sympathy" (Bellow 12). Fear,

specified by Kierkegaard as "a sympathetic antipathy and an antipathetic sympathy" (Kierkegaard 38), thus colours Herzog's view of his condition and of the world immediately prior to his choice to "anchor his existence in genuine moral commitments" (Scott 36).

"The ethical", writes Kierkegaard in *Either/Or*, "is defined as duty, and duty in turn is defined as a congeries of particular propositions" (II 258). One such "incumbent" (II259) proposition whereby Herzog decides "as to how and where he should 'apply' himself in the world of which he is a member" (Scott 36) is the primacy of humanity. "We must be what we are. That is necessity he proclaims of "I am Herzog. I have to be that man" (66, 67). The sequence in which Herzog makes these two pronouncements - "We" preceding "I" - points to a crucial property of the ethical stage in that Herzog remains a "member" of a group and has not yet become what Kierkegaard would like to regard as an "individual". In other words association with others in a collective venture, as Blackham observes. "[is] not an absolute venture but a substitute for one, 'a fictitious movement of the spirit, a gesture in the direction of the absolute' (21). In this sense, the ethical is also termed by Kierkegaard as "the universal" based on relativity, which is "itself tells for everything outside it"; and Herzog, as its "physical and psychical" constituent has "his ethical task [which] is to express himself constantly in it, to abolish his particularity in order to become the universal" (FTSD 64 - 65). To be ethical, then, is to articulate within

a certain moral and obligatory parameter, and to be universal is to de-individualize. By way of letters, Herzog's "relief of speech" provides him with a channel through which he is able to fulfil his moral commitments, thus "translat[ing] him into the universal" (FTSD 122).

As the mouthpiece on behalf of humans, Herzog's letters now body forth several major changes: from the previous narcissistic "I" to the present "humanity", anxiety to affirmation, complaint to acceptance, and "innocent sloth" to serious and passionate engagement. Whatever the change, the focal point is to dismiss "superfluous ideas... a great mass of irrelevancy and nonsense" (Bellow 362). For, as Kierkegaard asserts, "He who lives ethically... does not allow indefinite thoughts to potter within him, nor tempting possibilities to distract him with their jugglery" (E/O-II 263). Neither does Herzog. "One can't become Utopian", writes the protagonist in a letter to Dr. Bhave. "It only makes it harder to discover where your duty really lies" (48). With this belief, Herzog passionately engages himself to clear away the "ideas that depopulate the world" (95). Writing to Heidegger, for instance, he calls in to question "the fall into the quotidian", asking sarcastically, "When did this fall occur? Where were we standing when it happened?" (49). In a letter to the *New York Times*, he strongly protests against the idea of comparing "human life to Risk Capital in business" (50). With emotion, he further points it out to Edvig, the psychiatrist, that his "Protestant Freudianism" has "a lousy, cringing, grudging concept

of human nature" (58). To "the canned Sauerkraut of Spengler's 'Prussian Socialism', the commonplaces of the Wasteland outlook, the cheap mental stimulants of Alienation, the cant and rant of pipsqueaks about In authenticity and Forlornness" and so forth, Herzog responds : "I can't accept this foolish dreariness. We are talking about the whole life of mankind. The subject is too great, too deep for such weakness, cowardice - too deep, too great" (74-75). He further points out, in his letter to General Eisenhower, that "that man is free is to be released from historical limitation" (162). Consequently, "the problem as I see it", writes Herzog to Harris Pulver, "is not one of definition but of the total reconsideration of human qualities. Or perhaps even the discovery of qualities" (164). Not only does he describe Spinoza's "thoughts" as "random association", which he believes is "a form of bondage" (181), he also reminds Monsignor Hilton of "how little relevance certain ancient ideas have" (188).

Herzog's dismissal of "objective thinking", which is considered by Kierkegaard as a distraction from despair, a pretense for impersonal behaviour (E/O-II 216), is accompanied by his newly emerged acceptance or resignation with regard to his attitude toward the world around him. Herzog has, as his childhood friend Nachman observes, "learned to accept a mixed condition of life" (134). Believing that "in a spiritually confused age ... a man who could feel as he did might claim a certain distinction", he writes to Father Teilhard de Chardin, expressing his concern about "the inward aspect of the elements", thus seeing human existence as a spiritual entity with its own centre (157,

159). In addition, his courtroom experience, his car accident, his humiliating episode in the police department where he is booked for carrying a loaded gun, and his witnessing of Gersbach's tenderness in bathing his daughter June combine to lead to his conviction that "the human soul is an amphibian" (257) and that the world is a mixture of "everything horrible, everything sublime, and things not imagined yet" (258). As a result in "a few memoranda to himself", which "were not very coherent or even logical, but ... came quite naturally to him", Herzog writes,

The dream of man's heart, however much we may distrust and resent it, is that life it, is that life may complete itself in significant pattern. Some incomprehensible way. Before death. Not irrationally but incomprehensibly fulfilled. (303)

Herzog's emphasis on heart and his embrace of incomprehensibility, as articulated in the above passage, comprise the two essential ingredients of what Kierkegaard calls "the infinite resignation", the preparatory nature of which he thus defines in *Fear and Trembling*:

The infinite resignation is the last stage prior to faith, so that one who has not made this movement has not faith; for only in the infinite resignation do I become clear to myself with respect to my eternal validity, and only then can there be any question of grasping existence by virtue of faith... [Faith] has resignation as its presupposition. (57, 58)

It is by virtue of this infinite resignation, argues Kierkegaard, that one becomes capable of gaining one's "eternal consciousness", which is the "love to God" (FTSD 59). With his acceptance of the world as it is, Herzog's love to God is then expressed in his awareness of his failure in his duty to God, of his potential to reach God, and of his determination to follow God. "Lord", Herzog confesses in a letter, "I ran to fight in Thy holy cause, but kept tripping, never reached the scene of the struggle" (128). To Ramona, he writes, "The light of truth is never far away, and no human being is too negligible or his heart: "How my mind has struggled to make coherent sense. I have not been too good at it. But have desired to do your unknowable will, taking it, and you, without symbol. Everything of in tensest significance. Especially if divested of me" (325 - 326).

If, as Kierkegaard proclaims, "In resignation [one] make[s] renunciation of everything" (FTSD 59), then the last but by no means the lest thing that Herzog must give up in order to embark upon the religious stage is his abstract thinking in the form of letters. For, as is the case with Abraham who, significantly, "was not a thinker", "faith begins precisely there where thinking leaves off" (FTSD 26, 64) owing to the nature of faith as a paradox.

As discussed earlier, the ethical, according to Kierkegaard, is the universal, with one's existence prescribed as a congeries of moral duties and commitments. Herzog, being the defender of humanity on behalf of others, presents himself then as a member, a

component, subsumed into a well-defined system. His obligatory task is to articulate, through letters, the governing ethical norms and principles, a task that demands the erasure of his individuality or particularity. In this way, his relationship with the absolute becomes mediated by letters, in that he “determines... his relation to the absolute by his relation to the universal” (*FTSD* 80). Yet “precisely because of their universality,” as Scott argues, these ethical norms and principles “have only a very limited relevance to the concrete and uniquely existing individual,” whose “search for [one’s] own essential reality... in behalf of [one’s] own humanity” entails movements that transcend the ethical (38,41). Hence the paradox of faith, in that “the individual, after having been in the universal, now as the particular isolates [oneself] as higher than the universal (*FTSD* 65). So does Herzog, who, by virtue of his infinite resignation, “determines his relation to the universal by his relation to the absolute,” a relation that “does not permit of mediation, for it is founded precisely upon the fact that the individual is only the individual” (*FTSD* 80).

The ultimate expression of such an individual “in an absolute relation to the absolute” (*FTSD* 103) is, paradoxically, silence. Defined by Kierkegaard as “the mutual understanding between the Deity and the individual,” silence enacts “the terrible responsibility of solitude” as a result of “a teleological suspension of the ethical,” a movement of faith “(capable of transforming a murder into a holy act well-pleasing to God” (*FTSD* 97, 123, 64). In other

words, Herzog's movement of faith through inarticulation is made by virtue of its absurdity when judged from the standpoint of the ethical that demands articulation. To be religious, along this line of reasoning, is to be ethically incomprehensible. "Faith is this paradox," Kierkegaard writes, "the individual absolutely cannot make himself intelligible to anybody" (*FTSD* 81). Being "the highest passion" (*FTSD* 130), faith, in this sense, is what Scott describes as "(a form of radical trust... [a] 'letting go' of the material things of this world ...a great leap" out from articulation into silence (42, 43).

Herzog's experience of "Bildungsroman" (Interview 362) toward the religious is not, of course, accidental. On the contrary, his intense and passionate engagement with the modernist perceptions in the ethical stage is already punctuated by his self critique and periodical revelations. His ridicule of any abstract thinking as no more than "a good five-cent synthesis" (207), for instance, is quickly followed by his realization that "(he did not need to perform elaborate abstract intellectual work" and that "not thinking is not necessarily fatal" (265). "Did I really believe that I would die when thinking stopped?" asks Herzog, in reminiscence. "Now to fear such a thing-that's really crazy" (265). Further contributory to his belief in non thinking is his experience in silence, an experience that takes him to a realm where "everything is to be acquired in stillness, and in the silence of the divine" (*E/O-I* 31):

The silence sustained him, and the brilliant weather,

the feeling that he was easily contained by everything about him within the hollowness of God, as he noted, and deaf to the final multiplicity of facts, as well as, blind to ultimate distances. (325)

And Herzog's being "pretty well satisfied to be, to be just as it is willed" precludes his religious phase in which "he had no messages for anyone. Nothing. Not a single word" (341).

In marked distinction from his other works, Bellow's *Herzog* is constructed in a double discourse. A largely dialogical/descriptive discourse delineates a chaotic modern milieu, to which an exclusively homological/analytical one constitutes an existential response. Each presents a paradox. For, whereas the obvious physical movement depicted in the former turns out to be circular, the seeming meditative stasis manifested in the latter proves to be progressive. Thus structured, the Kierkegaardian thesis that "inwardness is higher than outwardness" (*FTSD* 79) finds its expression in Herzog's existential relay: by starting to write letters, he takes a leap out from the aesthetic into the ethical, and by ceasing to write them, out from the ethical into the religious.