

# The Obsessed Individual in the Intellectual Crisis: A Kohutian Reading of *Herzog*

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**Abstract:** This thesis has attached importance to Herzog's suffering from the intellectual crisis. First, it has points out that the historical and cultural circumstances condition the self of Herzog in the grip of modern society. Secondly, it holds that Herzog suffers intellectual crisis. He feels void from modern society and thinks he can intellectually resolve all of the complex issues of his age or at least control his situation, solely through an intellectual awareness of it. But neither can he resolve the problem, nor can he control his situation. Moreover, the thesis illustrates the folly of Herzog's grasping at lofty ideas to avoid coping with his own practical problems. Finally, this chapter finds that Herzog is in socially induced disintegration. While Herzog has a conviction that if he submits himself to the demands society imposes on him, he will lose his identity and will be reduced to fraction, which pits him against the external world and people he is in contact with. He stands away from the crowd. By repulsing the socially prescribed values, he is in turn rejected by the crowd. He is a self in a situation, where others provide no support to him self. Herzog has no selfobject support.

**Keywords:** Herzog, intellectual crisis, selfobject.

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## I. INTRODUCTION

As one of Saul Bellow's most successful novels, *Herzog* has attracted critics in a broad area of criticisms since its publication. Malcolm Bradbury holds that *Herzog* is Bellow's "most compulsively expressed and densest book", one of "the fullest and most explored presentations of modern experience we have."

*Herzog*, a controversial book, has given rise to reproaches as well as much praises. Some of the reproaches come from the critic Richard Poirier. He writes that Bellow's novel "was insufferably smug and riddled with sophomoric tag lines."<sup>1</sup> An anonymous reviewer in *Newsweek* praises *Herzog*'s range, depth, intensity, verbal brilliance, and imaginative fullness and regards it as a novel that is unmistakably destined to last. His rival in *Time* thinks that the novel is something soft, mushy, and too sweet. In *The New Republic*, Irving Howe does not accept the critical view that the novel is "not systematic, mismanaged and pattern-less," pronouncing *Herzog* to be "a marvelously animated performance."<sup>2</sup> Thomas Curley says that Herzog is "a comic novel of vigorous and subtle surface, with dazzling illusions of depth." And in *New York Times*, Orville Prescott holds that the novel is "as brilliant as it is confused, pretentious and mannered."

Robert Alter comments that being human is a difficult business in Bellow's view, but he sees it as an evasion with a quasi-scientific label like "neurosis", which implies that the problem could be handled by a professional, a therapist. "Everyman is his own analyst,"<sup>3</sup> and this is the condition of Bellow's protagonists.

Earl Rovit points out that Bellow's hero can be called a schlemiel type. If he is a victimized figure, he is a victim of his own moral sense of being right and wrong.<sup>4</sup>

David D.Galloway notes in his *The Absurd Man as Picaro* that Herzog is a wanderer in the mind as well as in the heart. He is "the picaro flat on his back."<sup>5</sup> Sarah Blacher Cohen in *That Suffering Joker*<sup>6</sup> argues that Herzog, the professional egghead, initially thinks he could understand and improve humanity through his sage speculations on it, even though he is removed from humanity. As a result, his mind becomes so "jammed with thoughts" and he grows so "sick with abstractions" that he is blinded to ordinary reality and to the existence of other human beings.

John W. Aldrige, in his *The Complacency of Herzog* thinks that Herzog is ineffectual, bumbling, a fool in comparison with

secondary characters, and the very type of the silly intellectual who helplessly drifts in the cruel world of practical affairs. His ridiculousness becomes, like his suffering, the badge of honor and the mark of his moral superiority.<sup>7</sup>

Victoria Sullivan's *The Battle of the Sexes in Three Bellow Novels* suggests that the lack of the ability to love is a major characteristic of modern life. Herzog is the archetypal twentieth product: the intellectual who can analyze any situation with devastating precision and irony, but who is incapable of almost all simple pleasure--is acutely aware and acutely unhappy simultaneously.<sup>8</sup>

In 1965, Tony Tanner, a British critic, published his first full-length study of Bellow's fiction. In Tanner's view, Herzog, a product of American literature, is in the dynamic conflicts that he enacts between his ideas and his behavior. For Tanner, Herzog is an incarnation of the American hero we have known since the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and is a character who desires fixity--in the form of home, wife, family, the cultivated comforts of city life, but who, fearing that the stasis is synonymous with paralysis. Herzog has his unique modern predicament: stressing the value of relationships while contriving to spend most of his time alone; dreaming the true community while he finding himself in flight from society. He is reduced to an experience that is largely verbal and is driven to use his thoughts to "explain" everything that happens both to him and to the world around him.

Tony Tanner considers *Herzog* as Bellow's "most impressive to this date, it seems to summarize and contain all the questions, the problems, the feelings, the plight, and the aspirations worked over in the previous novels."<sup>9</sup> He contends that Herzog's disease is also "his age's".<sup>10</sup> Nevertheless, with regard to the character, "Herzog", writes Tanner, is "more of a presence than a person."<sup>11</sup>

In *The Prisoner of Perception*, through a psychological reading of the novel, he analyzes some ideas that Herzog wrestles with. For Tony, these ideas are being turned over by a mind in the throes of a riot of subjectivism. The perception is his prisoner. He emphasizes that Herzog is in no normal state.

Doctor Elam, Heide Karst at the University of Chicago, draws on the self-psychology of Heinz Kohut to analyze Narcissus and Hermes, the two recurrent character types in some of Bellow's novels including *Herzog*, in order to explore the intersection of psychoanalysis and myth in the fictions.

Critics often concentrate on the hero of Bellow's novel, who is male and Jewish, and who tries to find a personal balance while rebelling against the chaos of the modern world. They attach importance to the individual's own effort in achieving his balance, emphasizing the discord between the self and the other, and emphasizing the importance of the individual's self-reliance and independence.

In China, some scholars point out that *Herzog* shows that the cultural advantage is another type of bondage, some think that Herzog's alienation shows that he is in the whole world of waste land, and some apply Apollo and Bacchus to the study of Herzog's contemplation for spiritual salvation, focusing on the new self-made spiritual identity.

This thesis tries to explore the self's dependence on the other in the light of the self-psychology theory of Heinz Kohut, the representative of Self-Psychology. Psychoanalyst, teacher, and scholar. Heinz Kohut is one of last century's most important intellectuals. As a rebel -- according to many mainstream psychoanalysts--Kohut has challenged Freudian orthodoxy and the medical control of psychoanalysis in America. Some outstanding critics have made extensive use of his theory in their literary readings. For example, in 1998, Doctor Collington, Philip David of University of Toronto (Canada), drew on the self-psychology of Heinz Kohut to analyze the imaginary cuckoldry in Shakespeare's plays. In 2004, Doctor Boydston, Susan Hathaway of University of Cincinnati with the help of the self-psychology, analyzed the pattern of metaphor in *Beowulf*. Brooks J. Bouson's "The Narcissistic Self-Drama of Wilhelm Adler: A Kohutian Reading of Bellow's *Seize the Day*" interpreted Wilhelm's inflated but narcissistically depleted self. In 1994, Doctor Elam, Heide Karst of the University of Chicago, applied some ideas in the self-psychology of Heinz Kohut to explore the intersection of psychoanalysis and myth in Bellow's novels including *Herzog*.

In China, some scholars argue that the Self-Psychology established by Heinz Kohut has become a new psychoanalytical paradigm because it can explain self disorders the traditional psychoanalytical theory has failed to adequately deal with.

Kohut extends Freud's analogy of a rider on horseback to distinguish a self who, as mature or developed, employs primitive energy rather than repress it or avoid it. Freud says that the ego, the principle of coherence in mental life, is most often like a horseback rider who, while having no control over the horse, nevertheless tries to save face by trying to

appear to be in control.<sup>12</sup> Ego psychologists, developing Freud's understanding of the ego, depict aspects of the ego as developing "outside of conflict," autonomously achieving proficiency in such functions as "perception, intention, object comprehension, thinking, language, recall-phenomena, productivity," and "maturation and learning processes."<sup>13</sup> The ego in this way is represented as a dismounted rider who leads the horse without being subject to its energy. Self psychology, in contrast, compares the self to a rider who, while mounted, experiences powerful energy while directing it.<sup>14</sup> Kohut does not conceive the maturely developed self as having achieved total independence from powerful, primitive energy. The point of Kohut's use of this analogy is that mature development of the self provides the ability to tap into fundamental emotional sources of energy without being at their mercy.<sup>15</sup>

According to Freud, the mind is an energy system which works properly when energy is evenly distributed, and which malfunctions when energy is unevenly distributed due to energy build-up from lack of objects on which to drain it, from conflict in energy channels which blocks its distribution and drainage, from a generation of energy coming too suddenly for the system to be able to manage it and so forth.<sup>16</sup> Catastrophic energy build-up occurs in two fundamental ways, deriving from biologically determined drives for sex and violence. Kohut, while acknowledging that people can become overwhelmed by such passionate urges, considers them a result rather than the fundamental cause of social defensiveness and restraint.<sup>17</sup>

Kohut argues that insufficient selfobject support will cause the self to fragment into the conflicting passions of sex and violence. The term "selfobject" refers to "that dimension of our experience of another person that relates to this person's functions in shoring up our self."<sup>18</sup>

As for the methods of knowing, Freud uses concepts and theories from economics, physics and biology to express the inner life of humans. Biological development, however, is different from psychological development. B. F. Skinner has illustrated the clear contrast between the way knowledge is obtained in psychoanalysis through empathy and the way knowledge is obtained in other sciences.<sup>19</sup> The principal methods of knowing used in self psychology are introspection and empathy.

To clarify how the self develops, Freud emphasizes the force of instinct, a biological force. By contrast, Kohut emphasizes the individual's experience in the relation of self to the selfobject.

The experience of vitality, stability and continuity is made possible through a core, or fundamental self experience. Kohut refers to this fundamental self experience as the "nuclear self." "I will thus define the nuclear self as a specific psychic configuration available to introspection and empathy."<sup>20</sup>

As for the self's development, there is at the start an archaic self which, with appropriate development, is eventually transformed into a mature self. From start to finish, this nuclear self is constituted by two "poles" which, through their interrelation, establish a "tension gradient," that is, a disposition to action, which is realized through an "energy arc" which propels the development of the self and sustains its vitality, continuity and coherence.<sup>21</sup>

"At one pole is the self as ambitious, as striving to reinforce and develop, through a variety of actions, an experience of fullness as a unified, powerful source of experience and activity. In the archaic, rudimentary stage of this experience of self completion or fullness, the experience is of the self as grandiose, as unlimited perfection, as omnipotent, with the inclination to express this and to be acknowledged for it."<sup>22</sup> In addition, there is the idealizing pole. The idealizing pole of the self provides an individual "meaningful goals...something around which his life potentials can cluster, on which he can converge to maintain a sense of direction."<sup>23</sup>

With the help of psychoanalysis, especially in terms of self-psychology of Kohut, this thesis mainly analyzes Herzog's intellectual crisis so as to show the importance of being in community.

## II. THE CONDITIONED SELF

The novel of *Herzog* is set in the historical background of the United States in the 1960s, a period that may be described as one of material excess and spiritual scarcity, a period when utilitarianism prevailed. With the development of new technologies, the postwar America greatly accumulated an abundance of material wealth. The development of modern scientific technology, the accelerating automation, and the increasing pressure of the Cold War brought about a series of problems: unemployment, poverty, crime, violence, social unrest and so forth. In such circumstances, human values and moralities faced severe challenges. "In emancipated New York, man and woman, gaudily disguised, like two savages

belonging to hostile tribes, confront each other.”<sup>24</sup>

*Herzog* represents Saul Bellow’s realistic view of the complexities of modern society and man’s predicament, especially the dilemma faced by intellectuals. Moses E. Herzog is a history professor who is a middle-aged Jewish-American intellectual born of immigrant parents. He has married twice. By each marriage, he has a child. Almost all of the action in the novel takes place in Herzog’s mind. He spends a week and a half in feverish thought, going over the breakup of his marriage and all its contingent elements such as lies, betrayals, alimony, child-custody problems, and so forth, which make him introspect his own attitudes, behavior, his family, his past, sexuality, and which make him consider the problem of the city, and the society.

The historical and cultural circumstances condition Herzog’s self. As a Jew, Herzog is deeply committed to the Jewish heritage. In his courtship of Madeleine, he commits the unforgivable sin of accompanying her to mass. He is dismayed by the impiety that he has attended a service in the Catholic Church. When he makes love with Sono (his oriental mistress) on her unclean and rumpled bed, he censures himself for being a turncoat from the faith.

Have all the traditions, passions, renunciations, virtues, gems, and masterpieces of Hebrew discipline and all the rest of it—rhetoric, a lot of it, but containing true facts—brought me to these untidy green sheets, and this rippled mattress? As if anyone cared what he was doing here. As if it affected the fate of the world in any way. (p.170)

As a Jew, Moses E. Herzog is likely to remind the reader of Moses in the Bible. First, when he takes a list of the traits of paranoia from a psychiatrist, Herzog says that “I put the scribbled paper in my wallet and studied it like the plagues of Egypt.” (p.77) According to the Bible on Exodus, when Moses leads the Hebrew go out of Egypt, they are relentlessly prevented by the Egyptian Pharaoh. With the help of God, Moses activates ten natural disasters to warn the Egyptian Pharaoh. In the novel, Herzog would like to study one of them, which suggests he unconsciously identifies himself with Moses.

Secondly, the oboe is frequently mentioned in the novel. Herzog has an oboe from Alec Hirshbein, his roommate at Chicago. “Herzog with his odd sense of piety (much heavy love in Herzog; grief did not pass quickly, with him) taught himself to play the instrument and, come to think of it.”(p.119) The word “Piety” hints at Herzog’s Jewish feeling. Later, when he lives in Ludeyville, it is shown that he likes playing the oboe. “In his dark study, vines clutching the bulging screen, Herzog played Handel and Purcell—jigs, bourrees, contredanses, his face puffed out, fingers fleet on the keys, the music hopping and tumbling, absent-minded and sad.”(p.121) When Madeleine leaves the house, he dries the oboe, looks over the reeds, and shuts the frowzy plush case. According to Bible, Moses’ mother put three months old Moses in the case for fear that he will be killed by the Egyptian. She places the case among the reeds on the bank of the river. The oboe and the reed hint at the relation of Herzog to Moses. Such kind of arrangement shows that Herzog in the novel is like Moses in Egypt. Both of them suffer anguish.

Thirdly, Herzog goes to have dinner with Ramona, his mistress. All the time, Egyptian music is on the phonograph in the adjoining room. Ramona is a beautiful and experienced lover. Besides Egyptian music, she prepares in her luxurious room the shrimp, wine, flowers, lights, perfumes, the rituals of undressing to entertain Herzog. All this flatters Herzog. It reminds the reader that Moses, adopted by the Egyptian as a prince, lives a luxurious life and faces many temptations. Herzog feels difficult to resist temptation from the attractive lover. He almost forgets his responsibility as an intellectual to help improve the human condition. He tells Ramona that he is “developing the psychology of a runaway slave.”(p.189)

Fourthly, in the novel, at the moment when Herzog visits Ramona, Herzog is in the most painful phase. Madeleine for whom he gives everything has fooled and cuckolded him and has left him with Gersbach, his “best” friend. Herzog’s painful mental state corresponds to the painful mental state of Moses when he knows that he is one of the Hebrew. Moses grows up in the Egyptian Basilica. He lives a happy life there. When his sister tells him he is one of the Hebrews, he feels painful. He cannot receive the fact that he is not the Egyptian prince and that he is the offspring of the Hebrews enslaved by the Egyptians. His mind is in fierce conflict. On one hand, he cannot give up the love from the Pharaoh; on the other hand, as the offspring of the Hebrews, he cannot be the son of his enemy. Moses is in great anguish and so is Herzog. Moreover, he is at great loss. People make use of each other without any human affection. Herzog sighs “Charity, as if it didn’t have enough trouble in this day and age, will always be suspected of morbidity—sado-masochism, perversity of some sort. All higher or moral tendencies lie under suspicion of being rackets.” (p.56) What is the meaning of life? As Moses is trying to find the way for his clansmen to go out of Egypt, Herzog is thinking of the way for human beings to get

out of modern predicament.

From above analysis, it is reasonable to identify Herzog with Moses in the Bible. He sees his conflict with Madeleine and Gersbach as universal and he sees himself defending Man against revolutionary mobs. He feels he is superior to the others. "The progress of civilization—indeed, the survival of civilization—depended on the successes of Moses E. Herzog." (p.125) Many of Bellow's mournful heroes, including Leventhal, Tommy Wilhelm, Henderson, Sammler and Citrine have also undergone painful separations or divorces, but none suffers as acutely from separation anxiety and divorce grief as Herzog.<sup>25</sup> However, he does not go into an irreversible decline; instead he attempts to pull himself up through his spiritual quest. He tends to intellectualize his personal misery into universal problems. He transmutes his obsession with his personal suffering into considerations of "the general conditions of common people, of their great need, of their hunger for good sense, clarity and truth."<sup>26</sup>

As a professor of history and as an academician of ideas, Herzog is supposed to be successful and it seems so at the beginning, which is also a reason why Madeleine marries him. He has made a brilliant start in his Ph. D. thesis. He has to his credit several articles. He has a book on *Romanticism and Christianity*. His thesis is influential and is translated into French and German. "His early book, not much noticed when it was published, was now on many reading lists, and the younger generation of historians accepted it as a model of the new sort of history." (p.5) But later on, all the good beginnings turn into chaos when he suffers from the breakup of his second marriage.

Herzog, an educated intellectual, feels to be in the grip of powers and forces. "We are bound to be the slaves of those who have power to destroy us." (p.51) He finds himself involved in a wide range of controlling people who think they know the world and know how it goes, but who turn out to be no more reliable in their behavior or no more accurate in their perception than tricksters, whom Herzog labels as "reality-instructors." (p.125) These characters include Madeleine, the lawyer Sandor, and the psychiatrist Dr. Edvig and so forth.

At his psychiatrist's suggestion, Herzog takes a tour in Europe. When he returns, he hears from Asphalter, one of his friends, that Madeleine has been cuckolding him with his "best" friend, Valentine Gersbach. Shattered by the news, Herzog is on the verge of a mental breakdown. For Madeleine, he has abandoned his promising teacher career in the University. He has even helped Gersbach find a job in the city. He feels his kindness effects nothing good to him. He feels an urgent need "to explain, to have it out, to justify, to put in perspective, to clarify, to amend." (p.2) He wants to get empathy and help from the "reality-instructors". For the reality instructors, a successful life in America can be achieved only through a manipulation of others; power comes through money and vice versa.

Empathy is a way of knowing which is infused with emotion. So says Kohut about empathy: "you perceive another's mental state via the capacity of your psyche to relate to similarities or similar experience in yourself. You feel yourself into them"<sup>27</sup> Empathy expresses the activity of "feeling into". By empathy, Kohut does not mean sympathy with another which is only superficially based on another's emotions, as when one "feel for" another in pain without appreciating any of its significance. Instead of feeling into Herzog's goodness, the reality instructors attach no significance to Herzog's suffering and they "want to teach you—to punish you with—the lessons of the Real."(p.125) As a result, in a frenzy, he is writing letters. Most of them are mental. Almost all of them are not mailed. The letters are to all kinds of people, living and dead. Throughout the novel, Herzog intermittently imagines all kinds of pains and tortures for the two betrayers--Madeleine and Gersbach. He uses his most powerful allusions to take revenge on them. He is an expert in verbal satire. He plays the role of the mad avenger. However, neither is violence the way to quiet his inner rage nor is wild sexual activity the way to restore his sexual power.

According to Freud, the mind is an energy system which malfunctions when energy is unevenly distributed. Catastrophic energy build-up occurs in two fundamental ways, deriving from biologically determined drives for sex and violence. While Kohut acknowledges that we can become overwhelmed by such passionate urges, he considers them a result rather than the fundamental cause of social defensiveness and restraint.

In the cab through hot streets where brick and brownstone buildings were crowded, Herzog held the strap and his large eyes were fixed on the sights of New York. The square shapes were vivid, not inert, they give him a sense of fateful motion, almost of intimacy. Somehow he felt himself part of it all.(p.27)

Herzog is in the grip of modern society, experiencing a historical assault on the individual of unprecedented indifference and brutality. The result, not surprisingly, has been a disintegration of solid notions of identity.<sup>28</sup>

So, the reader can see that Herzog's overwhelming passion to write letters is a result of social restraint which attaches little importance to the human being's mutual empathy.

### III. HERZOG'S INTELLECTUAL CRISIS

Throughout the novel, the reader is largely in Herzog's mind. He feels void from the modern society. He thinks he can intellectually resolve all of the complex issues of his age or at least control his situation solely through an intellectual awareness of it. But in fact, Herzog is a confused intellectual. Moreover, the reader can find out the folly of Herzog who tries to avoid coping with his own practical problems.

Herzog thinks that he is seeing not only the decline of Western society but of all the traditional ideologies embodied in old religions and philosophies. "An unrelenting tidal wave of change has inundated and is obliterating all vestiges of the past." Thus the modern individual is "left, then, with the soul or the spirit stripped of all orthodox accoutrements, encircled by a raging chaos."<sup>29</sup> Herzog is inevitably thrown into a void: a spiritual vacuum that keeps him dangling.

As a result of the spirit lost, Herzog has lost the context of his existence where it is possible for the soul to preserve the equilibrium. He reflects on the meaning of life, searching for an existential moral code to which he can cling.

The Jews hold the belief all the time that they are the "chosen people of God" even though the Jews paradoxically have undergone various sufferings. Likewise, Herzog initially thinks that he can understand and improve humanity through his sage meditations on it even though he is in isolation. Herzog wants "to do what he could to improve the human condition." (p.107) Herzog, a man of ideas instead of a man of actions, is lost in the abyss of meditations and reflections.

He is becoming repulsive towards those ideas proposed by such philosophers as Heidegger, Kierkegaard, and Nietzsche because he thinks that they all fail to offer the relevant answer to his question on Being. Throughout the novel, Herzog exists in the vacuum of philosophical clichés until he achieves his individual balance. His condition is the epitome of Bellow's portrayal of the modern man dangling in void.

The beginning part portrays an image of Herzog, who is alone in the big old house. It is the peak of summer in the Berkshires. Then the reader is taken back to the start of all his troubles. Herzog has a strong need to explain, to justify and to clarify. He gets into the habit of making endless notes and jottings, recording fragmentary thoughts, observations and even writing letters to friends, relations, dead ancestors, politicians, philosophers, finally even to God. Many of them are unfinished. He is in deep introspection.

He thinks that he can intellectually resolve all of the complex issues of his age or at least control his environment solely through an intellectual awareness of it. In fact, the reader can easily find that Herzog is a confused intellectual obsessed by overflowing fragments of the past, trying to narrate them, seeking coherence, attempting to unravel them to get some sense of life and to get an equalizing orientation.

Situation, characters, and events in the novel mostly come to the reader colored by Herzog's memory, permeated by his questioning, often broken up or interrupted by a sudden burst of letter writing and scribbling of odd notes. Those letters and notes are a way of alleviating the accumulating pressures on his mind; also they are part of his attempt to evaluate, understand and clarify. Into them he puts his resentment, his satires and his quarrels with the creeds of his age; through them he expresses his beliefs and concerns.

With different lengths and various contents, Herzog's letters and notes are randomly and chaotically scattered throughout the narrative. The letters to the celebrities directly reflect his great concerns about human existence and human civilization. He writes to Mr. President on the problem of taxes, unclear policies, unemployment, public security, overpopulation, and even on the race problem. He writes to the priest, considering the charity and bums. He writes to Mr. Alderman, scolding him for not having the Army's Nike missile site in some blighted area instead of on the city Point. He writes to Commissioner Wilson, complaining the weakness of police force in communities where violence and crime prevail. He writes to the New York Times, worrying about the problems of chemical pesticides, contamination of ground water and other forms of poisoning as well as the social and ethical ones. His mind seems compelled to take on the burden of the whole world, the problem of the mankind.

It is important to point out that Herzog scarcely mail any letter. In spite of his fanciful thinking, the problems remain there, unsolved. Hence, objectively speaking, he is still obsessed by the problem and by his concerns. Without action, meditation alone yields nothing. As a result, he is in intellectual confusion instead of having any intellectual awareness.

As for the value and importance of the individual self, the great work he is contemplating before his breakup is to show “how life could be lived by renewing universal connections; overturning the last of the Romantic errors about the uniqueness of the Self,” (p.39) He thinks with some irony back to the time when he is a student at the McKinley High School, he orates a text taken from Emerson: “The Main enterprise of the world... is the upbuilding of a man. The private life of one man shall be a more illustrious monarchy... than any kingdom in history.”(p.160) He is disgusted by the sly contemporary pessimists who maintain that “you must sacrifice your poor, squawking, niggardly individuality which may be nothing anyway(from an analytic viewpoint) but a persistent infantile megalomania, or (from a Marxian point of view) a stinking little bourgeois property--to historical necessity.” (p.93) Against sneering realists, Herzog prefers Romanticism. But the objections to the cult of selfhood remain. He wavers continually and decides “perhaps a moratorium on definitions of human nature is now best.”(p.129)

The word of “intellectual” in one sense means having or showing good reasoning power, contrasted with feeling and instinct. As an intellectual, Herzog uses most powerful allusions to take vengeance on Madeleine and Gersbach. By showing their similarity to the least admirable and their dissimilarity to the most admirable men of the past, he gets verbal revenge upon the two chief traitors. By likening Gersbach to Cagliostro, the 18<sup>th</sup> century Italian charlatan who pretends to be a noble and who deceives the gullible with his feats of alchemy and magic, Herzog accentuates Gersbach’s hypocrisy. Madeleine is damned as well. By suggesting that Madeleine expects to give birth to a Louis XIV as she purchases a five-hundred-dollar maternity outfit, Herzog ridicules her delusions of royalty and her extravagance. His resort to allusion to alleviate his anguish can prove that although he presumes that he can intellectually resolve all of the complex issues of his age, or at least control his environment solely through an intellectual awareness of it, Herzog unconsciously doubts his presumption. He tries to do more meditations and grasp at lofty ideas. His mind seems compelled to take on the burden of the whole world, the problem of the mankind. But he avoids coping with his own practical problems. It is really a folly.

When he thinks that Gersbach has given him the grief, Herzog goes over Chicago in order to find him. He has a strong desire to kill Gersbach and Madeleine.

It’s not everyone who gets the opportunity to kill with a clear conscience. They had opened the way to justifiable murder. They deserved to die. He had a right to kill them. They would even know why they were dying; no explanation necessary. When he stood before them they would have to submit. Gersbach would only hang his head, with tears for himself... (254)

The words, such as “conscience”, “justifiable”, “right”, show that Herzog has used his intellectual mind to figure out that his murder is conscientious by the moral, justifiable by the law, rightful by the principle of being a man. According to his own justification, his action is not a murder, but a feat because he defends the moral, the law and the men. He tries to classify his action to in lofty terms. But the word “would” puts Herzog into an awkward situation. The word “would” Herzog has used here is in the subjunctive mood, which shows Herzog’s uncertainty about his action. It is easy for the reader to ask why he feels uncertain. It can be seen that Herzog never thinks over the whole thing in his mind. He does not think about whether he himself is responsible for his wife’s betrayal. He just thinks of what the universally accepted conscience is. And then he gets a standard by his own reasoning to justify his will to murder. He uses lofty ideas to avoid facing his own specific problem directly, personally and realistically.

In addition, he is a poor judge of women. Herzog’s first wife Daisy is a typically traditional Jewish woman. She is orderly and frugal, willing to spend her time on looking after her husband and child. Herzog admits “Stability, symmetry, order, containment were Daisy’s strength”(p.126) “As long as Moses was married to Daisy, he had led the perfectly ordinary life of an assistant professor, respected and stable.”(p.5) Their peaceful marriage is helpful to Herzog’s career so that he is able to concentrate himself on his first volume on *Romanticism and Christianity*. But, he feels bored enough to forsake her. When he is abandoned by his willful, ambitious second wife, he “gave up the shelter of an orderly, purposeful, lawful

existence” because it is boring, and he feels that “it was simply a slacker’s life”. (p.103)

Sono, a Japanese woman, whom Herzog falls in love with for a while, is kind, tender, and knows how to comfort and relax men. “She asked for no great sacrifices.... She asked only that I [Herzog] should be with her from time to time.” (p.173) She loves Herzog, which makes her even disobey her father, who wanted her to go back to Japan. However, when she breaks down with pneumonia for a month, Herzog does not bother to go to see her once. Instead of choosing the submissive, thrifty Sono, Herzog marries the masterful, extravagant Madeleine.

Moreover, Herzog is also an incompetent father. He seldom goes to visit them. He has no right to take custody of his two children. Marco, Herzog’s son, blames Herzog for abandoning Julie, daughter of Herzog and Madeleine, like deserting him and his mother. Herzog is “an incorrigible character, doing always the same stunts, repeating the same disgraces.” (p.182)

Lastly, Herzog is a financial failure. He spends his \$20,000 patrimony--“Papa’s savings, representing forty years of misery in America” (p.120), not on promising land, but on some crumbling property in the Massachusetts wilderness. After the divorce, he goes bankrupt after he has paid the expenses of his extravagant wife. He has borrowed \$1500 from Shura, one of his two brothers. He admits, “With me, money is not a medium. I am money’s medium. It passed through me--taxes, insurance, mortgage, child support, rent, legal fees.”(p.31) He has given up his secure, tenured, academic position. He has engaged himself in the daytime intellectual meandering, and part-time night-school teaching. He has deteriorated from a productive, promising scholar into a confused thinker. His intellect is temporarily in a state of despair, so his second book on Romanticism remains unfinished.

In brief, the situation Herzog is trapped in demonstrates his difficulty in making the connection between what he finds in books and his real life experiences. His intellectual ‘privilege ’has proved to be another form of bondage. Saul Bellow says, “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 has considered his intellectual ‘privilege ’has proved to be another form of bondage. Anyone who misses this misses the point of the book.”  
30

#### IV. SELF-DISORDER

Herzog is in socially induced disintegration, which gives birth to Herzog’s narcissistic rage where the selfobject failure plays a part.

Under the pressure of society and those tricksters whom Herzog labels as “reality-instructors” around him, Herzog takes the recourse to withdrawing himself into narcissism, and negation of others. But his narcissism and negation give him nothing beneficial but an internal pattern as destructive as the pattern their external world imposes upon him.<sup>31</sup>

He lives in the society that is described as one of material excess and spiritual scarcity, in which utilitarianism prevails. For the utilitarian purpose, the wife may betray the husband; the good friend may become the stranger. In such circumstances, human values and moralities face severe challenges. “Herzog must defend the individual because he feels unworthy.”<sup>32</sup>“Maybe dignity was imported from France....It all belongs to museum now.” (p.193) Herzog has been overcome by the need to explain, to have it out, to justify.

Herzog’s idea is based on the Jewish tradition. His standard is the Jewish family as he knew it in childhood. Bellow explained to the interviewer for *Show*, speaking of the contemporary apocalyptic romanticism which sees the inevitability of total destruction, “I think the Jewish feeling resists romanticism and insists on an older set of facts.”<sup>33</sup> Similarly, Herzog resists “the argument that scientific thought has put into disorder all considerations based on value....The peculiar idea entered my (Jewish) mind that we’d see about this!”(p.106). He may bitterly laugh at his own principles, thinking of young Jews brought up on moral principles as Victorian ladies are on pianoforte and needlepoint, but they are his principles. In the passage from the interview in *Show*, Bellow clearly reveals his standards and their source:

My mother lived strictly in the nineteenth century and her sole ambition was for me to become a Talmudic scholar like everyone else in her family. She was a figure from the middle ages. In family pictures, her scholarly brothers looked as if they could have lived in the thirteenth century. Those bearded portraits were her idea of what a man should be.<sup>34</sup>

Herzog develops his standards in a similar environment.



Herzog's mother had had a weakness for Jews with handsome beards. In her family, too, all the elders had beards that were thick and rich, full of religion. She wanted Moses to become rabbi and he seemed to himself gruesomely unlike a rabbi now in the trunks and straw hat, his face charged with heavy sadness, foolish utter longing of which a religious life might have purged him. (p.22)

"Rabbi" is the teacher of the Jewish law; it is title of a spiritual leader of Jewish congregation. Herzog longs for a life fulfilled by spiritual pursuit. He thinks he can understand and improve humanity through his sage meditations about it. His ideal is opposed by what is found in a world which values success in terms of practical business at the expense of spiritual pursuit. The world treats his need for self affirmation as insignificant. In this sense, the world Herzog lives in does not give him the self support, which put him in a painful irresolution--"rebellion versus submission; narcissism versus communion; and fear versus courage."<sup>35</sup> In this sense, Herzog is in disintegration. The painful irresolution in one way or another has led to the marginalization of Herzog's self.

The quirk in Herzog's character contributes to bring about Herzog's marginal self. He has been brought down to his present disgrace simply because of his intellectual and spiritual rebellion against institutionalized ideologies and social demands upon him. To be a social success and in harmony with his surrounding, the individual is compelled to submissively adopt socially prescribed values and coordinate them into his behavior accordingly. Herzog has a conviction that if he submits himself to the demands society imposes on him, he will lose his identity and will be reduced to fraction, which pits him against the external world and people he is in contact with. He stands away from the crowd. By repulsing the socially prescribed values, he is in turn rejected by the crowd. Herzog is a self in a situation, where others provide no support to the self. According to Self Psychology, Kohut calls the provider of this self support a "selfobject." In this sense, Herzog has no selfobject support.

Selfobject refers to "that dimension of our experience of another person that relates to this person's functions in shoring up our self."<sup>36</sup> This statement suggests interaction between two individuals, one helping the other. It can be seen that lonely Herzog gets no sufficient selfobject support whether from the world or from the other people. He is a complete failure in terms of selfobject. However, lacking sufficient selfobject support, a disintegrated self will experience sexual and aggressive urges as lust and violent rage.<sup>37</sup>

Herzog emerges "distressed, impatient, angry," (6) resentfully and vehemently projecting his inner outrage and personal crisis upon the external world and people inhabiting it. He holds the society as a whole responsible for the pathetic situation in which he is now trapped because he believes

a curious, creepy mind that one, convinced that madness always rules the world. The Dictator must have living crowds and also a crowd of corpses. The vision of mankind as a lot of cannibals, running in packs, gibbering, bewailing its own murders, pressing out the living world as dead excrement.(p.77)

He is thrown back upon himself to establish a form to fight the madness of the world. But he is caught in such an anxiety that he is completely immersed in his own self. To some extent, he has developed a love for and an obsession with his form in spite of the fact that his self is cracked.<sup>38</sup> Thus Herzog has complacently settled into the cocoon of narcissism.

His ambition is too much grandiose and he is so eager for intellectual fulfillment that he even abandons a promising teaching career (though it is decided by Madeleine). In order to carry out his grandiose plan, he retreats himself from society to a run-down house that he has bought with his \$20,000 patrimony. He has an idealistic and somewhat impractical thinking that he is "the man on whom the world depended for certain intellectual work, to change history, to influence the development of civilization."(p.105) This point shows that Herzog feels proud of himself.

With the breakup of his second marriage, he finds his grandiose project shaken. Instead of completing a book, he produces 800 pages of listless arguments. His academic life proves unsuccessful, which has left him an academic failure.

In addition, Herzog is a mad avenger. When he learns that his rival, Valentine Gersbach, has locked Junie, his little daughter, in the car at night, he becomes very angry. He fantasies how he will wipe out the guilty pair. For the time being, he does not act out this fantasy. When he encounters the brutality of the actual child-killing in the New York courtroom, his unreasonable connection of Gersbach with the murderer prompts him into the decision to kill Gersbach and Madeleine. An anger prompted by injured pride and fuelled by the hope of revenge is called narcissistic rage by Kohut.<sup>39</sup> Herzog is

just in this kind of narcissistic rage.

The foregoing analysis may lead the reader to the conclusion that Herzog is in socially induced disintegration, that this disintegration gives birth to Herzog's narcissistic rage, and that his problems are caused by selfobject failure.

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- <sup>1</sup> Richard Poirier, "Herzog, or, Bellow in Trouble," *Saul Bellow: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. Earl Rovit (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1975) 81.
  - <sup>2</sup> Tony Tanner, "The Prisoner of Perception," *Saul Bellow's Herzog*, ed. Harold Broom (New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1988) 11.
  - <sup>3</sup> Robert Alter, "The Stature of Saul Bellow," *Contemporary Literary Criticism*, ed. Carolyn Riley, vol.3 (Detroit, Michigan: Gale Research Company, 1975) 49.
  - <sup>4</sup> Earl Rovit, ed. *Introduction to Saul Bellow* (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1975) 1-4.
  - <sup>5</sup> David D. Galloway, "The Absurd Man as Picaro," *The Absurd Hero in American Fiction* (University of Texas Press, 1970) 164.
  - <sup>6</sup> Sarah Blacher Cohen, "That Suffering Joker," *Saul Bellow's Enigmatic Laughter* (University of Illinois Press, 1974) 35.
  - <sup>7</sup> John W. Aldridge, "The Complacency of Herzog," *Time to Murder and Create* (Mckay, 1966) 133.
  - <sup>8</sup> Victoria Sullivan, "The Battle of the Sexes in Three Bellow Novels," *Contemporary Literary Criticism*, eds. Dedria Bryfonski and Phyllis Carmel Mendelson, Vol.8 (Detroit, Michigan: Gale Research Company, 1978) 78.
  - <sup>9</sup> Tony Tanner, *Saul Bellow* (London: Oliver & Boyd, 1967) 87.
  - <sup>10</sup> Jonathan Wilson, *Herzog: The Limits of Ideas* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1990) 15.
  - <sup>11</sup> Wilson 15.
  - <sup>12</sup> Gary F. Greif, *The Tragedy of the Self: Individual and Social Disintegration Viewed Through the Self Psychology of Heinz Kohut* (Lanham · New York · Oxford: University Press of America, Inc., 2000) 4.
  - <sup>13</sup> Heinz Hartmann, *Ego Psychology and the Problem of Adaptation*, trans. David Rapaport (New York: International Universities Press, 1958) 4.
  - <sup>14</sup> Heinz Kohut, *The Kohut Seminars*, ed. Miriam Elson (New York & London: w. w. Norton, 1987) 306-307.
  - <sup>15</sup> Greif 5.
  - <sup>16</sup> Greif 41.
  - <sup>17</sup> Greif 44.
  - <sup>18</sup> Heinz Kohut, *How Does Analysis Cure?* ed. Arnold Goldberg (Chicago & London: University of Chicago Press, 1984) 49.
  - <sup>19</sup> B. F. Skinner, *Science and Human Behavior* (New York and London: Collier-Macmillan Free Press, 1965) 31.
  - <sup>20</sup> Heinz Kohut, *The Search for the Self*, vol.3, ed. Paul H. Ornstein (Madison Connecticut: International Universities

Press, 1990) 164.

- <sup>21</sup> Heinz Kohut, *The Restoration of the Self* (Madison Connecticut: International Universities Press, 1977) 180.
- <sup>22</sup> Greif 3-4.
- <sup>23</sup> Kohut, *The Kohut Seminars* 80.
- <sup>24</sup> Saul Bellow, *Herzog* (New York: Viking, 1964) 187. All the following parenthetical page numbers refer to the same book unless otherwise indicated.
- <sup>25</sup> Andrew Gordon, "Herzog's Divorce Grief," *Saul Bellow and the Struggle at the Center*, ed. Eugene Hollahan (New York : AMS PRESS INC., 1996) 58.
- <sup>26</sup> Ruth Miller, *Saul Bellow: A Biography of the Imagination* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1991)155.
- <sup>27</sup> Kohut, *The Kohut Seminars* 275.
- <sup>28</sup> Jonathan Wilson, *Herzog: The Limits of Ideas* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1990) 100.
- <sup>29</sup> Frederick Glaysher: *Saul Bellow's Soul*, [http:// www.fglaysher.com/bellow.htm](http://www.fglaysher.com/bellow.htm)
- <sup>30</sup> Interview with Gordon Lloyd Harper in *Writers at Work: The Paris Review Interviews*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ser. (New York: Viking, 1967) 193-94.
- <sup>31</sup> Irving Malin, *Saul Bellow's Fiction* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1969)146.
- <sup>32</sup> John Jacob Clayton, *Saul Bellow: In Defense of Man*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed (Bloomington. London: Indiana University Press,1986) 206.
- <sup>33</sup> Clayton 202.
- <sup>34</sup> Clayton 202.
- <sup>35</sup> Malin 4.
- <sup>36</sup> Kohut, *How Does Analysis Cure?* 49.
- <sup>37</sup> Greif 53.
- <sup>38</sup> Malin 15.
- <sup>39</sup> My discussion is indebted to Philip David Collington, *O Word of Fear: Imaginary Cuckoldry in Shakespeare's Plays* (University of Toronto, 1998).