

Saul Bellow's main characters are frequently persons who convey their experience with reality in the contemporary Western society. The concrete phenomena - their individual experiences fold up into a more conclusive reflection and lead to the comprehension of reality on a general level. And it is disappointment that best characterizes the resulting knowledge.

The novels I selected for the thorough analysis, Mr. Sammler's Planet and Herzog, both depict and encounter of man with reality. The reflection of this encounter is presented by scholarly men, Mr. Sammler and Moses E. Herzog. Despite the fact that they are fictitious characters, their knowledge of Western thinkers makes them 'real' intellectual critics of the contemporary time. They connect through their theoretical scholarship and their personal lives, observations and experiences. The outcome is an account of the state of the contemporary Western society in the light of a broader understanding of its development.

The course of that development or transformation can be analyzed with the help of works of influential Western thinkers for their reasoning always arises from the conditions of their present time. Their works containing novel concepts have impact on the future development but also inevitably reflect the past development.

This is the reason why I decide to analyze the novels in the light of three representatives of the Western thought - each rooted at a different period of time in the course of development of the Western culture. I have chosen three philosophers: St. Augustine, F.W. Nietzsche, and J.P. Sartre. My intention is to show that they well represent the changes of concepts that have taken place in the Western society.

Augustine's works mark the dawn of the Western civilization back in the Early Middle Ages. His thought naturally makes up the foundation of the European society. Nietzsche grasps a turn in the course of future development based on irretrievable overall decline of the traditional spiritual supports of the nineteenth century Europe. And Sartre in the twentieth century declares man free, that is to say, independent of the previous Western development. All three together thus roughly cover the major spiritual turning points in the development of the Western society.