ARTISTIC DEFINITION:

A Study of the Words Character, Fate and Reality, as used in Saul Bellow's The Adventures of Augie March and Henderson the Rain King

A thesis submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree of Bachelor of Arts with Honors in English

by

Don Phillipson

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I. Introduction

Saul Bellow defines, as they relate to people, certain very important but abstract words and concepts which, when used in their strictly logical sense, have no significance and can be logically untrue. Bellow, through art, shows that truths about people do not conform to logic and are often paradoxical and ineffable. Both Augie March, in The Adventures of Augie March, and Eugene Henderson, in Henderson the Rain King, search to discover the meaning of certain words: Augie searches to know what his character is and Henderson searches to know what reality is. Saul Bellow, in telling these individuals stories, develops other themes related to each one's search. It is through Bellow's expansion of these themes that he relates the importance and significance of the words to people's lives; it is through the respective stories that Bellow defines the words. The reader gains a true understanding of the concepts when he indentifies them with Augie and Henderson.

In The Adventures of Augie March, Bellow defines and expands upon the crucial words "character" and "fate." Singly, the words and their definitions pose no special problems. The Oxford English Dictionary defines character as "The sum of the moral and mental qualities which distinguish an individual or a race, viewed as a homogenous whole; the individuality impressed by nature and habit on man or nation; mental or moral constitution." (OED def.11) It defines fate as "The principle, power, or agency by which, according to certain philosophical and popular systems of belief, all events, or some events in particular, are unalterably determined from eternity."
But then Bellow introduces the difficult to understand and what will prove to be paradoxical concept that a man's character is his fate. It is through this concept, though, that Bellow relates the abstract words to man's real life and through art shows that the words and the concepts have the utmost value and meaning.

Augie, striving to know his character, comes to believe that his character makes him search; his is a searching character. Augie bases this knowledge, however, upon the precept that one has a given character which one was born with, is, and will be. This concept of a given character is developed in Augie's mind as part of the notion of axial lines. Relating this to Augie's already stated idea that character is fate, we see the difficulty and paradox implicit in this concept. Logically, if one's character is given, and one's character is one's fate, then one's fate is also given. But Augie explicitly denies any notion of determinism or, simply, a given fate. Augie's reconciliation of this paradox comes from other facts noted about the human personality, such as Augie's ability to oppose people and his inability to stay with his purest feelings. Bellow's art, then, goes beyond the logical definitions of words, combines them into larger even if paradoxical concepts, and relates them to the human condition, thus letting the reader understand a paradox where logically the words are untrue.

Bellow's theme of a protagonist searching to bring a concept out of abstraction and relate it to his real life carries over into Henderson the Rain King. Henderson searches for reality. Though more difficult to define perhaps than character, it nevertheless can be
stated. The OED Defines it: "Real existence, what is real; the aggregate of real things or existences, that which underlies and is the truth of appearances or phenomena." (OED def.3). Bellow grants that this popularly accepted definition is a valid one but confines its jurisdiction to the physical world.

Going beyond, then, the definition of the word as it applies to objects, Bellow looks for another definition of reality; he wants to know what is the meaningful reality on which people base their lives and actions. A problem arises when the belief emerges that this noumenal reality is ineffable. If one cannot speak of the other reality, then Bellow obviously faces the problem of trying to say in words what cannot be said. Here again the function of art enters. Henderson experiences many events and meets many people; the reader gains a definition of the noumenal reality through an understanding of and an identification with his experiences.

In both Augie March and Henderson, Bellow examines the most important, meaningful words we live by and takes them out of the realm of cliches and misuse. More importantly, he defines them as they relate to people's lives by showing, through Augie's and Henderson's stories, what these words mean to actual lives. Bellow succeeds in both novels because we gain a real understanding of the concepts represented by these words.
II The Adventures of Augie March

The Adventures of Augie March, presented as Augie's memoirs, traces the narrator's search to know his own character. Throughout the novel one prevailing belief drives Augie on: That a man's character is his fate. For purposes of clarification, we will here state Bellow's conclusions about character and fate and grant their validity. It must also be noted, however, that only through art, through the story itself, can one accept the truth of these statements. First, we grant that one has a given character, that each person has a desire which motivates him. Augie, looking back on his life, believes he himself had a desire to know his character. This poses a paradox because once he has discovered his character, he must continue to search to know his character or he will not be true to that character. Next, though Augie's character is given and his character is his fate, his fate is not given. In this concept fate may be thought of as events. Where a "given fate" implies events which must happen, Bellow denies this notion as determinism. A person may choose to oppose-- an important concept which Bellow develops-- his character and so alter the seemingly determined sequence. But, and this is the key to Augie's discovery, being true to one's character and voluntarily causing a sequence of events brings serenity rather than a feeling of being trapped by cause and effect circumstance.

Bellow notes the paradox, that Augie must keep searching to know himself, in two ways. First, he notes it in Augie's encounter with Mintouchain, who actually states the paradox. And, in a more subtle way, Bellow notes the paradox in the structure of the novel itself.
Bellow uses the device of a literary foil, Simon March, to make this comment. Simon March constantly reminds us of what Augie will become if he does not keep searching, if he does not continually strive to know himself.

Augie begins his memoirs quoting Heraclitus: "A man's character is his fate," (1), and then gives some vivid descriptions of his boyhood. These memories include the first mention of minor characters such as Anna Coblin and include the introduction of Simon, his older brother. In his memory, Augie is already discovering his character in these boyhood encounters. He remembers Anna Coblin, (who has designs on him as a prospective son-in-law), offending him by snatching away a saxophone. His reaction, which at the time is only in his mind, will become typical: "'Go on, take it. What do I want it for! I'll do better than that.'" He then adds in retrospect, "My mind was already dwelling on a good enough fate." (p. 31) This is also the first example of Augie's opposition. Augie, or anyone, may oppose two things: other people or himself. Augie most often opposes other people who wish to pattern his life by making events happen to him. Other people do not necessarily wish to correlate Augie's character to actions, a correlation which would bring serenity. But Augie may also oppose himself or his purest feelings, not intentionally but nevertheless opposing his real character or desire and thus breaking any determined sequence of events.

Remembering another boyhood incident, Augie compares himself with Simon. Simon had an ability to love, evidenced by his love for their mother. A note should be made here concerning Bellow's belief about
love. In every person the ability to love is as strong a basic
calendar trait as any other given trait— that trait which, in Augie's
case, is his desire to know himself. One's acting upon love causes
events, a fate, which is in accord with everyone's given nature. One
must act both upon love and any other character trait. Simon could
love but was being influenced by other people and events, influences
which would later prompt him to act not in accordance with his given
desire to love.

Shortly later, Augie makes a comment that complicates his view
of character development. He says, "All the influences were lined up
waiting for me. I was born, and there they were to form me, which is
why I tell you more of them than of myself." (p. 40) We see in the
course of Augie's adventures that these influences do not really form
him. But they are necessary for him to experience so that he may see
who he is, who the person is reacting to the influences. Later in the
novel we will hear his conclusion that one has a given character or
nature which is what one is, and that to be fulfilled is to act in
accordance with his given nature.

Before he can come to that conclusion, though, he must experience
people and events and see how they either agree or disagree with his
character and so learn what that character is. The first major incident
with which he disagrees is also one in which he is told something very
true about himself. Augie was working under Einhorn, a crippled
businessman, whom he respected and who showed great insight about
Augie's personality. Augie had just participated in the robbery of a
leather good's store. Einhorn, with some ties to the underworld, finds
out about the robbery and then questions Augie. "'Were you looking for a thrill?... But wait. All of a sudden I catch on to something about you. You've got opposition in you. You don't slide through everything. You just make it look so.'" And Augie responds to the words, "This was the first time that anyone had told me anything like the truth about myself. I felt it powerfully."(p. 123) There is both insight into Augie's character and the introduction of the theme of opposition in this dialogue. He has opposed, in the first place, the standard influences to work hard and be honest. But then, after completing the robbery, he independently chooses not to continue theibery--"No use doing it if it isn't in me."(p. 121) He thus shows he can also oppose his peers. What comes out of this incident is exactly what Einhorn cites: that he is willing to oppose and take extreme chances in his search to know this character but that thievery is indeed contrary to his character. Also, if Augie had been caught in the robbery, his opposition to his character would have caused other events; specifically, he would have gone to jail. Experiencing acts not motivated by his real character or desires reveals to Augie what his real character is. His ability to oppose this character, though, always remains a real potential to break the chain of cause and effect events which is determinism. A man's fate is serene and in harmony if he molds his fate in accordance with his given nature. A man's character is given but it is the man's responsibility to make that character his fate.

Augie sums up his experience with Einhorn by recalling that even Einhorn's truthful reflections of him were a means of imposing a fate.
"No, I didn't want to be what he called determined. I never had accepted determinism and wouldn't become what other people wanted to make of me. I had said 'No' to Joe Corman too. To Grandma. To Jimmy. To lots of people. Einhorn had seen this in me. Because he too wanted to exert influence." (p. 124) Beginning with this passage Augie contradicts his earlier statement about the influences waiting to form him; he once again prepares us for his conclusions about people's given character and the necessity of being true to that character.

More experiences are necessary before Augie can come to know his character. Einhorn, with the advent of the Depression, loses most of his business and so Augie moves on. With some lucky breaks Augie becomes a sporting goods salesman in the employ of Mr. Renling. As such, he makes the acquaintance of Mrs. Renling, who fondly takes to him.

"'I'll make you perfect,' she said, 'completely perfect.'" (p. 137) She improves upon his social graces, enrolls him in Northwestern University and has him take her to the resort town of Benton Harbor. She is the newest influence in Augie's life.

Simon re-enters the novel at this point and his significance to Augie is further developed in the forthcoming events. Here, too, Bellow introduces Cissy Flexner whose breakup with Simon will be the cause behind the dramatic development which will firmly establish Simon as Augie's character foil. Simon visits Augie in Benton Harbor and brings along Cissy, with whom he is in love and plans to marry. As they part from their day long visit, Simon says to Augie, "'Well, sport, we may be married in the next few months... You envy me? I bet you do.'" (p. 158) Though ambitious, money-wise and single minded in
purpose, Simon still could be "powerfully in love." Augie and Simon share the basic nature of holding love in high regard. While Simon acts upon love he is still shown to be mostly content. Augie and Simon temporarily bid farewell.

Shortly after Simon's visit, Augie again turns to Mrs. Renling. His next move reiterates his opposition to a fate which is not in accord with his character. Just when Mrs. Renling's construction around me was nearly complete I shoved off. The leading and precipitating reason was that she proposed to adopt me... However, I was in a state of removal from all her intentions for me. Why should I turn into one of these people who didn't know who they themselves were? And the unvarnished truth is that it wasn't a fate good enough for me, because that was what came out clearly when it became a question of my joining up. (pp. 158-59)

Augie has nothing against Mrs. Renling or her lifestyle but he will not accept someone's imposition on him of events not in accord with his nature. She would have controlled him by giving him an affluent life and then by holding the power to remove it. But what she offered was not worth giving up the freedom to search for that life which would correspond to his given character.

After leaving Mrs. Renling because of her proposal to adopt him, he again meets Simon. In this encounter he gets a clearer idea of how highly he values love by experiencing Simon's newly stated disregard for it. In a talk with Einhorn, Augie learns about the outcome of Simon's affair with Cissy Flexner. Simon tried to raise some fast money in an illegitimate deal to be able to afford to marry Cissy. Simon lost his temper with his partners and got a beating. Cissy then refused to marry him and he went to her father's place of business and started a riot. He ended up in jail. This sorrowful end to the love
affair influences Simon to oppose his basic desire to love. In his next meeting with his brother, Augie learns how deeply Simon has been hurt.

Then Simon put off the brass he had come in, and he said I was a damn fool to get mixed up with that mob... But I didn't think, I mean, because I was in love. Love!... But after a while... you wise up to the fact that first comes all the selfish and jealous stuff... Then I thought it would be all the same to the somebodies if I died... By suicide. I came close to it in jail, there on North Avenue. (p. 206)

With this last remark we see the depth of Simon's despair. It has altered his values and his next announcement portrays the new Simon.

"'I've been working on something. I think I'm getting married soon.... To a woman with money.'" Augie, still holding love in high regard, responds, "'It's cold-blooded.'" (p. 208) But Augie's arguments do not sway Simon and he goes ahead with his plan to marry the girl with money. Though we have not been given an exact idea of Simon's innermost character, we do know that he is not acting upon any idea of love. In opposing this character trait, common to all people, he is arranging for himself events which will not bring serenity. Basically, Simon still desires to search for love but his hurt has made him give up.

Shortly later Augie remarks that Simon "slept badly and was looking flabby and ill, and one morning when he came to fetch me he locked himself in the toilet and cried." (p. 235) Simon in contrast to Augie, is opposing his own character and is paying in physical and mental health. He is, by now, firmly established as Augie's foil; he is constantly there reminding us that Augie too may become, if he acts with disregard to love, cold-blooded.

Established as Augie's foil, Simon then begins offering Augie a
real temptation to act motivated by something other than love or his desire to know himself. Simon tempts Augie with money. Simon, needing Augie to reinforce his new life-style, arranges to have Augie begin courting his new wife's sister, Lucy. As Augie associates more and more with Simon and sees his affluence, Simon's life becomes more and more of a temptation. "Why shouldn't I marry a rich man's daughter? If I didn't want to do as Simon did in every respect, couldn't I arrange my life somewhat differently? Wasn't there any other way to ride this gorgeous train?" (p. 251) Augie hopes for a compromise; he attempts to find a fate good enough, a life which will satisfy the needs and wants of his character, with this new woman with money.

Augie's character, though, is strong enough to stand up to this tempting fate and his attempted compromise does not come easily. He has a minor accident with Simon's car and when Simon yells at him Augie doesn't seem to care. Augie says, "This is just where the error was; it was that I had to feel bad... it wasn't so much the accident as my failure to care as I should that he minded... I was too despondent to stand up to him. Nothing visible backed me, as it did him, to see and trust, but all was vague on my side and yet it was also very stubborn." (p. 264) Augie's will to be true to his character, though he does not yet properly know that character, comes through strongly in this passage. His longing to find a fate good enough built on his character dominates him. Though he cannot articulate his desire it is strong and stubborn enough to stand up to the temptation of Simon's life-style.

In his final move to oppose Simon's imposition on him of a fate,
Augie makes a choice in regard to Lucy Magnus. A friend, Mimi Villars, is pregnant and goes to a hack abortionist. When complications arise, Augie helps her and is seen in the doctor's office by a friend of the Magnus'. Simon had warned Augie to keep away from this girl but Augie made his choice and the Magnus' ostracize Augie. Again we see the power of Augie's desire; we see that the need of his character to act on the precepts of love and friendship pattern his fate.

Augie begins to understand that his character is based on love, and consequently his fate, when Thea Fenchel, whom Augie had met while with Mrs. Renling, re-enters the novel. His adventures with her give us great insights into Augie's character. For Augie is truly and deeply in love with Thea and it is in the time with her that he feels he has found a fate good enough. In one of his first conversations with her he says, "I tried to tell her that I had looked all my life for the right thing to do, for a fate good enough, that I had opposed people in what they wanted to make of me, but now that I was in love with her I understood much better what I myself wanted." (p. 333) Augie gradually formulated beliefs about love, that just being in love is a life and fate good enough. He contrasts himself in this regard with Thea, citing their lovemaking: "But I knew that, both in love, we were not quite the same in our purpose. She had the idea of an action for which love makes you ready and sets you free." (p.364) Lovemaking and the love it signifies is, for him, its own purpose.

Thea's departure from Augie, their break-up, becomes Augie's passage into manhood and teaches him that when he can't stay with his purest feelings-- when he opposes himself-- he brings about a discordant
fate. He does a favor for Stella, one of the members of the American colony in Mexico; at her request he takes her away from her boyfriend. When she asks this favor, he says, "I shivered, as if my fate had brushed me." (p. 399) It is his fate brushing him. His answer could have been either yes or no. But he, by nature, wishes to build friendships; he wishes to do favors so that some noble feeling can exist between people. He convinces himself that helping Stella is an act based on friendship. He listens to his impulses and answers yes because he is the constant searcher for how to be true to his character—even when that search leads him to robbery or to being unfaithful to a woman he truly loves. As he helps Stella flee toward Mexico City, their car breaks down and they are forced to spend the night together. After they come together in the "only one appropriate thing" he admits the "inevitability that brought us together on this mountain of wet grass was greater than the total of all other considerations." (p. 406) He has listened to the impulses of his character, followed a search for love both physical and emotional, and Thea leaves him for his indiscretion. He has been true to his searching character by plunging into more experiences. It is only through experiences that he can know his character. In this case, unfortunately, his experience was contrary to his basic nature which prompts him to love, and his opposition to that nature patterns events not in accord with his character. He has once again broken any pattern of determinism but simultaneously molded a discordant fate.

With this loss Augie doubts himself rather than his ideal; he momentarily loses hope for himself rather than hope in the ideal of love.
If I didn't have money or profession or duties, wasn't it so that I could be free, and a sincere follower of love? Me, love's servant? I wasn't at all! And suddenly my heart felt ugly, I was sick of myself. (p. 417)

But where Augie is temporarily disillusioned by his failure, we see that it is the following, the searching, that is his success. His failure is with the relationship with Thea but his success is with himself; he knows more of his character now through Thea. He knows that his relationship with Thea, built upon love, brought a fate good enough but also, even in disillusionment, he seeks to know himself. Thus, though then temporarily not acting upon love, he acts in accordance with part of his given character, an act which is still molding a good enough fate.

With disillusionment still in his heart he nevertheless readies himself for more idealistic beliefs:

You invent a man who can stand before the terrible appearances. This way he can't give justice, but he can live. And this is what the mere humanity does... But the invented things were never real for me no matter how I urged myself to think they were. My real fault was that I couldn't stay with my purest feelings. (p. 418)

Augie admits that man concocts beliefs on which to base his life and actions. Beliefs then give rise to religions, nations, governments. These beliefs, though, are the manifestations of other's characters; they are the versions of reality which people have forced upon Augie through his life and the ones which he has opposed. He searches for his own version of reality, has found one based on love, and criticizes himself and his own weakness for not remaining with his purest feeling. He adds that "for me personally, not much better than some of the worst, my invention and special thing was simplicity." (p. 418) He can sincerely believe in the grand ideal of pure feelings and simplicity
and then admit it's an invention. He paradoxically must invent something for which to search and simultaneously believe that for which he searches is given. "It might be in the end that the chosen thing in itself is bitterness, because to arrive at the chosen thing needs courage, because it's intense, and intensity is what the feeble humanity of us can't take for long. (p. 418) He again criticizes himself and humanity in general for being too weak to stay with the purest feelings, the given precept of love through which, if one can act in accordance, one finds his character and molds his fate.

With his doubt of love comes Augie's realization that it is that very hope of living the ideal of love upon which he bases his search. "At one time I felt that if Death came up and tapped me on the shoulder, saying, 'Ready?' I'd think it over a minute and then say, 'Okay.' So in a way I died somewhat, and if there was anything I knew by now it was how impossible it is to live without something infinitely mighty and great." (p. 429) His faith is restored in the ideal though he now knows how weak he is and how it is ultimately impossible for man to secure the ideal. He cannot live the ideal because it is intense; but he must keep searching for how to live it because he cannot live without it.

Still he does not give up. He works his way back to Chicago and again confronts Simon. "The instant I saw him I loved him again...." Augie declares his love for Simon and Simon in return boasts that he is about to become a millionaire. But he still needs Augie's approval and asks,

"'Augie, you don't think you're superior to me because you have
no money, do you?" Augie replies no, but in his own mind adds that having a fate good enough comes first. Augie, still much poorer than Simon, does not in this encounter appear to envy him. Even though Augie does not envy Simon, neither does Augie possess any spiritual gift for Simon to envy. "If there had been real ease in me, he might have envied me." (p. 440) He continues to search though he appears to Simon to be wasting time. Augie's contrast with Simon will appear more vivid later in the novel when we learn more of Simon's life.

Just then, however, Augie wanders around Chicago, readying himself for conclusions about his character. He is lying on his couch, in the state of "grand summary," when Clem Tambow arrives. Clem has an idea about the two of them going into business together as counselors, but Augie has another important thought on his mind. He says to Clem:

I have a feeling... about the axial lines of life, with respect to which you must be straight or else your existence is merely clownery, hiding tragedy. I must have had a feeling since I was a kid about these axial lines which made me want to have my existence on them, and so I have said "no" like a stubborn fellow to all my persuaders, just on the obstinacy of my memory of these lines, never entirely clear. But lately I have felt these thrilling lines again. When striving stops, there they are as a gift. I was lying on the couch here before and they suddenly went quivering right straight through me. Truth, love, peace, bounty, usefulness, harmony!... And I believe that any man at any time can come back to these axial lines, even if an unfortunate bastard, if he will be quiet and wait it out. (p. 472)

Augie's summary, though somewhat vague and ambiguous, attempts to articulate some of the themes found thus far in the memoirs. Specifically, Augie implies the axial lines are given and remembrance of them stems from childhood. Having a memory of them has been the will behind his stubbornness. He has, therefore, rejected people's attempts to impose upon him a life which would not be on the axial lines.
The axial lines can be thought of as character and fate. When the lines coincide, one gains peace and harmony. In his adventures so far we have seen Augie on the axial lines, with a fate good enough, both when he is acting upon love and when he is acting to know himself. When he was in love with Thea he felt he had a good enough fate. Also, as he lay on the couch, he felt their peace and harmony. In this instance it is due to the fact that he is still searching to know himself. Acting upon either part of his nature brings serenity. Serenity seems to come in non-striving because both character and fate are given. One has a character; when one acts in accord with it one is on the axial lines; one is then voluntarily forming a fate; but one can oppose his character and so break any pattern of a given fate. Also, one cannot literally be still, hoping to accept himself, because one would decay. One must keep acting and simultaneously search to know if those actions are in accord with his given character. At times the actions will be, and one will be on the axial lines; at times the actions will not be in accord with the given, and one will be breaking the cause and effect chain of events which constitutes determinism.

Augie dwells further on the problem of how to act in accord with the given. Immediately after making his declaration about the axial lines, he proposes a plan to buy a farm, get married, become a teacher, and adopt kids to teach; all this because he is "looking for something lasting and durable and trying to get where those axial lines may be found." (p. 475) His paradoxical problem is that one cannot live in the world and also literally be non-striving. He must hold the belief that there is a still point of non-striving which one must strive to be
on. How one searches for that point depends upon one's character and the actions involved in the search become one's fate. The paradox is that being true to one's character while searching is the desired stillness, the stillness of character and fate coinciding; the stillness is found in searching yet to stop is to lose the stillness. Augie realizes this and forms his ideas as a belief in the axial lines. He adds this belief to his already stated realization that purest feelings, being on the axial lines, demands intensity. Later, he will thank someone else, Mintouchian, for articulating his vague ideas about the paradox of the axial lines.

Before meeting Mintouchian, though, he associates much more with Simon and begins to learn that Simon has made his own efforts not to be cold-blooded. He has a mistress, Renee, (whose name, incidentally, calls up connotations of rebirth); She has kept him emotionally alive. He wants her to meet Augie and explains, "'Before you start to think any different, I love this girl.'" (p. 479) Augie notices that Simon's actions and corresponding fate have not been in accordance with his true character and so Simon has had to search covertly for himself. "'My problem-- my problem is Renee here. And myself.' For a second, as he said 'myself,' he looked grim and somehow in thought followed his soul past lots of danger, downward." (pp. 479-80) Simon again contrasts with Augie: Where Augie's search seems brave, always hopeful even in unhappiness, almost noble, and certainly idealistic, Simon's seems grim and desperate. Simon, as Augie's foil, gave up molding a fate which corresponded to his nature. Our knowing Simon gives credence to Bellow's paradoxical concept that one has a given character, and that character
is one's fate, in the sense that, whether acting in accord with that character or opposing it, it influences one's actions.

Having acted upon love and having strived to know himself, Augie, in retrospect, finds himself ready for a man named Mintouchian. During Augie's stay in Chicago, he meets Stella, the girl he helped in Mexico. Shortly after, they are married. Stella knows a friend of Mintouchian's and so Augie is introduced to him. As a lawyer, Mintouchian sees much of the world and wishes to tell Augie about it. A week before Augie is to be married, he and Mintouchian are sitting in a Turkish bath having a conversation. Augie admits, "I wanted him to give me wisdom." (p. 503) Mintouchian is more than willing and begins, "Why do you think that the thing that kills you is the thing you stand for? Because you are the author of your death. What is the weapon? The nails and hammer of your character. What is the cross? Your own bones on which you gradually weaken." (p. 503) If Mintouchian says one's character is one's death, Augie agrees but adds it also is one's life and fate. Mintouchian goes on, "The fish wills water, and the bird wills air, and you and me our dominant idea." (p. 503) It is an elusive analogy: Birds do not create air but it is their reality, they need it, live in it and without it a bird would not be a bird. So it is with man and his dominant idea, which is his character. Implied is that people do not create it but are given it; also they need it, react to it, and without it people would not be people. Mintouchian reveals that his dominant idea is secrets; his character is secretive. "I must beget secrets." (p. 503) He also damns them and calls them the source of lies and disguises. "How rare is simple thought and pureheartedness! Even a
moment of pureheartedness I bow down to, down to the ground.' " (p.504)

Augie responds to these words because his idea of the axial lines is also based upon simplicity. Augie opens up to him in return:

'You will understand, Mr. Mintouchian, if I tell you that I have always tried to become what I am. But it's a frightening thing. Because what if what I am by nature isn't good enough? I suppose I better, anyway, give in and be it. I will never force the hand of fate to create a better Augie March, nor change the time to an age of gold.' (p.504)

Augie here sums up the ideas he has lived by. He has tried to become what he is. He has a given nature, what he is, and what he has tried to become, to build a self, an identity, and act in a way which corresponds to his nature, to what he is. And he has opposed other people because what they offered was a fate not good enough, not strictly in accord with the given. He has even been frightened by what he is by nature, a weak man unable to remain with his purest feelings of love. But he is now ready to give in and be what he is.

Mintouchian understands Augie's feeling and more. He is aware of the paradox of accepting what one is but he is also aware of the necessity of simultaneously striving to better one's self by acting upon love and always seeking to know one's self. He agrees with Augie: " 'That's exactly right. You must take your chance on what you are. And you can't sit still. I know this double poser, that if you make a move you may lose but if you sit still you will decay... It is better to die what you are than to remain a stranger forever.' " (p. 504)

Augie's efforts to know his character, which is what he attempted by his adventures, are validated as the only way to live by Mintouchian.

Augie, in his memoirs, now brings us up to date. He remembers what he said when he started to make the record: that a man's character
was his fate and that this fate is also his character. He adds, "And since I never have had any place of rest, it should follow that I have trouble being still, and furthermore my hope is based upon getting to be still so that the axial lines can be found." But he concedes, "Maybe I can't take these very things I want." (p. 533) Mintouchian reinforces his concession when Augie tells him of his plan to start a foster academy. Mintouchian says, "'It could never work, Excuse me, but it's a ridiculous idea.' " (p. 533) Stella also has a picture of the reality of the school, saying it would probably be a beaten up frame house with laundry boiling in the yard and kids rioting. Augie then admits, "It was only one of those bubble-headed dreams of people who haven't realized what they're like or what they're for." (p. 534) His idea of a dream house where he would be on the axial lines is an illusion. That idea could not be an answer to his very complicated search because it would end in something very near literal stillness. He would, as Mintouchian said, decay.

Augie understands what direction his life will take, given his firmly stated beliefs. "Pretty soon I understood that I would do mostly as she (Stella) wanted because it was I who loved her most." (p. 535) Augie has come to know his character and accepts his belief in love as the makeup of that character and the molder of his fate. And, as indicated by his memoirs, he is still striving to know himself. He is in this frame of mind when we last see Simon, come to visit Augie in Paris. Augie does not know what has been happening with Simon and, in their first moment alone, asks about Renee. Simon responds, "'Why do you have to ask me here, for the love of God!' " (p. 551) But soon
Augie learns of the details of Simon's affair from Charlotte, Simon's wife. Charlotte's speech however, appalls Augie. "How much of this did Simon have to hear? If she didn't stop she'd turn him into stone. He'd have turned into stone long ago if it hadn't been for these Renees... His secrets were being told. His secrets!... all they were about was his mismanaged effort to live. To live and not die." (p. 553) Augie looks on his brother with sympathy, understanding and forgiveness. In the end, here, we see Simon as the consummate foil to Augie. Simon gave up an honest search where Augie persisted and Simon could at best produce only a mismanaged effort to live. It is to his credit, in Augie's eyes, that he could go beyond social restrictions as they were to try to live emotionally. Only through these efforts did he even produce a life as good as a mismanaged one.

Augie concludes his memoirs thinking about his maid, Jacqueline. She has confessed her desire to visit Mexico and he laughs at her will and all people's determination not to lead a disappointed life. He turns his scrutiny to himself and says, "Look at me, going everywhere! Why I am a sort of Columbus of those near-at-hand and believe you can come to them in this immediate terra incognita that spreads out in every gaze. I may well be a flop at this line of endeavor. Columbus too thought he was a flop, probably, when they sent him back in chains. Which didn't prove there was no America." (p. 557) His concluding description of himself and the metaphor captures his own life. He is a Columbus, a searcher for the simultaneously undiscovered, new, occupied and ancient land of the self. He searches and often believes he may be failing but he never gives up. And even if he appears to fail,
appearances cannot always be trusted. He continues to search.

Bellow, by making Augie live— which is his art at work— has defined and related to people the abstract words character and fate. He has convinced the reader that one has a certain given character and, as an adjunct to that character, that every person is capable of love. That given character is a person's fate in the sense that, whether following that character or opposing it, one's actions are influenced by it but are not determined by it. Bellow has furthermore convinced the reader who has appreciated the art that there is a point where character and fate coincide; where one discovers the given character, one gains peace and harmony. Bellow has brought the words character and fate out of abstraction.
III Henderson the Rain King

Bellow returns to his theme of defining crucial words through art in *Henderson the Rain King*. In this novel he defines reality. The popular definition of reality remains a meaningless abstraction because it concerns itself only with the object world, not with people; it defines reality as the aggregate of existences. Bellow defines a reality beyond what can be scientifically and physically proven to exist by letting Henderson tell of the noumenal reality he has discovered. Henderson's noumenal reality is a belief in the meaning and significance behind his actions. Bellow permits the reader to see that meaning behind action is just as believable a reality as any physical object.

Henderson attempts to explain his discovery of the noumenal reality which is his meaningful reality beyond the physical world of existences. He does so by relating his experiences. His experiences consist of meeting two African tribes who manifest two aspects of human nature. Through his confrontation with and his reconciliation of these parts of human nature, Henderson discovers his noumenal and meaningful reality. His reality consists of three things: acceptance of the physical world; the ability to imagine; and affirmation of love as a moral guide to his actions. Henderson accepts the terrifying aspect of the physical world by accepting and confronting a terrifying symbol of that world, a lion. He learns of the power of the imagination from Dahfu, King of the Wariri, one of the two tribes he meets. Finally, he is reminded of the importance of love by Willatale, Queen of the Arnewi, the other tribe he meets.
Henderson's experiences can be catalogued and stated. But stating them does not define the noumenal reality he discovers nor does it convince the reader of the existence of that meaningful though non-physical reality. Henderson can never state, as in a maxim, what it is that gives meaning. This is apparent as his problem—at the beginning of the novel—of how to start his explanation. The explanation and definition of Henderson's noumenal reality comes only through Bellow's art. The critic's job is to clarify the function and process of that art.

The narration of events in Henderson is Henderson's explanation of why he went to Africa and of what he found there. He opens his narrative giving an account of his emotional state. Predominant among his emotions is one manifest as an inexplicable voice from within which cries, "I want, I want, I want, oh, I want." (2) Though Henderson does not know what this voice wants, it eventually comes out that something in him was crying for meaning. That the voice was crying for meaning is proved by the voice ceasing when Henderson discovers his noumenal reality, his meaning. Even though Henderson has and lives in a physical reality, his past life has lacked meaning. To satisfy the voice Henderson begins travelling. He does not know that he will find meaning in Africa but he does know he doesn't have it at home.

Also in the opening pages Henderson reveals his long—held desire to be a doctor. He remembers a talk with his first wife, Frances, where he wonders if, at his age, it is too late to enter medical school. Frances laughs at him. Because Henderson's desire and need to become a doctor is so intense, Frances' ridicule of this need separates them
wholly, Henderson has prepared us for the development of his intensity of desire; he holds his ideal of being a doctor to be sacred and needing no explanation. Doctors relieve pain and the relief of pain, for Henderson, goes beyond arguments about its ultimate meaning. Insight about Henderson's character gained from knowing about his desire will later benefit in our understanding of what he finds in Africa.

Henderson then presents an idea central to his discovery of a meaningful reality, the idea that pain is truth. Henderson says, "I was chopping wood for the fire... and a chunk of wood flew up from the block and hit me in the nose... As I felt the blow my only thought was truth. Does truth come in blows?" (p. 23) Though vague, this idea implies that people, except for moments when conscious of their physical selves, do not feel any truth. Ambiguity arises, though, when we consider Henderson's desire to relieve pain, his desire to be a doctor. This ambiguity is reconciled if we think of pain as reality only in the sense that people perceive it through their senses and in the sense that people do not generally doubt its existence. Henderson, though granting that the existence of pain is a truth, makes no judgement about that truth: It's neither good nor bad nor meaningful. It simply is. Relieving pain, however, not only deals with an indisputable physical reality but invites a judgement about the reality and meaningfulness of that act. People's actions in relieving pain deals with a reality beyond the incontrovertible physical reality of pain. Henderson believes pain is truth and prepares to make a moral judgement about himself and his humanity when he decides to take a step toward
becoming his ideal, the reliever of pain.

Further in the narration, Henderson gives the immediate reasons for leaving home. After causing more and more trouble at home, Henderson, during a fit of anger, brings on the death of his cleaning lady by heart attack. Consequently, learning of a friend's planned trip to Africa, Henderson decides to go. But, only shortly there, the voice of his desire returns. So, still troubled, Henderson leaves his friend, travels into the interior, and meets a tribe. In meeting the prince of the tribe he recalls to mind what he had come for, and he started to look at the prince more closely "for what he might know about the greater or deeper facts of life." (p. 49) Henderson wants to learn, to change, to satisfy his quest for reality.

Bellow then introduces the related theme of people having a dual nature—simultaneously being physical and beyond the physical. This first tribe manifests, primarily, that side of people which is beyond the physical. The prince of the tribe, Itelo, challenges Henderson to the customary wrestling match, (this match might seem to indicate a physical nature for this tribe but there is no implication of violence—a distinction which will be made clearer). Henderson explains, "It so happens I am trying to stay off violence." (p. 58) He has acknowledged the violent part of his nature and has attempted to overcome it. But declining the match does not win Itelo's respect; Henderson concedes to give it a try and they wrestle. Henderson's violent nature, somewhat uncontrollable, is still with him and this nature will soon draw consequences among this tribe, the Arnewi.

In this tribe there is one who has reconciled the dual nature
of man; it is the queen, Willatale. Having won the match with Itelo, Henderson goes to meet Willatale. "The queen expressed stability in every part of her body... and she was wrapped in a lion's skin... even when I spoke of (her) troubles she smiled right along, as steady as the moonlight at the bottom of a stream." (pp. 63-64) Willatale impresses Henderson very much. She shines with the reconciliation of two aspects of man, love and violence. While stable and smiling, she is wrapped in a terrifying symbol of violence, the skin of a lion. She has accepted herself and has accepted the terrifying aspect of the physical world but remains the leader of a gentle and peaceful people.

Observing Willatale, Henderson comes to feel that she can help him in his quest to satisfy his inner voice, a satisfaction which he does not yet know is the discovery of reality. When the queen asks Henderson why he has come to Africa, he doesn't know what to answer. The thought, he "had to burst the spirit's sleep, or else," presses in upon him. (p. 67) He then asserts, "It's too bad, but suffering is about the only reliable burster of the spirit's sleep. There is a rumor of long standing that love also does it." (p. 68) Again, Henderson knows that suffering, pain, is real, but still searches for a meaningful reality. And he adds the comment about the "rumor." Love has not yet burst the spirit's sleep for him but he feels that simply being in contact with Willatale and the Arnewi is about to burst that sleep. He loves the Arnewi as a whole; and Mtalba, the queen's sister, is in love with him. Consequently, Henderson says, "Altogether I felt my hour of liberation was drawing near when the sleep of the spirit was liable to burst." (p. 70) Love is about to free Henderson and provide
him with a meaningful reality.

But there is still a violent part to Henderson's nature. He has not yet come to accept and love violent, physical reality and that violent physical part of himself. This part of him causes his own banishment from the Arnewi. They are in a drought and frogs have polluted their only source of drinking water. Unable to touch the frogs because of their religious beliefs, the Arnewi are in a crisis. Henderson plans to help the Arnewi by blowing up the frogs with a bomb. He does so but the bomb also destroys the water cistern; his violence earns him banishment. He is banished before the Arnewi's love has had a chance to burst the spirit's sleep. Henderson needs first to accept physical reality. In this condition Henderson moves on to meet the Wariri.

Henderson's first contact with Wariri, who primarily manifest the violent nature of man, comes when they ambush him. "Three tribesmen knelt with guns aimed at us while eight or ten more standing behind them were crowding their rifle barrels together." (p. 100) As Henderson comes to see more of the tribe, several other acts reinforce his first impression that the Wariri are indeed violent people. Someone places a dead body in Henderson's sleeping hut; he sees dead bodies hanging upside down from trees; and he hears a lion's roar coming from underneath the palace.

Amidst this violent people Henderson meets Dahfu, king of the Wariri. Dahfu is another who lives in touch with a meaningful reality. Henderson's and Dahfu's dialogue and mutually precipitated experiences constitute the remainder of the novel. During their first confrontation,
Dahfu asks Henderson the purpose of his journey. Before Henderson gives the superficial answer, "'I seem to be a kind of a tourist,'" he records his honest thoughts: "some people found satisfaction in being... Others were taken up with becoming... Now Willatale, the queen of the Arnewi, and principal woman of Bittahness, was a Be-er if there ever was one. And at present King Dahfu... Becoming was beginning to come out of my ears." (p. 136) Henderson contrasts himself as a Becomer to Dahfu and Willatale as Be-ers; Henderson's problem is to understand how two such seemingly diverse people can be apparently at the same emotional or spiritual state and how he may attain that state.

Bellow, at this point, reintroduces the theme that man has a dual nature. In Henderson's case, not reconciling these natures within himself has prohibited him from discovering the noumenal reality. An acceptance and experience of the physical must come before one can discover the noumenal. Bellow emphasizes this theme through Dahfu, who informs Henderson of a myth: "'A legend exists that we were once the same and one, a single tribe but separated over the luck question.'" (p. 141) Dahfu explains the Wariri are thought to be traditionally lucky, the Arnewi unlucky. There are strong hints here that the two tribe's origin is a metaphor for the development of man as an individual and as a race. The two tribes are contrasted in the very important difference of having a loving nature or having a violent nature. At some time in the past it seems that these natures were one within man; (the metaphor being: in man as a race, long ago when the tribes were one; in the individual, in childhood—Bellow will touch on the theme of childhood again later). But the tribes separated over the question
of luck. Luck, being the coincidental and random occurrence of events in the physical world which affects man, separates man's nature. A physical reality and events have separated man's nature and spirit. Before man's reflective consciousness formed, when man was only a part of the physical and nothing more, violence and love were one within him. At least one person in each of the tribes moreover, has overcome the historical division and has reconciled his two natures. Willatale clothes herself in the skin of a lion, accepts the violent physical and so obtains a meaningful reality. We will come to see the form which Dahfu's reconciliation takes.

The complex nature of the experiences which form Henderson's discovery of noumenal reality is emphasized through Dahfu. He says to Henderson: "'They have made the impression on you which so commonly they make... Ah, yes, I know the qualities. Generous. Meek. Good. No substitutes should be accepted. On this my agreement is total and complete, Mr. Henderson.'" (p. 142) Implied here is the belief that those are basic qualities but more is needed. And Dahfu's remark is given credibility by the simple fact that Henderson could not learn from the Arnewi how to reconcile his two natures because his violent nature was so overbearing. Henderson, a civilized man, cannot follow the Arnewi's method.

In response to Dahfu's statement, Henderson starts a train of thought which will prove fundamental to his final reconciliation. Remembering a quarrel with Lily, his second wife, he thinks, "What we call reality is nothing but pedantry... The world of facts is real, all right, and not to be altered. The physical is all there, and it
belongs to science. But then there is the noumenal department, and there we create and create and create... I knew it (reality) better, all right, but I knew it because it was mine—filled, flowing, and floating with my own resemblances; as hers was with her resemblances."

(p. 142) Henderson grants a physical reality which we all share but also becomes aware that there is an individual mental reality beyond this. And it is the individual who creates this personal, noumenal reality; it is that reality to which people attach meaning and without which the physical seems unreal and sterile. Henderson has shown some desire to create a meaning, (his desire to become a doctor), but he has not acted. He has been prohibited from acting because he has not accepted the physical and something in him is awaiting a catalyst which would simultaneously remove the prohibition and inspire him to create a meaningful, noumenal reality.

Bellow next returns to the theme of the violent nature of man. It is noted in the following passage that Dahfu, even though king of the violent tribe, can still have reconciled his dual nature and created his own meaning. During rainmaking ceremonies to combat the drought from which the Wariri suffer, Henderson refers to Dahfu's superior nature. Members of the tribe abuse their statue gods and Henderson is appalled: "I wanted to say to the king, 'You mean to tell me all this bad blood is necessary?' Also I marvelled that such a man should be king over a gang like this. He took it all pretty calmly, however." (p. 154) His Being nature, reminiscent of Willitale's stability, is again apparent.

Shortly after this observation, though, Henderson gives us a hint that Dahfu suffers from a fatal flaw. Consummating the rainmaking
ceremony is the lifting of the rain goddess, Mummah. When the obvious champion fails, Henderson begs permission of Dahfu to try. Dahfu replies, "I am obliged to tell you, Mr. Henderson, there may be consequences." (p. 160) But Henderson is emotionally excited and does not understand the king may be warning him; "Moreover, the king smiled and thus retracted his warning... he had satisfied the requirements of his conscience, if any, and caught me, too." (pp. 160-61) In retrospect, Henderson understands that the king not only withheld knowledge of the consequences of his attempt, but also probably held concealed motives for allowing him to try. The immediate consequence of Henderson's successful effort to lift Mummah is that Henderson becomes Sungo, the Rain King. Long term consequences are that the Sungo, in the event of the king's death, becomes the king and assumes the king's husbandly duties to his harem. The significance of Dahfu's deceit by withholding information cannot be stressed highly enough. As Dahfu will later explain, his philosophy, and the meaningful reality he has discovered, revolves around the belief that a good man need not pass on evil. Dahfu, obviously, has passed on the "blow" given to him by his tribe, (who are the incarnate violent, physical part of man). It is up to Henderson to benefit from this experience and incorporate its significance into his own beliefs which bring about the reconciliation of his troubles and the discovery of a noumenal reality.

After moving Mummah, Henderson almost feels as though he has found meaning in his life. Accomplishing the fear of moving the rain goddess wakes his spirit. "My spirit was awake and it welcomed life anew. Damn the whole thing! Life anew!" (p. 164) But his spirit's waking
lasts momentarily. Even such an intense experience as doing what no one else could do and earning the gratitude of the tribe does not prove sufficient to permanently rouse Henderson. His desire is to live with meaning in all his actions. Thinking of what his neighbors and friends at home might think if he never came back, he responds to them, in his mind, "'Listen, you guys, my great excess was I wanted to live.'" (p. 166) His great excess cannot be met by the ego-boosting but only temporarily fulfilling act of lifting Mummah. Henderson's feeling that he has performed a meaningful act, moreover, soon fades. When he learns of the immediate consequence of his action—being made Sungo—he falls into despair. "'I don't know why it is I have such extreme intensity. The whole thing is so peculiar the explanation will have to be peculiar too. Figuring will get me nowhere, it's only illumination that I have to wait for.'" (p. 172) Slowly Henderson comes to the conclusion that no directed act of his own can grant him an attitude of acceptance or let him feel meaning in his everyday actions. Rather, he intuits the coming of illumination.

Further expanding on the theme of the necessity of Henderson controlling his violent nature, Bellow gives more of Dahfu's background. This background will prove significant when his philosophy is further disclosed. Dahfu reveals that he was studying for an M. D. degree and would have attained the degree except for the death of his father. Dahfu also held the desire to be a doctor, to relieve pain. But a particular ritual of his tribe prevented the completion of his goal. The ritual was that Dahfu's father, as king, was strangled when he could no longer perform his duties to his many wives. The violent
nature of his tribe, (and, again, by implication, the unbridled violent part of man), and the manifestation of this violence—the tribes rituals—are the causes behind Dahfu's not completing his medical studies. But Dahfu, then reunited with his tribe, develops ideas which are at odds with his tribe's nature. Dahfu is a good man, and like Willatale, develops his self, his personality, beyond the normal personality manifested by the majority of the tribe. But where the Arnewi's rituals, (not touching the frogs and so dehydrating when there is water available), bring about problems to the tribe as a whole; they do not, as the Wariri's do, ultimately prevent the individual from going beyond the physical and violent.

Henderson recognizes the fact that Dahfu has created a meaning—though he is not yet clear what that meaning is—in spite of living among violent people. He feels Dahfu may be able to help him create his own noumenal reality. Consequently, Henderson proposes a bond between them. "'You want to do me a favor, Your Highness, a big favor?... will you expect the truth from me?'" (p. 179) Dahfu complies but makes the reciprocal demand. Thus Henderson and Dahfu have mutually made the agreement to expect the truth from the other. Henderson's course is set toward his illumination through a combination of experienc­ing Dahfu, hearing his ideas, and synthesizing his whole encounter with the king into his past beliefs and experiences.

Where Henderson could not follow Willatale's method of reconciling his natures because his violent nature was so overbearing, Bellow wishes to emphasize that neither can Henderson follow Dahfu's method. This will be made clear when we see that Dahfu's noumenal reality is based
on a belief in the natural nobility of man. Dahfu and Henderson begin their exchange of truths. Dahfu's first admission to Henderson is that only his uncle Horko has been in the world at all and Dahfu cannot freely exchange with him. His tribe is against him. Only Dahfu, among this tribe, appears to Henderson as good or noble. The rest of the tribe is the epitome of man's violent nature. Henderson will learn what it is that sets Dahfu apart from his tribe; that same thing which also necessarily makes him the only good man in the tribe.

Before Henderson learns what this is, though, he tells Dahfu of his belief that truth is related to blows. " 'It has been going through my mind for some time that there is a connection between truth and blows.' " (p. 180) Instances of physical pain have been Henderson's rare contacts with truth. Dahfu, hesitatingly and only partially agreeing, amends Henderson's statement. " 'As things are... such may appear to be related to the case... Man is a creature who cannot stand still under blows... man is a creature of revenges... this I conceive of as the earthly dominion. But as for the truth content of the force, that is a separate matter.' " (p. 180) There is a fine distinction between Henderson's and Dahfu's beliefs. Henderson feels truth under physical pain. This is one reality, the reality of his physical body. Dahfu takes the jump and relates this physical reality to pain from another human source; to which the person naturally reacts by passing on the blow. This action of passing on the blow is another reality, the reality of the act of revenge which takes on meaning, though it be negative meaning. Dahfu is correct in saying the truth of the force is a separate matter; it is the matter of the first physical reality.
To go back to Henderson's previous phrase, there is moreover the "noumenal department." On this matter Henderson is compelled to speak. "'You want to know something, Your Highness, there are some guys who can return good for evil. Even I understand that. Crazy as I am'... I realized on which side of the issue I stood, and had stood all the time." (p. 181) Henderson states his belief that blows are truth and Dahfu classifies it as a "separate matter." Both of them willingly speak of the noumenal reality which is the exclusive meaningful reality. Henderson realizes he believes and has believed in returning good for evil. He must await, though, acceptance of the pain physical reality brings people in order to fulfill his ambition of becoming a doctor. People, being physical, having natural emotions and desires which often bring and cause blows, also have the power to create a noumenal reality which deals with and goes beyond the physical. It is only in this department where man can return good for blows.

Henderson's experiences with Dahfu have already begun to inspire him to create a meaningful reality. He sees that Dahfu theoretically agrees with him. Dahfu says:

'A brave man will try to make the evil stop with him. He shall keep the blow...
'... good exchanged for evil truly is the answer... I think the noble will have its turn in the world.' (pp. 181-82)

We see Henderson and Dahfu hold the same ideal, good for evil, which, lived, would keep Henderson in touch with more than a physical reality. But simply holding the belief is not enough; Henderson has never approached his ideal of becoming a doctor because he lacks the significant experience of truly accepting the violent physical and so accepting himself as part of the physical world and simultaneously more.
Neither did Dahfu complete the ideal but was instead called back to his violent tribe. Still, Dahfu finds meaning in the midst of his tribe. His meaning is beyond the grun-tu-molani which Willatale revealed to Henderson. Dahfu says, "I understand what this grun-tu-molani implies... (it) is much, but it is not alone sufficient. Mr. Henderson, more is required... I can show you something now—something without which you will never understand thoroughly my special aim nor my point of view." (p. 184) This something is the basic experience Henderson needs. It is also what sustains Dahfu and what inspires his idea of the noble which separates him from his tribe. But, once experienced, Henderson cannot remain with the violent tribe, the violent nature. Dahfu has remained and, consequently, Henderson is ready to succeed where Dahfu is destined to fail.

A major difference between Henderson and Dahfu is becoming apparent. Henderson needs to experience and accept the violent physical world; it is an experience without which he cannot act to create a noumenal reality. But Dahfu, in contrast, stops at the developmental point of experiencing the physical. We will see that he cannot sustain a meaningful life with this relation to the physical. Dahfu leads Henderson to the chambers below the palace where Dahfu keeps his pet lion. Dahfu insists that Henderson meet, come to know, and finally, imitate the lion. It is this violent, terrifying experience which completely shatters the sleep of Henderson's spirit. But simply bursting his spirit's sleep is not enough and Henderson must reconcile his experience with his belief in love and so form a synthesis on which he is ready to build a meaningful reality. Atti, the king's lion, meets Henderson
and paces around him, muzzling his body. Henderson is in terror: "I was gripping the inside of my cheek with my teeth, including the broken bridgework, while my eyes shut, slowly, and my face became, as I was highly aware, one hugh mass of acceptance directed toward fate. Suffering." (p. 188) Atti, as a symbol of physical reality, terrifies Henderson but he readies himself to accept it. Beyond acceptance, though, Henderson must learn to love it and then finally imitate it thereby coming to the realization that at least part of him is physical reality.

After Henderson's initial encounter with the lion, he and the king are ready to talk about the experience. Dahfu anticipates Henderson's anxious hope that this might be a dream. "'Yes, I could easily understand that--delusion, imagination, dreaming.'" (p. 196) Until this point Henderson has admitted that his spirit is sleeping. He did not why nor how to wake it but something drove him toward an awakening. Dahfu goes on:

'However, this is not dreaming and sleeping, but waking. Ha ha! Men of most powerful appetite have always been the ones to doubt reality the most. Those who could not bear that hopes should turn to misery, and loves to hatreds, and deaths and silences.' (p. 196)

Here the king gives a probable explanation behind Henderson's hiding in a dream or not accepting the reality of his physical self. He simply could not bear the terrible natural physical part of man which does not create but decays. He has not accepted and loved his natural self— a developmental stage necessary before he could let his mind create a meaningful reality beyond the physical.

Bringing in another very important theme, Bellow next introduces
a concept of the imagination. It is this power whereby a person
envisions actions which he foresees will be meaningful. It is through
Dahfu that this theme is expanded upon. Dahfu relates to Henderson an
idea about a power of man to go beyond his physical nature.

'The mind has a right to its reasonable doubts, and with
every short life it awakens and sees and understands what so many
other minds of equally short life spans have left behind. It is
natural to refuse belief that so many small spans should have made
so glorious one large thing. That human creatures by pondering
should be correct. This is what makes a fellow gasp. Yes, Sungo,
this same temporary creature is a master of imagination.' (p. 196)

Here Dahfu proposes a mystical explanation of the power of man to create
a meaningful reality. Henderson has naturally doubted his unity with
other people. He feels, moreover, he is sleeping. But a moment of
waking will come, his spirit's sleep will burst. When it does, his
lone mind will feel and understand what others have lived for. They
have lived for and created a meaningful reality through institutions,
states, nations, and arts; or through vocations which manifest a belief
in an ideal such as good returned for evil. Specifically, Henderson has
had a hint of this in his desire to be a doctor. Alone, temporary,
upon waking he will feel united with "one large thing." Through the
power of his imagination Henderson may create and carry on a vision for
himself of how he may live in a meaningful way. But first Henderson
must completely undergo his devastating experience of the terrible
nature of physical reality.

Up to this point in the novel, Bellow has been introducing related
themes which contribute toward his communicating a definition of noumenal
reality. At this point Bellow begins weaving together his themes.
Henderson recalls a statement about forgiveness which he had read in his
boyhood and which he had previously cited in his narrative. He had read that the forgiveness of sins was perpetual and righteousness first was not required. This impressed him so deeply that he went around saying it to himself. He cites it again as another example of having felt truth: "All I can truly say is that when I read in one of my father's books, 'The forgiveness of sins is perpetual,' it was just the same as being hit in the head with a rock." (p. 205) Henderson's feelings that there is a reality beyond the physical are few but all are significant. Dahfu suggested that man is a creature of revenges, exchanging blows for blows. Henderson, feeling the forgiveness of sins, or blows, is truth, disagrees with Dahfu and also consequently has an idea which would end the cycle of blow for blow: forgiveness. Henderson advocates the age-old religious concept of forgiveness. Dahfu retracted his idea, or more correctly he amended it by adding the belief that the noble will have its turn in the world; this being a good and brave man simply keeping the blow and passing on good by virtue of nobility or strength rather than forgiveness. Henderson accepted this amendment but it remains to be seen if Dahfu can live his exact idea and whether Henderson will have to reach his own conclusions about forgiveness.

Henderson, in his final encounter with Atti, completes the terrible experience which shatters his spirit's sleep. First, though, viewing Atti from behind the barred entrance to her den, Dahfu gives his opinion on what the lion is. Dahfu says, "'She is unaviodable... lions are experiencers... Moreover, observe Atti. Contemplate her. She has much to teach you.'" (p. 219) Henderson must not avoid her, must experience her, and finally must contemplate her by imitating her. So he will learn.
Experiencing Atti the lion to break the spirit's sleep has gradually become a metaphor for any experience any person goes through which tears the emotions with sufficient intensity to make the person feel that he is part of physical reality. Reality, as it relates to people's physical selves, can be terrible. Until people feel that terror and benefit from it they cannot feel part of the physical world nor go beyond it to create a noumenal reality.

Bellow, throughout the novel, hints at the theme that a childlike view of the world is the first developmental stage of a man's consciousness. That is, a child does not reflect that the world is apart; he has no "I." The Arnewi and Wariri, when they were one tribe, had this view but recognition of the physical as a reality apart separated them. When a person recognizes he is apart, he must simultaneously recognize he is physical and more. Henderson never recognized this. He had not benefited from previous painful experiences and so has never felt fully human, has never accepted the physical. He has never lost that childlike view of the world. So Willatale said that the world looks strange to a child. Yet Henderson has developed an identity; he knows there is more to him than the physical. He wants so much, though, to be a part of the physical, he so much loves "sensations," that he cannot realize that he can be simultaneously both. His awakening is to see this paradox.

Through Henderson's awakening, Bellow shows that people absolutely need to experience something which makes them aware of their physical selves and makes them accept this fact and all its implications. The experience precedes creation of a meaningful reality. Atti, the lion
is providing Henderson with the experience he needs. He is about to go beyond Atti by first loving and imitating her. He feels and dreads her: "'Oh, king, what can I do? My openings are screwed up tight, both back and front. They may go to the other extreme in a minute. My mouth is all dried out. I may be passing out.'" (p. 220) Henderson's experience is universal because the emotions it evokes are universal—any experience which terrifies is needed to burst the spirit's sleep.

Bellow continues to emphasize Henderson's need to accept his physical self. In the child consciousness of man, people are part of the physical world. Bellow, through Dahfu, communicates this as a notion of the given state or the natural part of man. Observing Henderson's fear and listening to his objections, Dahfu stresses the need to learn more from this experience. "First by means of the lion try to distinguish the states that are given and the states that are made. Observe that Atti is all lion. Does not take issue with the inherent. Is one hundred per cent within the given.'" (p. 221)

There exists in Henderson and in every person something given and inherent which is physical and natural and cannot be altered. Dahfu knows that this basic nature of man exists and that it identifies him with nature. He urges Henderson to imitate the lion: "'Roar, roar, roar, Snarl greatly... Now, with your hand—your paw—attack! Cuff! Fall back!... Be the beast! You will recover humanity later.'" (p. 225)

Henderson has never identified himself with the natural, has always avoided it, and so has never accepted it nor loved it. He must be the beast first. This is Henderson's growth stage, to accept his given
nature, be physical and natural; his next stage should have been to become human but, having progressed in such a disjointed manner, he must instead recover humanity later. Henderson, listening to Dahfu, takes the necessary step. He says, "So I was the beast. I gave myself to it, and all my sorrow came out in the roaring." (p. 225) Henderson has finally experienced the terrible, identified with it, accepted it and consequently purged himself of his sorrow.

In the final forthcoming dialogues with Dahfu, Henderson must reach some conclusion about his experience with the lion and incorporate Dahfu's particular teachings into beliefs he has already held. Henderson's first doubt about Dahfu comes when Dahfu relates a theory involving the relation of the body to the brain. According to Dahfu, if one has a noble self-conception in the imagination, the body will mold itself into a parallel self-construction. "Body and face are secretly painted by the spirit of man, working through the cortex and brain ventricles three and four, which direct the flow of vital energy all over." (p. 226) This idea appalls Henderson because this implies his spirit has molded his own mishaped body with its huge nose, long face and enormous paunch. It shocks Henderson to the point where he doubts Dahfu's infallibility. "I came near holding a grudge against the king at that moment. I should have realized that his brilliance was not a secure gift, but like this ram-shackle red palace rested on doubtful underpinnings." (p. 226) Henderson's self confidence and ability to discriminate good from poor ideas are flourishing. He is beginning to realize that Dahfu is only a man with ideas of mixed value; he is ready to benefit from Dahfu and incorporate portions of Dahfu's
philosophy into his own beliefs about reality.

Bellow, ultimately, entertains the notion of two different powers of the imagination: the power to mold the body into a desirable self image and the power to envision acts which would give meaning. It is Dahfu who voices these aspects and it is Henderson who reacts to them. Dahfu, with his ideas of imitating the nobility of nature, makes a not-unrelated but also not entirely necessary argumentative connection. He claims one's brain and spirit mold the body. He claims individual minds and spirits mold types, (citing as examples epitomes of types being Jesus and Socrates). One gains one's conception, which eventually becomes the body and person in total, through imagination. "'The great Kepler believed that the whole planet slept and woke and breathed. Was this talking through his hat? In that case the mind of the human may associate with the All-Intelligent to perform certain work. By imagination.' " (pp. 226-27) But Dahfu is despondent because instead of creating noble types following the example of previous great men or intuitively following an ideal, we have instead created a "procession of monsters." Dahfu's idea of molding types rests on a belief in the existence of ideal types which we can intuitively emulate through imagination or natural, observable types we may emulate. Dahfu himself wishes to emulate the natural creature the lion. Henderson has already doubted, and rightly so, this ability of the imagination in his statement about Dahfu's doubtful underpinnings. He grants the necessity of accepting the physical but cannot believe imitating the natural is a desirable endpoint nor possible. Dahfu then makes another related but not necessary connection about the imagination. "'The career of
our specie... is evidence that one imagination after another grows literal. Not dreams. Not mere dreams... All human accomplishment has the same origin, identically. Imagination is a force of nature... It converts to actual.' " (pp. 228-29) This second power of the imagination, to inspire people to accomplish and create outside of themselves what they envision, Henderson accepts.

In the course of his narrative, Bellow has suggested some beliefs--for example, forgiveness is necessary and it is through imagination that we envision meaningful acts. The stated beliefs are no more important than Henderson's experiences; experiences such as Henderson's confrontation of the physical which are the only means of convincing the reader of the truth of the stated beliefs. A synthesis is necessary. Henderson has imagined his life as being a doctor; he is taking the steps to make the imagined reality actual by enrolling in medical school. This drive serves not merely as the selection of a vocation but as the creation of a meaningful reality beyond the physical. The physical had to be accepted and so the lion had to be experienced before Henderson could act; the experience gave him the ability to Be in the world. Imagination, in Henderson's case, then inspired him to create what he imagined, thus creating another reality. Henderson's final step is to realize how he differs from Dahfu. Dahfu has also experienced and accepted but stops at the developmental point of imitating the lion. His love for and desire to be like Atti sustains him. Fancying himself a good and brave man, Dahfu lives among his violent tribe developing a philosophy of the noble. Events will make Henderson realize the implications of Dahfu's actions and philosophy.
For the most part, Bellow has shown the intensity of experience which Henderson had to undergo in order to accept the physical. Bellow wishes, finally, to emphasize the implications of Dahfu’s interpretation of nearly identical experiences of the natural. Dahfu’s idea of a meaningful reality differs significantly from Henderson’s: Henderson, after many sessions with the lion, feels as though he is recovering from an illness. Still, though crediting his recovery to the king, he has doubts about the king. "To tell the truth, I didn’t have full confidence in the king’s science... While I went through the utmost hell, he would idle around, calm, easy." (p. 230) Their relationship to the lion differs. Dahfu is the natural man full of faith in the ability of man to create himself in the image of noble nature. Henderson sees the experience of nature as a stepping stone toward gaining humanity through another power; a power about which he is readying a conclusion.

The implications of Dahfu’s beliefs are pursued further. Anticipating his return home, Henderson writes to Lily, his wife. In his letter, a chance to summarize what he has seen in Africa, Henderson touches on several points. He mentions the Woman of Bittahness and her remark that the world is strange to him and also to a child. "'But I am no child. This gave me pleasure and pain, both.'" (p. 238) Henderson’s child-like view of the world again brings out the notion of innocence where the person still cannot contrast himself to the world. But because Henderson was not a child, and saw the world as apart, the strangeness caused suffering. He mentions Dahfu, with whom he is participating in "an experiment," and who suggests he move into the states "which are
given of themselves." Henderson's experiment is to be natural. He mentions and reaffirms his desire to be a doctor: "'I want you to enroll me at Medical Center... Healers are sacred.'" (p. 240) Henderson has his meaningful reality envisioned and which he is now bound to create. He has accepted and recognized the physical as part of himself and also realized he is more; he has undergone the dreadful experience which has enabled him to become fully human, be at ease, and create. He then adds, going beyond what he learned from Dahfu, "'And moreover, it's love that makes reality reality. The opposite makes the opposite.'" (p. 241) Henderson, is contrast to Dahfu, exhibits a very religious nature in his reconciliation of ideas and experiences. Where Dahfu believed in a good and brave man's ability, Henderson affirms love. Dahfu's coming death and the consequent synthesis of ideas and beliefs will then be the catalyst for Henderson's final affirmation of his belief in forgiveness. Henderson, first, analyzes his lion-experiences. Thinking of all his contact with animals, he says, "But then what could an animal do for me? In the last analysis?... We had our share of this creature-blessing until infancy ended. But now aren't we required to complete something else-- project number two-- the second blessing? I couldn't tell such things to the king, he was so stuck on lions." (p. 242) Where Dahfu soars with the ability of man to be natural, Henderson anticipates project number two: to be human. Experiencing nature, identifying with the natural in infancy, are necessary but are only steps toward becoming fully human.

Not to degrade the natural part of man nor the attempt to create a noumenal reality based on simply being natural, Bellow credits Dahfu
with giving as much meaning to the physical as anyone could. Henderson remembers, speaking to himself, more of Dahfu's ideas. "Well, Henderson, what are the generations for, please explain to me? Only to repeat fear and desire without a change?... Any good man will try to break the cycle." (p. 249) Dahfu broke the fear and desire cycle; he is a be-er; he does not fear the lion nor desire in Henderson's manner which is to suffer from a voice crying "I want." Dahfu has a meaningful reality but it was the reality of acting as part of the natural which is not being fully human. And, though neither fearing nor desiring, Dahfu still passes on the blows and so does not sustain his noble self-conception.

In the ritual capture of the lion, which is supposed to be his father, Dahfu is killed. It is the lion which kills Dahfu. And in his dying breath Dahfu discloses that Henderson must succeed him. Henderson, in horror, asks, "'Your Highness... what have you pulled on me?... Was this a thing to do to a friend?'" And the king justifies himself with, "'It was done to me...'" (p. 262) Dahfu broke the cycle of fear and desire but not of blows, blows which even may seem to be necessary or inevitable. Henderson must go beyond Dahfu and does. He forgives him. Romilayu, when Henderson soliloquizes about him, reminds Henderson that the king was in a dangerous position. Henderson grants, "'Why should I ask to have it better than he?'" (p. 265) Henderson accepts the cycle of blow for blow and reaches the religious conviction that forgiveness, a truth he felt long ago, will stop the cycle.

Bellow, through Henderson's experiences, has shown what is involved in a man's discovery of how to invest meaning in his actions. Bellow
ties together his themes as Henderson is on his way home to Lily. Henderson stops in Greece to view the ruins. "As far as the Acropolis went, I saw something on the heights, which was yellow, bonelike, rose-colored. I realized it must be very beautiful... There are reasons for it all." (p. 279) Henderson here reaffirms his belief in people's imaginations to create a meaningful reality beyond the physical; he views this symbol of beauty and inspired meaningful creation. As important as this belief is, he reiterates another. "Once more. Whatever gains I ever made were always due to love and nothing else." (p. 284) This is Bellow's final comment on Henderson's life experiences and it is ultimately what makes him different from the natural though noble man Dahfu.

Returning to the theme of an innocent consciousness being wholly natural and so having no need to create a noumenal reality, Bellow emphasizes that innocence cannot last and it must give way so that humanity may follow. Inspired by looking at a child on his homeward bound plane, Henderson remembers the attraction of being natural: "He was still trailing his cloud of glory. God knows, I dragged mine on as long as I could till it got dingy, mere tatters or gray fog." (p. 285) Henderson has remembered and appreciated his innocence and natural state. But Bellow, through Henderson's story, has communicated what must follow innocence: Henderson had to go through his devastating experience which burst his spirit's sleep, which forced him to accept the physical world as a reality, which made him aware of his physical self and its possible terror, an awareness without which he could not consummate any human potential nor act toward an ideal beyond the physical; he had to
recognize the power of the imagination to inspire him to create a noumenal and the only meaningful reality; and he had to recognize the religious truth that only the power of love and forgiveness can break the cycle of revenges.

Bellow, through our understanding of Henderson's experience and identification with those experiences, has given ideas of the nature of both physical and noumenal reality. Where a person may go to a dictionary or a textbook for a definition of reality, the reality of physical objects, it is only through art that a person may get an idea of a reality which relates to people. Bellow consistently performs as the consummate artist in communicating and defining the most important words and ideas by which people live. By knowing Augie March and Henderson, we know the words character, fate and reality and how they truly relate to people's lives.
FOOTNOTES

(1) All references to Augie March are to The Adventures of Augie March. (Greenwich, Connecticut: Fawcett Publication Inc., 1953) Page 5. Further page numbers are noted in parentheses.

(2) All references to Henderson are to Henderson the Rain King. (Greenwich, Connecticut: Fawcett Publication Inc., 1959) Page 14. Further page numbers are noted in parentheses.