

**The True Self and the Social Self in *Seize the Day*: The Case of Wilhelm Adler**

Submitted by

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**Abstract**

The self of any human being is a parallel between two main domains: the domain of true self and the domain of social self. In Saul Bellow's *Seize the Day* (1956), the nexus between 'true self' and 'social self' is a disturbed one. Bellow depicts such relationship within the parent-child social context. Wilhelm's troubled relationship with his father contributes much to his psychic split. He forges an external ideal to meet his father's expectations of him as a successful man. This makes Wilhelm an ideal example to Laing's 'false-self system'. In this paper, the researcher employs the findings of R.D. Laing in his pioneering study on 'false-self system' and its distinguished characteristics to analyse Wilhelm's character and to reveal the disturbed relationship with his father. In that manner, the research attempts an interdisciplinary approach that combines a literary and a socio-psychological examination to the novella. The paper devotes the first part to give a theoretical basis for the analysis in the second section of the paper. The last section of the paper is to reach a conclusion on whether Bellow's main character is successful in realizing his true self or not. In so doing, the paper attempts to answer pivotal questions namely, what triggers a person to seek having a different personality from his own? Is it possible to have an accepted social self by means of pretence and forging personalities? How far is Saul Bellow's main character in *Seize the Day* a representative of Laing's 'false-self system' theory?

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The relationship between the two main concepts of the title is the concern of this study. Bellow is quite aware of the individual's conflict between his true self or 'first soul' and social self or 'constructed ego' as Bellow has called them. Many people are "cut off from" that "first soul" once they hold it as undesirable to the society (*It All Adds Up* 322). Bellow writes his works with the psychological awareness of a theorist. In his "Where Do We Go from Here", Bellow displays the social self as the "presentation self" that a person continuously improves to play the social roles required by society while the true self, as Bellow adds, "lies deep—very deep" (212). In *Seize the Day*, Bellow keenly fictionalizes such concern with the two concepts of the true self and the social self.

The troubled nexus between man's 'true-self' and 'social self' may lead to the emergence of personality disorders, of concern here is the 'false-self system' and its entailing schizoid state. One of the main reasons behind this divorce of the true self and the social self is the relationship with parents since they play a vital role in causing such personality disorder. Needless to say, parents are the means by which a child constructs his personality not only during the early formative years, but throughout life. Nonetheless, what of concern here is not to conduct a psychological study on parents' role and relation in shaping their children's personalities but to examine and display how a troubled parental relationship – as exemplified in *Seize the Day*- leads to suffering from a 'false-self system'.

### **The 'True Self' and the 'Social Self'**

The concept of self exists in both the domain of individuality and domain of collectiveness, i.e., the 'true self' and the 'social self'. In this regard, there are 'private' and 'public/collective' aspects of the self. The social psychologist, Abraham Tesser, points out that the 'private self', refers to the way that the person understands himself or herself. Such domain of individuality includes "introspection, private decision making, self-esteem, and self-perception" (Tesser 55). The 'public self', on the other hand, refers to the way one is perceived as an individual by other people, including his "reputation, impressions made on specific others" (55). Man shapes such 'public self' so as to attract and maintain the relationships he wishes. Closely related to such public aspect of the self is the 'the collective self' which refers to one's memberships in social groups, such as "ethnic identity and family ties" (Tesser 55). This 'collective/public' aspect shows the significance of forming and maintaining interpersonal ties. Self, in this sense, is an integral part of society. It is formed in relation to the conditions that it responds to.

Man's self-consciousness, in this sense, involves two facets of awareness; an awareness of oneself by oneself, and an awareness of oneself as an object of someone else's observation. These two forms; as "an object in one's own eyes" and as "an

object in the other's eyes", are interdependent (Laing 106). Satisfying both man's internal needs and those of society is a way to fulfil successful socialization and self-realization. In that sense, any conflict between the 'private' and 'public, collective' or 'social' selves leads to a split that may negatively affect a person's personality. In some instances, one denies his real self, and claims to be someone or something s/he is not as an attempt to form the "ego ideal" that refers to "the kind of behavior which the individual would like to engage" in order to be socially acceptable (Dalton 367). In other words, a person may deceive himself by creating/ pretending an ideal image for the sake of being accepted by others. What is pursued is an establishment of a positive basis for self-esteem, to think well of one's self, and be thought of in the same way. To summarize, a troubled relationship between the two main constituents of man's identity: the 'true self' and the 'social self' may lead to the emergence of personality disorders exemplified in the 'false-self' that Laing discusses.

### **The Dilemma of the True Self vs the Social Self**

In his classic work on existential psychology *The Divided Self: A Study of Sanity and Madness* (1960) **R.D. Laing sheds light on the characteristics of the 'false-self system'**. According to him a 'false-self system', "exists as the complement of an 'inner self' which is occupied in maintaining its identity and freedom by being transcendent, unembodied, and thus never to be grasped, trapped, [and] possessed" (Laing 94 -95). In Laing's view, the aim of such false-self system is to be "a pure subject, without any objective existence" (95). Laing states that "meaninglessness [and] purposelessness" are essential features of the false self's perception (96). Laing relates such characteristics of 'false-self system' to "the particular schizoid mode of being in the world" (94). Hence, schizoid can be considered a variation of 'false-self system'.

The schizoid character is usually caught in the dilemma of the "actual duality" of his "overall unity into two selves" (Laing 117). In such 'schizoid' state, there are two separate 'me's' and 'I's'. Living such dual life, the 'schizoid' character "never quite says what he means or means what he says" (Laing 114). Playing a part that is always not quite himself is another key symptom of a 'schizoid' personality. For example, he makes friends with people he does not really like and is rather aloof to those whom he would really like to be friend with (114). Thence, a 'schizoid' person is aware of his/her entrapment in 'false-self system'. According to Laing, the false self of the 'schizoid' character is compulsively compliant to the will of others; it does not serve as a vehicle for the "fulfilment or gratification of the self" but rather as a means to be socially acceptable (96). In the schizoid individual, Laing states, "the self may remain hungry and starved in almost primitive sense while the false self may be apparently genitally adapted. The actions of the false-self do not, however, 'gratify' the 'inner self' (96). The schizoid false-self system is obviously "very complex and contains many contradictions" (97). The basic split in the schizoid person's being, Laing adds, "is along the line of cleavage [disagreement or a division] between his outward compliance and his inner withholding of compliance" (Laing 99). Thus, the whole being of the schizoid person does not conform nor comply in a stable way.

In such a case a person is also involved in the dilemma of 'engulfment'. According to Laing, 'engulfment' is a psychological condition in which person encounters a "complete loss of being by absorption into the other person . . . merging of being" (44). The engulfed being, in Laing's view, counteracts such feelings through the constant release of energy. To that, such a person can only save himself from "drowning by the most constant, strenuous, desperate activity." (44) Laing uses the

word 'drowning' to describe the possibility of the dread of engulfment. In this case, a person possesses a dual character that— as a result— has feelings of two persons, two different selves inside him. Saul Bellow's *Seize the Day* (hereafter *SD*) reveals a great deal about living such a dual life. Wilhelm Adler is obviously an epitome of a person with a 'schizoid' state. His troubled relationship with his father is one of the inner motives which cause his psychic split.

### **Troubled Parent-Child Relationship**

Bellow's *Seize the Day* (1956) may be seen as a psychological text. Thus, this paper attempts a psychological analysis to trace how Wilhelm (the protagonist in *Seize the Day*) is an ideal representative of R.D. Laing's 'false-self system'. As mentioned above, parents have a major influence on constructing their children's personality and determining their behavioural patterns. Perception of personality is influenced by certain processes operating within a human being such as 'memory' and 'motivations' (Dalton 161). The household structure has a great impact upon man's 'motivations'. The social psychologist Robert Dalton, interested in explaining such impact upon the child, appraises that identification with the parent includes sharing the parent's conscious and unconscious concept of the child as loved or unloved. These unconscious motives of the parents play a decisive role in the development of their children's personality. As Dalton observes, if the child's behaviour is integrated with the conscious approval of the parent, the child will not suffer guilt, but if his behaviour is reacted to by the parent with "unconscious or guilty permissiveness", the child may feel anxiety or guilt for his behaviour (352). Such unconscious process causes 'neurotic behaviour' in children as well as adults (348). Parents, in this sense, may urge their children to seek gratification by forging who they really are. Nonetheless, those children may still be unable to act satisfactorily and in a socially acceptable way (351). Conclusively, households play a vital role in producing a change in one's own perception of his self.

In *Seize the Day*, Wilhelm Adler initially seems to have a troubled father-son relationship which acts as a major force in his suffering. Almost all the situations in the novel reveal that Wilhelm shares his father's concept of him as unloved son. In the first-person narration, Bellow gives his main character the opportunity to internalize his father's conviction of him as "the wrong kind of Jew" (*SD* 93). 'Wilky', as his father calls him, seems convinced that his father does not like the way he acts. Comparing his success to his son's failure, Dr Adler denies that he is 'self-indulgent' or 'lazy' like his son (*SD* 55). He hints at Wilhelm's failure when he says that he does not have time to go to Cuba for a vacation like his son. He blames Wilhelm for leaving his wife and kids behind to go and enjoy his time. The father boasts how responsible he is and how irresponsible his son is and will always be (*SD* 55). At the first few chapters, the reader knows that Wilhelm "had left college and had gone to California" to seek an acting job (*SD* 18). Being "horrified by the cynicism of successful people", Wilhelm declares that he could not do things that his father had done already such as studying chemistry (*SD* 20). Wilhelm seems filled with guilt and self-hatred which is obvious in comparing his failure to his father's success. To that, Wilhelm sadly declares that he had never made a success like his father's (*SD* 55). This probably is what creates his psychological conflict. He believes that "he [is] the only member of the family who [has] no education" (*SD* 17). This sense of failure is the source of the anxiety that progressively incapacitates Wilhelm. It is a 'sore point' that Wilhelm believes his father is 'ashamed of him' (*SD* 17). It is made clear that Wilhelm feels inferior to other members of his family. His sister Catherin has a B.S. degree; his late mother is a

graduate of Bryn Mawr. The fact that Wilhelm is less educated than the rest of his family makes him even more miserable when he thinks of his father. He is desperately in need to feel that his father is proud of him. As a reaction to his feeling of failure he tells lies as a means of protection or 'defence' against his society. As a result, he lies about his education; he says that he is "an alumnus of Penn State" (SD 17) when in fact, he has left school before his sophomore year is finished. Wilhelm is depicted as such a deceitful person who seems to "respect the truth, but he could lie" if it would improve his image and would make him socially accepted (SD17). Keeping his 'true self' hidden, Wilhelm is involved in "love [of] looking fine in the eyes of the world" (SD 17).

In such troubled father-son relationship, Wilhelm is also perplexed by his father's contradictory opinion of him as a highly valued person in other situations. One of these situations appears clearly when he has heard his father bragging to his old friend saying that his son is a sales executive. This action suggests that Wilhelm might be loved by his father if he lived up to his father's expectations of him as a successful man. Dr Adler is depicted boasting among his milieu that his son does not have the patience to finish school, but he- Wilhelm- does all right for himself, as his father assumes (SD 17). Dr Adler obviously brags about his son's success to other people. His father's ambivalent attitude highly determines Wilhelm's 'neurotic behaviour'. The pressure of his father's contradictory opinion of him, beloved against hated and rejected son, is an essential inner motive that causes Wilhelm's personality disorder. Hence, his father plays a vital role in producing a change in his son's own self-perception. If Wilhelm meets his father's expectations about failure, with all the probable disappointment entailed, is a cause for Wilhelm's psychic split. Lack of gratification from his father causes him to lack self-esteem. Consequently, he attempts in 'merging' with an external ideal to meet his father's expectations of him as a successful man.

### **Manifestations of Wilhelm's 'False-Self System'**

Bellow's main character seems to suffer from a psychic split. He is depicted as a 'neurotic character' (SD 99). Wilhelm, as Bellow suggests, is "of two minds . . . he [is] really divided in mind" (78). Such state of duality or to use Laing's term- false-self system can be observed on more than one level. Thus, (i) changing his name; (ii) contradiction and (iii) pretence are main indicators of Wilhelm's false-self system.

#### **(i) Changing name**

To start with, Wilhelm's changing his name to Tommy is an indicator of his involvement in the psychological conditions of 'engulfment' and 'merging' which are key symptoms of, a variation of 'false-self system' as mentioned earlier. He is caught in the dilemma of having two 'hims', 'Tommy' and 'Wilhelm', one there and the other here. He lives as 'Wilhelm Adler', a lonely Jewish man. On the other side, he is absorbed into his other persona as 'Tommy Wilhelm', the mask of a successful actor. Wilhelm Adler casts off the name given to him by his father and changes it to an American name of Tommy which is his own invention (SD 18 and 29). He hates his original name for it reminds him of the name of 'Wilky' as his father calls him. The name has a connotation of failure and unacceptance. When Wilhelm is drunk he reproaches himself horribly: "You fool, you clunk, you *Wilky*" (SD 28- 29) [Italics

mine]. *Wilky* for him is a synonym and a sign of failure not affection, and he is ashamed of it; the name 'Wilky' reminds Wilhelm of how his father sees him as a fool and a loser in everything. Wilhelm supposes if he casts off his father's name from him, he will be also casting off his father's negative opinion of him. Bellow depicts this change as Wilhelm's "bid for liberty" (SD 29). In his mind, Wilhelm's father's name, Adler, represents "the title of the species" (SD 29). His name 'Tommy' embodies "the freedom of the person" (SD 29). The 'species' that Wilhelm seeks to deny is his father's opinion of him. Wilhelm's changing his name is a gesture of escape from the burden of his 'true self' that obviously lacks self-esteem.

While changing name clearly stems from a troubled father-son relationship, some critics assess that it is an attempt to assimilate into the American Hollywood community. The idea of changing name reveals Wilhelm's inner motive of the denial of his own personal Jewish identity. By casting off his father's name, Wilhelm also attempts to deny his Jewish heritage as some critics propose. Wilhelm's escape from his first name may seem as an escape from his "racial background" (Opdahl 109), or ironically may reflect "the sacrifice of traditional Jewish ethics to modern American materialism" (Levin & Papatotiriou 84). In other words, Wilhelm feels that his father's German-Jewish lineage interferes with his assimilation into American life and that the German name is too constricting. As L.H. Goldman, wonders: "How can one be an American and be called 'Wilhelm Adler', especially an American movie star?" (67-68) Hence, in his pursuit of the American dream, Wilhelm has changed his name to make it sound less Jewish. He, in Mitchell terms, uses "idealization as a defence", along with splitting, to conceal the contemptuous devaluation of others (2). The researcher agrees with the previous critics that Wilhelm adopts a name that is not his in order to be accepted by the moviegoers of Hollywood community and by the society that surrounds him. Under the pressure of troubled demands of these internal and external factors, Wilhelm has an overwhelming need to form the 'ego ideal' in his mind. His assumed name of 'Tommy' is the ideal picture that he attempts to create of himself. It aims at satisfying the outer social needs to be socially accepted in the American society. Consequently he suffers and his misery is due to the obligation to show only the aspects of his self that are socially accepted, and hide those which would face rejection, as Wilhelm believes. Thus, seeking social acceptance is a major cause of Wilhelm's forging a social self.

Wilhelm's changing his name reveals how he lives in Laing's 'false-self system'. In such 'false-self system', Wilhelm's psyche is obviously comprised of dual components. Wilhelm wishes to change his name "in accordance with the falsities" which he attempts to perpetrate (Alhadeff 17). He changes his name to an unreal one as a 'defence' against the surrounding society dangers. 'Tommy' name does not only represent Wilhelm's freedom, but is also compliant to the wills of the surrounding American society. However, Wilhelm cannot feel balance between the two halves of his self. He still feels his true self in his own consciousness; "his soul [has] always remained Wilky" that is "his inescapable self" (SD 28-29). This makes clear the split within him. The incorporation of 'Wilhelm', 'Tommy', and 'Wilky' names is an indication of his schizoid-personality disorder. When Wilhelm decides to be an actor, he wears the mask of Tommy while, when he makes mistakes, he calls himself 'Wilky' which causes him to be involved in a 'schizoid' state.

### Contradiction

A second facet of Wilhelm's false-self system is his pretended behaviour, which is obvious in more than on occasion. Wilhelm seems to say what he does not mean and means what he does not say. For example, he pretends that money makes no difference to him and that he is a better person for the lack of it. When sitting with his father and Mr. Perl, he wonders "How they [the old men] love" and "adore money" (SD41). Wilhelm believes "that people were feeble-minded about everything except money" (SD41). Meanwhile and in contrast to his earlier belief, Wilhelm confirms that if [man] didn't have it [money] [man was] a dummy, a dummy!" (SD 41). Thus, Wilhelm has an ambivalent attitude; he judges everyone by his ability to make money: his father, Tamkin, Rappaport and even himself. Wilhelm seems convinced that money will fulfil his social acceptance in the capitalist society of New York City. Wilhelm trusts that he is not a beloved son because he has not money. In a conversation with his father, Wilhelm tells him that "money makes the difference" (SD 60). Wilhelm is almost certain of that he and Dr Adler "would be a fine father and son, if [he] is a credit to [his father]" (SD 60). Wilhelm seems to suggest that if he had money, his father would "boast and brag about [him] all over the hotel. But [he is] not the right type of son... [he is] too old and too unlucky" (SD 60). He adds further that his father's wealth stands between them. Such an ambivalent attitude towards money reveals Wilhelm's 'schizoid' personality. Behaving in that way confirms that there are two persons, two different selves living within Wilhelm Adler.

### Pretence

One more aspects of Wilhelm's false-self and the divorce between his 'true-self' and 'social-self' is playing a part that is not quite himself. For example, he forms a close friendship with the pseudo-psychologist Tamkin. He listens to his advice and suggestion as to what he should do to invest his money at the commodities market. Wilhelm seems severely suspicious of Tamkin whom he believes as "funny but unfunny", "true but false", "casual but laborious" (SD 71). Despite this suspicion in Tamkin's personality and his intentions, Wilhelm attempts to make the elusive Tamkin his close friend. Wilhelm's longing for care and respect in his father-son relationship leaves him in a bad need for love and approval. Wilhelm, as Ritu Rani observes, keeps up on the surface the appearance of a successful man, the son of the famous Dr Adler but underneath he needs to communicate and seeks somebody's love and guidance (955). He grows into being a love seeker, from others around him. He helplessly sets himself in a quest of an understanding, a loving heart, actually a father-figure that never rejects him as a son. Since he is a 'schizoid' character, Wilhelm falls in many contradictions. Such needs are fulfilled in his relation with Tamkin. Although he seems suspicious of Tamkin's character, Wilhelm sees Tamkin as an ideal father figure. Sometimes, he changes his view that Tamkin understands the relationship of fathers and sons. This "substitute father" or "phantom father", as Freedman calls him, emerges to take the real father's place in Wilhelm's own consciousness (58). When Wilhelm speaks about the problems between him and his father, Tamkin declares that such conflict of father and son is "the eternal same story" which "won't end, ever. Even with a fine old gentleman like [Wilhelm's] dad" (SD 67). Tamkin attempts to persuade Wilhelm that "the longer [Wilhelm's father] lives, the longer [Wilhelm's] life-expectancy becomes" (67). Tamkin understands Wilhelm's agony and shows love and affection for Wilhelm to make him confident and to help him with his self-esteem. Wilhelm needs sympathy, and Tamkin fulfils this need. Wilhelm comments that Tamkin "at least . . . sympathizes with [him] and tries to give [him] a hand

whereas Dad doesn't want to be disturbed" (SD14). Wilhelm would like to feel that someone cares about him and in such a state of desperation and agony, Tamkin shows Wilhelm the kindness and mercy that he longs for.

Aware of Wilhelm's confusion and contradiction, Tamkin plays the role of the healer who explains the human behaviour to Wilhelm. Tamkin suggests that man has a "real soul" and a "pretender soul", opposed to each other (SD 76-77). He believes that the interest of 'pretender soul' is the same as "the interest of the social life, the society mechanism" (SD 76). In other words, he regards the social self that the person experiences in his society as a "pretender soul", as a "betrayal" that is "inside of [man] and sells [him] out" (SD 76). Man has to obey this self as "a slave", because such a "pretender" is a lie, as Tamkin tells Wilhelm (SD 76). This self, as John Clayton clarifies, makes man work to "appease its need for social approval" (49). To get out of such human tragedy, as Tamkin believes, man has to "kill the deceiver biologically, the pretender soul takes away the energy of the true soul and makes it feeble like a parasite" (SD 76-77). It happens, as Tamkin points out, "unconsciously, unwarily, in the depths of the organism" (SD 76-77). Bellow being aware of psychological theories puts such words as Tamkin's to help guide Wilhelm to realize his true self at the end.

### Realization of the True Self

Events then move towards a crescendo. Trapped in the dilemma between true-self and social self, Wilhelm could not bear living two lives each pressing on the other. On the one hand, he is not happy with his false-self, the pretended self, the social one; and on the other hand, he could not let go of his relation with his father. After handing Tamkin his last seven hundred dollars to invest in the market as a final trial to be successful and to have money, Wilhelm is faced with the fact that Tamkin, the psychologist, lost his money in the stock exchange. Having lost all his money, Wilhelm chases the devious Tamkin on Broadway. Bellow's protagonist thinks he sees his betrayer, Tamkin standing outside with the mourners at the funeral of a strange man. Wilhelm then in a monologue says: "*I labour, I spend, I strive, I design, I love, I cling, I uphold, I give way, I envy, I long, I scorn, I die, I hide, I want*" (SD 122). It is Wilhelm's second self, or social self, that is talking here. It is actually challenging Wilhelm himself. These words reveal Wilhelm's suffering of living with divided mind which reaches its climax in the final scene of the funeral.

In the final scene of the funeral, Wilhelm's divided personality is observable within the conflicting senses of hate and love towards his father. A few minutes before the funeral scene, Wilhelm makes a last plea to his father for help in the message room, which includes not only money, but understanding. He says to his father: "It isn't all a question of money – there are other things a father can give to a son" (SD 117). Nevertheless, his father appears as impatient with his suffering and sends him away because "it's torture for [him] to look at [his son] slob!" (SD117). Feeling the full force of desperation after this encounter, Wilhelm appears as "an abandoned child" who is left to weep at the funeral of a stranger. (Freedman 58) Wilhelm stumbles into a funeral parlour: "Howling like a wolf from the city window" (SD105). The corpse is symbolic of the wish to destroy this hated father. At first, the face of the grey-haired, proper looking, but not aged man, calls to Wilhelm's mind his father and "the oedipal wish" to see him dead (Raper 81). However, in an ambivalent attitude, Wilhelm calls upon the corpse as "father" to protect him against "that devil" who wants his life, as he believes (SD 125). On the surface, Wilhelm seems horrified by the 'devil' of his



penniless state. Such 'devil', at a deeper level, refers to his 'false self', 'Tommy', that he wants his father to "take from [him]" (*SD* 125). Both scenes of the massage room and the funeral depict Wilhelm's conflicting hateful and loving feelings towards his father which embody his psychic split.

Bellow's depiction of Wilhelm at the funeral scene clearly indicates his protagonist's desperation. Wilhelm is depicted as crying at first softly, but soon from deeper feeling. He seems to sob loudly, his face becomes hot, and "the tears [sting] his skin" (*SD* 125). Filled with despair, he could not fight back tears. Several critics argue that Wilhelm's profound sense of despair in this final scene of the funeral is a rebirth of his true soul. They agree that the funeral is symbolic of Wilhelm's overcoming his death phase as an attempt to experience a sort of rebirth. For instance, Markus Klein points out that at the moment of death, Wilhelm's "motion is toward existence, the vitality that defines and unites everyone" (94). In such proposition Wilhelm's weeping may be seen as an acceptance of his true self leading to love life. Wilhelm seems finally to "proceed from a standpoint of total humiliation to the realization of self and... love" (Rani 954). This is also consistent with what Keith Opdahl states about the final scene of the funeral. He holds the view that it depicts Wilhelm's progress from rejection of his true self to the acceptance of it; from "destruction to redemption" (117). Wilhelm's final grief in the scene of death may be seen as a triumph of great depth (Opdahl 98). Klein, Rani, and Opdahl agree that Wilhelm's weeping in the final scene of the funeral is an indication of his realization of the true self and the farewell to the 'pretender soul' by which he is deceived.

In another interpretation, Wilhelm's weeping might be seen as an attempt to achieve reconciliation with the surrounding reality, his true self that he wishes to keep hidden. Wilhelm's true soul convulsively expresses its grief in a flood of "happy oblivion of tears" that emerge "in Wilhelm's blind, wet eyes; the heavy sea-like music came up to his ears" (*SD* 125-6). Wilhelm's crying sinks deeper than his imprisoned being – so deep that it shows him an opening at the bottom. Barbara Alhadeff emphasizes how Wilhelm's psyche "eventually becomes immersed in the waters of the soul as 'Tommy' dissolves and gives way to the 'real' Wilhelm Adler" (18). The researcher agrees with Alhadeff that Wilhelm's 'false-self system' disappears to enable Wilhelm to realize his 'inner' true self. At the final scene, 'Tommy', the 'pretender self, dies and 'Wilhelm', the inner true self experiences a rebirth. Tommy's misery is overwhelming that it drowns him but and out of this figurative death his real soul is born (*SD* 126). Wilhelm finally recognizes that both 'Tommy' and Tamkin are pretenders. He realizes at last that Tamkin is "a charlatan" and a great betrayer who does not truly care about him or his problems (*SD* 103). Using the image of drowning in the funeral scene, Bellow attempts to suggest Wilhelm's disappearance of his 'false-self'. In *Seize the Day*, the image of drowning is used to reflect Wilhelm's suffering from the beginning of the novel. He is depicted as 'hippopotamus' wallowing in the recesses of despair: "What have I let myself in for? The waters of the earth are going to roll over me" (*SD* 83). Such drowning image has an important significance in Wilhelm's self-perception. At the end of the novella, Wilhelm seems to save himself from drowning in his condition of 'engulfment' by 'desperate activity'; he releases energy through weeping. His tears actually help him to sink deeper into himself and finally find reconciliation with his 'true self'.

### Conclusion

Saul Bellow, a Jewish-American novelist, is primarily interested in exploring the individual's conflict between his true self and social self. Bellow proposes that true

self is often less than desirable and lies that it lies very deep while the social self is a 'constructed ego' as Bellow describes it in his own words. The personal self in Bellow's works is inevitably in conflict with external reality. This inevitably leads to a conflict with another dimension of the self; that is 'social' self. Such disturbed relationship between the true self and the social self leads to the psychic split of the self. This point is most fully realized in Bellow's portrayal of the troubled relationship between true self and social self within father-son social context.

In this paper, I attempted to investigate how Saul Bellow, with a psychological awareness of a theorist, solves his split main character's dilemma at the end. Bellow relates Wilhelm's realization of his true self to his relationship with his father. In the final scene of death, Bellow displays the death of Wilhelm's false self and suggests that Wilhelm experiences a rebirth. In *Seize the Day*, the psychological analysis finally shows Wilhelm's realization of his inner true self. Bellow's fiction is read and studied from a humanist perspective in many studies and this paper is an effort in presenting a socio-psychological reading of it.

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