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THE PHILOSOPHICAL CONCEPTS AND INTELLECTUAL HERO IN THE NOVELS BY SAUL BELLOW

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the philosophical concepts embodied in the intellectual hero of Saul Bellow's novels. As one of the most influential American writers of the twentieth century, Bellow explores the complex relationship between intellect, morality, and individual identity in modern society. His protagonists are typically educated and reflective individuals who struggle to find meaning in a world characterized by materialism, social alienation, and spiritual uncertainty. Through characters such as Moses Herzog, Charlie Citrine, and Mr. Sammler, Bellow investigates major philosophical themes, including existentialism, humanism, self-knowledge, freedom, and moral responsibility

Keywords: Saul Bellow, intellectual protagonist, existential philosophy, humanism, moral responsibility, individual identity, self-discovery, modern American novel, philosophical fiction, twentieth-century American literature.

The intellectual hero is one of the most significant character types in twentieth-century literature. Unlike the traditional hero, who is often defined by physical courage and heroic actions, the intellectual hero is characterized by intelligence, education, self-reflection, and a deep concern with philosophical, social, and moral questions. This figure emerged prominently in the twentieth century as writers responded to rapid social change, technological progress, world wars, and growing uncertainty about human values and identity.

Twentieth-century intellectual heroes often experience alienation from society. They question accepted beliefs, challenge social norms, and seek a deeper understanding of human existence. Their struggles are usually internal rather than external, focusing on issues such as identity, freedom, morality, and the search for meaning. As a result, intellectual heroes frequently appear as isolated individuals who find it difficult to reconcile their ideas with the realities of everyday life.

Many important literary works of the twentieth century feature intellectual heroes. In the novels of James Joyce, characters engage in profound self-examination and intellectual exploration. The protagonists of Franz Kafka confront an incomprehensible and often hostile world, reflecting modern anxieties about existence and authority. In the works of Albert Camus and Jean-Paul Sartre, intellectual heroes struggle with existential questions concerning freedom, responsibility, and the meaning of life.

In American literature, Saul Bellow developed a distinctive version of the intellectual hero. Characters such as Moses Herzog and Charlie Citrine combine intellectual sophistication with a strong concern for human values. Through these protagonists, Bellow explores the tension between intellectual ideals and the practical realities of modern society.

Saul Bellow is one of the key figures in 20th-century American literature, a Nobel Prize laureate in Literature (1976) and a three-time Pulitzer Prize winner. His work is not only an artistic interpretation of the fate of the individual but also a profound philosophical reflection on the place of the individual in a rapidly changing world. To fully understand Bellow's work, it is necessary to consider the cultural, historical, and philosophical context in which his worldview and literary style were formed.

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The first idea for Saul Bellow heroes is the search for the meaning of Life as Bellow's characters are people who constantly ask themselves: "Why am I living?", "How can I be honest with myself?" ,"What is the true value of life?". This search reveals an existential conflict: a person strives to understand themselves, but the world proves chaotic, noisy, and oppressive. Examples of his works are "The Duke," "Humboldt's Gift."

The second idea is a Man in Crisis: an inner turning point characters typically experience is a spiritual or moral crisis. Bellow's crisis isn't a dead end, but a moment when a person is capable of self-change. It becomes the impetus for self-knowledge. Characteristics of crisis are career disappointment, loss of loved ones, confrontation with one's own mistakes, spiritual weariness with society. The third idea is Loneliness and Alienation. One of the key themes is the loneliness of the intellectual in the modern world. Bellow's characters are: intelligent, sensitive, thinking a lot, but they fit poorly into the everyday, pragmatic world.

Bellow's intellectual heroes are usually scholars, writers, professors, or thinkers. They possess a strong intellectual curiosity and a deep awareness of philosophical and cultural issues. However, their intelligence often creates difficulties in their personal lives. They struggle to reconcile abstract ideas with everyday reality and frequently experience loneliness, alienation, and existential anxiety.

Unlike traditional heroes, Bellow's protagonists are not defined by physical strength or heroic actions. Their heroism lies in their constant search for self-understanding and their resistance to the superficial values of modern society.

One of the best examples of Bellow's intellectual hero is Moses Herzog from the novel Herzog (1964). Herzog is an intellectual and university professor who undergoes a personal crisis after the failure of his marriage. Throughout the novel, he writes numerous letters—many of which are never sent—to philosophers, politicians, friends, and family members.

Saul Bellow, a luminary in the landscape of American literature, carved a niche for himself with his profound exploration of the modern human condition. Through his narrative works, he delved deep into the complexities of life, identity, and the quest for meaning amidst the chaos of the 20th century. In Herzog, Moses Herzog struggles with emotional pain after the collapse of his marriage and career. He writes letters—many of them never sent—to philosophers, friends, and public figures. These letters reflect his attempt to understand himself and the world around him.

Herzog's identity crisis is both intellectual and emotional. Although he is highly educated, he feels powerless and confused. Through his reflections, Bellow shows that knowledge alone cannot give a person a stable identity. True self-understanding requires emotional honesty and acceptance of human weakness.

Augie March is one of Bellow's most independent characters. Unlike traditional heroes, Augie refuses to let society define him. Throughout the novel, he tries different jobs, relationships, and lifestyles while searching for his true self.

Augie's journey represents the modern individual's struggle for freedom and self-definition. These letters reveal Herzog's attempt to understand himself and the world around him. Although he is overwhelmed by emotional pain, he continues to seek intellectual and moral clarity. His journey illustrates the conflict between reason and emotion, a recurring theme in Bellow's fiction.

Another important intellectual hero is Charlie Citrine in Humboldt's Gift (1975). Citrine is a successful writer who struggles with questions about art, culture, and spirituality. Despite his professional achievements, he feels dissatisfied with the materialistic values of American society.

Through Citrine's reflections, Bellow examines the role of the intellectual in contemporary culture. The protagonist seeks a deeper understanding of human existence and attempts to preserve spiritual values in a commercialized world. A distinctive feature of

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Bellow's heroes is the combination of intellectualism and humanism. They are not merely thinkers; they are deeply concerned with human dignity, ethical responsibility, and the meaning of life. Their intellectual pursuits are connected to broader questions about humanity and morality. Bellow suggests that intellectual reflection can help individuals resist cultural decline and maintain a sense of personal integrity. His protagonists often discover that genuine wisdom requires both intellectual knowledge and emotional understanding.

The intellectual hero occupies a central place in Saul Bellow's novels. Through characters such as Moses Herzog and Charlie Citrine, Bellow explores the challenges faced by educated individuals in modern society. His protagonists struggle with alienation, identity, and the search for meaning, yet they remain committed to intellectual inquiry and humanistic values. As a result, Bellow's intellectual heroes represent the enduring importance of thought, self-reflection, and moral responsibility in contemporary life.

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