

## Lukacs' Theory Of The Novel And The Problematic Consciousness In The Novel's Character

DR. Benaidja Nouredine

Received: 14/11/2023 , Accepted: 26/04/2024 , Published: 06/06/2024

### Abstract:

*The novel theory by the critic and philosopher Georg Lukacs is considered one of the most significant intellectual contributions to the study of literary fiction. Through this theory, he provided a deep insight into the role of the novel in depicting social and historical reality. Influenced by Marxist philosophy, Lukacs extensively analyzes the evolution of the novel as a literary genre, linking this evolution to the social and political changes experienced by societies throughout the ages. His concepts about the "problematic consciousness" of fictional characters are among his most notable contributions in this field. He posits that the novel reflects the internal and external struggles of characters in confronting social and existential contradictions. From this<sup>1</sup> perspective, this research will attempt to address the main issue, which is how Lukacs addresses the idea of "problematic consciousness" in fictional characters and how this consciousness reflects the internal and external conflicts faced by these characters. This will be done by elucidating his theory and ideas about the novel in general, and the fictional character and problematic consciousness in particular.*

**Keywords:** narrative; Georg Lukacs; novel theory; problematic consciousness; fictional character.

**Introduction:** Contemporary literature has witnessed a significant shift in terms of form and content, especially with the advent of the modern novel, which has opened up to all fields, aiming to explore the contemporary human being and the crises and challenges they face. It has depicted a variety of fictional characters through which it attempts to explain the self and its depths, and to express the inner emotions and hidden feelings. The novel acts as a mirror reflecting our selves and telling our stories without shame or evasion. Moreover, it delves into various aspects of social, cultural, and even economic life, striving to seek human progress and establish justice and equality among people. All this has made it a subject of great interest, not only to writers and artists but also to politicians, sociologists, philosophers, and critics who have seen it as a valuable outlet and platform for expressing and diagnosing societies.

Among these figures is the literary critic and philosopher Georg Lukacs<sup>1</sup>, the author of the theory of the novel. In this article, we will attempt to shed light on his philosophical and critical views on theorizing the modern novel, considering that these views have not yet received sufficient study and analysis. This lack of attention is perhaps due to their association with Marxist thought, which has waned in recent years. This neglect in research is unfortunate, as if studies were tied to the trends of a particular era. Although Lukacs belongs to the Hegelian and subsequently Marxist schools, his ideas still warrant reading, critique, and scrutiny. From this perspective, this article aims to highlight one of the

prominent figures in literary criticism, Georg Lukacs, who presented a comprehensive vision of the fictional character living in a crisis-ridden world.

A follower of Georg Lukacs's philosophy clearly sees the level of theorizing that has laid the foundation for significant critical studies in the field of the novel, particularly concerning the fictional character, which is one of the most important elements of the modern novel. How could it not be, when it is the character that expresses, confesses, and sketches the contours of life within the space of the novel.

A follower of Georg Lukacs's critical philosophy will find it characterized by two decisive phases. The first phase is reflected in his writings based on traditional European philosophy and classical cultural historical thought, built on Hegelian and Kantian ideas. This is clearly evident in his works: "Soul and Form" (1911), "History and Class Consciousness" (1913), and "The Theory of the Novel" (1920), through which he contributed to laying the foundations of dialectical sociology of literature.

In the second phase of his philosophical writings, we find him adopting the dialectical materialist propositions of Marxist theory. This phase is distinguished by his writings on "Studies in Realism" (1950), "Balzac and the French Realism" (1952), "The Destruction of Reason" (1954), and "The Historical Novel" (1956).

Lukacs's ideas had a significant impact on the development of literary criticism in the twentieth century. He influenced the development of the Marxist school in literary criticism and contributed to the evolution of theories of realism, modernism, and postmodernism. A close examination of Lukacs's writings reveals his strong connection between artistic literary work and philosophical work, making the novel a medium for expressing societal crises. Through his philosophical ideas linked to society, he established the foundations of realistic literary social methodology.

From this perspective, this article will attempt to answer some important questions, including: How did Georg Lukacs view the novel as a modern literary artistic work? What were his foundations in establishing the theory of the novel? What is his concept of the fictional character? And how closely is it connected to reality? These and other questions will be addressed in this article, which aims to re-examine the methodology of Georg Lukacs, the father of realism and Marxism in literature.

### **Georg Lukacs and the Theory of the Novel**

"The Theory of the Novel" by Georg Lukacs is considered the epitome of his thoughts on literature, where he explains the emergence of the novel theory from the vast bourgeois tradition, without precisely linking the dialectical relationship between the head and the hand, thought and production, i.e., the relationship between intellectual work and productive work (Shoufi, 1987, p. 11). Lukacs saw that the rise of the bourgeoisie and the dominance of market values in a society brimming with separation and suffering led to the development of the novel as a literary genre that expresses reality. "In the novel, we see that the contradictions characteristic of bourgeois society are depicted in a more appropriate and explicit manner. The changes brought about by the novel in the forms of general images are so profound that we can now speak of it as a typical literary form for modern bourgeoisie, unlike other literary forms that bourgeois development adapted and reconstructed according to its purposes, such as drama" (Shoufi, 1987, p. 15).

The new novel rebelled against bourgeois society, depicting its contradictions and brutality, and attempted to be an outlet that expresses the reality of society with all its contradictions and evident and hidden class struggles. "The novel is distinguished as a story of searching for genuine values in a degraded manner within a degraded society, a degradation that is

mainly manifested in the hero through mediation and the reduction of genuine values to an implicit level, and their disappearance as an obvious reality" (Goldmann, 1993, p. 21).

In his book "The Theory of the Novel," Georg Lukacs attempted to establish a comprehensive theory emphasizing the importance of both aesthetic and historical criteria in his concept of the novel. He stated, "When Hegel says that the novel is a bourgeois epic, he simultaneously raises the aesthetic and historical issues" (Lukacs, n.d., p. 13). The novel contains some aesthetic elements of the epic and is linked to the rise of the bourgeoisie and the establishment of the modern state in the nineteenth century. "The modern novel was born in light of its contents from the ideological struggles of the rising bourgeoisie against the declining feudalism, but the opposition that existed against the medieval world, the opposition that almost fills the major novels, did not prevent the novel in its nascent stage from receiving all the inherited feudal culture in the field of narrative" (Lukacs, n.d., p. 42).

Lukacs sees that the emergence of the novel is tied to the bourgeoisie and is related to both aesthetic and historical issues. However, this emergence revealed ideological conflicts, whether between the bourgeoisie and feudalism or between its opponents. Through his in-depth studies and analyses, Georg Lukacs re-established the foundations of novel classification and categorized them into three types (Goldmann, 1993, pp. 15-16):

- The "abstract idealist" novel, characterized by the hero's activity and his limited awareness compared to the complexity of the world (e.g., *Don Quixote* and *The Red and the Black*).
- The psychological novel, which focused on analyzing the inner life, distinguished by the hero's passivity and his broader awareness that could not be satisfied with what the world of agreements could offer him (e.g., *Oblomov* and *Sentimental Education*).
- The educational novel, which is completed by a self-determination that cannot be considered an abandonment of problematic inquiry or an acceptance of the world of agreements, nor a departure from the implicit value scale—a self-determination we must distinguish through the term "manly maturity" (e.g., Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister* and Gottfried Keller's *Der grüne Heinrich*).

The new world has become a deteriorated one, biased toward one class against another, a world dominated by the powerful at the expense of the poor, the weak, and the proletariat. There is no place for anyone except the strong and the bourgeois wealthy. Hence, a separation begins between two worlds: the world of the rich and the world of the poor, due to the division of labor and the emergence of property, and the exploitation of the working class. The individual finds himself in a state of alienation, dissolution, and confusion after market values, injustice, and greed prevailed. All these factors and circumstances made the novel, according to Georg Lukacs, depict that split, clash, and conflict between social classes, unlike drama and the epic, which refer to harmony and coherence.

The novel is the rebel against bourgeois society and the expression of genuine values in a troubled society. The novelist or writer is the one who expresses the concerns of his people, society, and life. The novel becomes the documentation of that period, explaining history and expressing it through its techniques within the issues known to man in life. The novel today is about the troubled and restless human being, caught between the consciousness Lukacs describes as problematic—standing midway between the opportunistic consciousness seeking to accumulate wealth through deceit and illegal gain, and the class consciousness representing those who want to divide labor and production methods, necessarily generating the class struggle that drives history. "The bearer of problematic consciousness does not appreciate the dialectics of history. He desires change but does not go beyond the desire for action to the action itself. This consciousness in the novel takes the form of a search for values and principles that the problematic character sees as true

and worth defending, as they are all that remains of a world that no longer recognizes anything but money accumulation, stock trading, and merchandise hoarding" (Abd al-Malik, 2015, p. 21). Therefore, the problematic hero is always in a state of crisis, seeking salvation from a world dominated by greed, injustice, and tyranny.

From here, the relationship between the novel's problematic hero and the writer, or "the creative author who transfers daily life to the realm of writing, as if the problematic consciousness unites, in an unequal way, the 'problematic hero' and the creative who has been marginalized by life due to his problematic consciousness" (Darraj, 1999, p. 44), might arise. He is necessarily an individual from society, living its joys and sorrows, and interacting with all social, economic, political, and cultural events, just like the rest of society, but with an ideological vision, of course, because he bears that problematic consciousness. He is "a social model not in the superficial daily average sense, but in a fundamentally higher social and aesthetic sense" (Lukacs, 1985, p. 42). The process of literary production is an integral part of the general social process because this creative is an intellectual aspiring to a possibility that makes him rebel against all principles and values created by money and bourgeois forces, which may be embodied in the image of the problematic hero.

Lukacs adopted the principle of realism in literary creativity throughout his critical career. He developed a deep view of literature by connecting literary works to society and reality. "However, he did not fall into the trap of crude and hasty ideological readings that merely justify the political stance in the literary text, neglecting the idea of the fertility of art and its transcendence over the partial, the immediate, and the narrow horizon, embracing the universal, the philosophical, and the human" (Shaalán, 2008, p. 38).

He also confronted the idea that literature is an automatic reflection of reality and society, a notion promoted by some Marxist writings at the time. He believed that the novel reflects and embodies reality not by depicting its superficial appearance but through the dynamic nature of reality, which is filled with social problems.

Therefore, Lukacs viewed literature as "not reflecting reality like a mirror reflects the objects placed in front of it, but rather as knowledge of the external reality reflected in it—i.e., literature—through the writer's creative formulation of the literary work's form, which reflects the form of the real world" (Azzam, 2003, p. 240).

Narrating reality should not be merely describing external sensory appearances; it must come from within, from the depths of society, to present reality appropriately. It "conveys a vivid and complex human experience, an artistic vision of the world. Reflection is not immediate and quick perception or capturing superficial features in a flat manner, isolated from penetrating the essence; it is the creative ability to grasp the social totality to dive into what lies behind the sensory appearances and represents the essential truth" (Shaalán, 2008, p. 41).

The creative self that shapes the literary work, attempting to reflect the real world's form, must comprehend the totality of reality, which Lukacs insists on considering a "dialectical totality." He rejects mere "photographic" representation and description, requiring the entry of the writer's creativity to craft the text and its literary quality, making the artistic work truthful and giving us the sense of the images it presents about reality. These images must possess "comprehensive unity" or "dialectical totality," derived from the world itself and expressing lived experience. This unity or totality is "a concept taken directly from Hegel, meaning the achievement of comprehensive completion in interpreting a phenomenon as an integrated system, considering all influencing and influenced systems."

In Lukacs's conception, "totality" appears as a network unifying human relationships on one side and relationships among various institutions organizing their existence on the other, defining the relationship between humans and their nature. The novel genre expresses the mediations that have come between humans and their mother nature" (Bahri, 2015, p. 36). The term "totality" is fundamental in Marxist philosophy, aiming to understand existence, history, and literary works as a homogeneous, integrated system. Lukacs says, "The great writers of this period elevated to a high level of realistic style, surpassing romantic tendencies, and striving with great effort to understand the totality of the era they live in, with all its contradictions" (Darraj, 1999, p. 29). Totality here is a fundamental condition for expressing and depicting reality to understand it. This depiction should not be fragmented but should be within a comprehensive unity, expressing the essence of this reality with all its contradictions.

Through these statements focused on the principle of totality, we find that Lukacs is considered one of the most important philosophers and critics who recognized the necessity of studying literary works within a comprehensive, holistic vision that reveals the worldview of the writer or author. He often declared that "what matters is the worldview or the ideology underlying the writer's work" (Lukacs, 1971, p. 18). This led him to "search for that underlying vision in great works, such as the satirical works of George Bernard Shaw and the works of Fyodor Dostoyevsky, thereby attempting to study reality and society within a comprehensive framework and holistic vision. This foundation established the emergence of the concept of worldview in literary sociological criticism. Lukacs's critical ideas had a significant impact on strengthening the foundations of sociological criticism, which would later crystallize into a comprehensive theory and methodology known as the genetic structuralism of Lucien Goldmann.

### **The Novelistic Character and the Problematic Term**

Characters are fundamental elements in shaping a novel and are crucial for developing and advancing the narrative structure. Narration cannot exist without characters that move and interact in the narrative setting. It is impossible to imagine a story without characters, whether they are human, animal, or even mechanical, as the character is a dynamic being that moves within the social environment and interacts with a specific social milieu.

If we delve into the meaning of the term, we find that the word "character" is derived from a Latin term meaning "mask" or "disguised face," which actors used to wear to conceal their identities and to perform their roles in plays (Al-Qadhafi, 2011, p. 9). Aristotle defines a character in his book "Poetics" as follows: "Since tragedy is essentially an imitation of an action, it must also be an imitation of the agents primarily. It follows, then, that character is a second in importance to plot; because tragedy is not an imitation of persons but of actions and life. Character determines men's qualities according to their actions" (Tallis, 1973, p. 18). Hence, the term "character" denotes the attribute associated with fictional work, which individuals adopt to perform certain roles. Subsequently, the term came to refer to the traits of different individuals in society.

With the emergence of the novel in the modern era, this term was used to refer to fictional individuals in novels. Roland Barthes defines a narrative character as "the product of a compositional work, meaning that its identity is distributed throughout the text via descriptions and attributes that rely on a proper name that recurs in the narrative" (Lahamdani, 2000, p. 51). In this context, the novel employs characters not as beings like in theater but through language. For Barthes, a narrative character is "the product of a compositional work," meaning it is not just a recurring proper name in the novel but one with attributes and characteristics that distinguish it from other characters and has no existence in reality.

In our simple experience in the field of narrative criticism, we noticed confusion between the term "characters" and "persons," which are the plural forms of character and person, respectively. This raises the question: is a character the same as a person? Can we say "novelistic person" or "novelistic persons"?

We might argue that a character differs from a person since the latter may refer us to a real and factual reference. For example, we can say this person is so-and-so in reality, represented in their physical structure, surname, and realistic reference, which are fixed by their existence. A person is a set of morphological and semiotic traits that an individual possesses, reflecting their real image. However, a character is what appears to us as traits of that person, which may change and vary depending on the surrounding circumstances. Additionally, it often highlights their values, attitudes, principles, and habits practiced in daily life and determines their relationships with others through their individual and social behaviors. For example, we might say a strong character, introverted character, weak character, etc.

In novels, characters are fictional and often unrelated to reality. Therefore, we believe the term "character" or its plural form "characters" is more appropriate, while "person" or "novelistic persons" is not suitable for the novel's domain. Mohamed Azzam supports this when he distinguishes between "the novelistic character" and "the novelistic person," stating that the former is general with rules and systems governing it, while the latter refers to a specific individual (Azzam, 2005, p. 11).

What matters in a novel is not the person per se but the values and ideas they carry, thus focusing on the character of the person rather than the person itself. "The traditional concept of character relied mainly on attributes, causing much confusion between the narrative character (Personnage) and the real-life person (Personne)" (Grillet, n.d.). The word "person" shares a semantic root related to appearance and manifestation, but the difference lies in the nature of the subject appearing. The word "person" typically refers to physical or structural appearance, while "character" pertains to intellectual and behavioral aspects when they appear, forming the unique identity of the character, whether real or fictional, actual or conceptual (Bseiso, 1999, p. 28).

Dr. Jamil Hamdaoui in his book "Semiotics of the Narrative Character" confirms this distinction: "The difference between the person and the character becomes clear and precise when the person (Personne) is considered a flesh-and-blood human being, pulsating with life and movement in reality, referring to a tangible material world, while the character (Personnage) is merely an imaginative paper being created by the author to communicate with an imaginary and hypothetical reader" (Hamdaoui, 2015, p. 41).

The modern novel has come to completely separate the real person from the fictional narrative character, which only refers to itself as linguistic paper beings used solely to perform the functions assigned to them. Tzvetan Todorov pointed this out when he noted that the novelistic character "is, above all, a linguistic issue. Characters do not exist outside of words; they are merely 'beings of paper.'" However, rejecting any relationship between the character and the person becomes meaningless because characters indeed represent people, but according to specific formulations of imagination. Therefore, it can be said that the novelistic character is nothing more than a collection of words, a literary 'trick' used by the novelist to create a character and give it a great suggestive power" (Baharawi, 2009, p. 213).

The identity of the narrative character is determined through the reader's interaction with the character. Some researchers have used a specific method to identify the narrative

character's identity based on the reader's perspective. This is because the reader gradually forms an image of the character through three informational sources:

- What the narrator tells.
- What the characters themselves tell.
- What the reader deduces from the characters' behaviors.

This concept implies that a single narrative character can have multiple faces depending on the readers and their different analyses. Structuralists consider this a strength of their analytical approach because it makes the narrative rich in meanings, rejecting the single perspective proposed by "traditional" methods with social or psychological foundations. These traditional methods view the novelistic character as a human person with psychological depth, examining its psychological internalities and emotional subtleties. A researcher in psychology states, "Studying personality means focusing on the traits unique to each individual that make them a distinct unit different from others" (Abdel-Khaleq, 2009, p. 43).

Morton Prince defines personality as "a collection of innate inherited predispositions, inclinations, drives, and forces, along with acquired traits, predispositions, and inclinations" (Abdel-Khaleq, 2009, p. 44). The psychological approach examines only the individual aspect of personality, considering it a singular unit without any relation to its external environment.

In contrast, the social approach views personality as having a social dimension that "expresses class reality and reflects ideological consciousness" (Bouazza, 2010, p. 39) that the writer attempts to convey in their narrative text. According to the social approach, the character is a product of society; there is no meaning to a character's existence that grows and lives outside society because society shapes the character, while isolation creates individualism. Without society, it is impossible to develop a character with cultural, ideological, social, or religious dimensions.

The contemporary structuralist approach views the narrative character as nothing more than a "sign" with two aspects: the signifier (Signifiant) and the signified (Signifié). The character as a signifier takes on multiple names or attributes that summarize its identity. The character as a signified is the totality of what is said about it through scattered sentences in the text, or through its statements, sayings, and behaviors. Thus, its image is not complete until the narrative text reaches its end, and there is nothing left to say on the subject (Lahamdani, 2000, p. 51).

Structuralism removes the character from its psychological and social aspects, reducing it to paper beings that derive their meanings through the language that creates them. The author employs them in the story as desired, through what they narrate about themselves or what is narrated about them. However, they never escape their linguistic existence, whether through names, attributes, or explanatory sentences about them and their actions.

Thus, we see a divergence among modern critical approaches in how they study the novelistic character. This presents a significant challenge for critics and researchers dedicated to studying it. However, it seems that the methodology used should be determined by the nature of the corpus or the narrative text. Some narrative texts with a social nature depict class struggles among different characters, while psychological texts highlight the psychological crises of individuals, and there are mixed genres as well. The important point is that the nature of the text dictates the methodology to be followed in studying the characters employed in the novel, and one should not stubbornly or dogmatically adhere to one methodology over others.

### **The Novelistic Character and Problematic Consciousness**

Novel writing is a fundamental field that reveals the hidden or overt conflict between worldviews and contradictory ideologies. It organizes ideology and transforms it into a new form—the literary text—exploring the individual and society's inner workings and attempting to interpret this mysterious world filled with diverse ideas and visions that often do not align or harmonize with each other.

Since the novel is an artistic, fictional work that explores this conflict, it attempts to interpret its details and manifestations on both the individual and societal levels, according to a perspective inevitably influenced by the writer's worldview and ideological consciousness. The writer cannot detach from this consciousness, no matter how much it hides behind techniques and methods of concealment. The writer is the originator of the discourse, the designer, the engineer, and the builder who monopolizes their world with their language, style, and voice. The languages, styles, and voices of the characters become echoes of the writer's words, and their ideologies faithfully reflect the writer's ideology (Ben Malek, 2012, p. 27). As a part of the superstructure, the writer seeks to convey this consciousness to the oppressed masses.

Given that fiction is the foundation of novel writing and language is its expressive medium, the active novelistic characters bear the problematic consciousness, as Lukacs calls it. These characters confront and struggle against opposing characters who carry a false and misguided consciousness absorbed automatically from their cultural, social, and political environment. Here begins the ideological and conceptual conflict among the novelistic characters, aimed at demonstrating this clash of visions by employing this conflict at the level of consciousness patterns in its various forms. The writer finds themselves compelled to use characters with different ideological visions to highlight or advocate for their worldview. This means that the consciousness patterns in society are worldviews attributed by the novelist to characters with social and existential concerns, seeking to achieve possible awareness that responds to their emotions and realizes their ideas and aspirations.

Characters cannot reach this awareness except through the conflict that imprints them with a mark of positivity (Abd al-Malik, 2015, p. 29), giving them persuasive power to achieve possible awareness among the people. The writer presents the idea and its opposite and ultimately champions a specific idea by exerting pressure on those characters. This has a significant and impactful effect on the audience, as monolithic or didactic narration does not resonate with the audience unless it is through genuine conflict between individuals and ideologies, demonstrating the credibility of the vision or ideology the writer champions. "The novel has become, within the realm of socio-linguistics, a forum for linguistic, expressive, and intellectual freedom. The character's positivity now means its ability to engage in verbal communication with other characters to defend its ideology and convince 'opponents' of the validity of its worldview and the meaning of life under the adopted creed. The speaking character in the novel tests the credibility of its ideology through discussion and debate, comparing its awareness with other forms of consciousness. The writer, in turn, interacts with all these characters, defending their ideology and striving to refute the claims of the paper beings they created. The writer uses the characters' languages and worldviews to test the validity of their own vision and its capacity for argument and influence" (Ben Malek, 2012, p. 28).

### **The Problematic Hero or Character**

According to Lukacs, the problematic hero or character is inherently flawed, described as "demonic, insane, or criminal—a problematic figure whose degraded and thus inauthentic search for genuine values in a world of conformity and agreement forms the content of the novel" (Goldmann, 1993, p. 15). This means that the hero in the novel lives in a degenerate society marked by reification and market values, making their search futile. Goldmann,



Lukacs's student, agrees, saying, "This form—the novel of the problematic hero—enjoys a special status in the history of cultural creativity: it is the tale of the deteriorated quest of a hero unaware of the values he seeks within a society ignorant of values, almost forgetting their memory. Perhaps the novel was the first of the major literary forms in a social system to bear essentially a critical nature" (Darraj, 1999, p. 40). He adds, "Through his troubled quest, the hero ends up realizing the impossibility of finding and giving meaning to life" (Darraj, 1999, p. 41). Both Lukacs and Goldmann view the problematic hero negatively, seeing them as unable to understand their commodified reality, which is built on alienation and quantitative exchange, without regard for human life.

However, the reality of the novel and its employment of the problematic hero suggests that such a character "is a well-adjusted individual with good morals, a sensitive disposition, and above all, an enlightened intellectual and cultural vision, perhaps approaching idealism to some extent, which distinguishes them from others and increases their pain and suffering" (Azzam, 1992, p. 17). Here, the concept of being problematic is not associated with demonic behavior or madness but with the character's lack of harmony with the reality in which they live, being a conscious individual striving for the possible in a degenerate world entrenched in false consciousness.

Lukacs believes that the novel represents the interaction between the hero and the degenerate world they inhabit, making both degraded by their interaction. The hero searches for lost genuine values in a world founded on market values, where human meanings are absent, leading to the separation between the individual and their social reality.

Based on his concept of the problematic hero, Lukacs categorized three types of Western novels in the 19th century (Goldmann, 1993, pp. 15-16):

1. **The "Abstract Idealist" Novel:** Characterized by the hero's activity and limited awareness compared to the complexity of the world (e.g., *Don Quixote*, *The Red and the Black*).
2. **The Psychological Novel:** Focused on analyzing the inner life, distinguished by the hero's passivity and broad awareness that could not be satisfied with what the world of agreement offered (e.g., *Oblomov*, *Sentimental Education*).
3. **The Bildungsroman (Educational Novel):** Completed by a self-determination that cannot be considered an abandonment of problematic inquiry or acceptance of the world of agreement, nor a departure from the implicit value scale—a self-determination marked by "manly maturity" (e.g., Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister*, Gottfried Keller's *Green Henry*).

Lukacs also added a fourth schematic type, representing a shift in the novel genre towards new forms requiring different analysis. This fourth possibility, emerging around 1920, was primarily expressed in Tolstoy's novels, which lean towards the epic.

Here, we see that Lukacs observed a variance among different novels in terms of genuine values. He noted that the problematic hero in these novels is characterized by their rejection of the commodified reality imposed by new market values and their inability to confront this reality due to their hesitation between the self and the world.

The problematic hero is "the bearer of problematic consciousness, disdaining the dialectics of history. They desire change but do not move from desire to action. Their primary focus is the hero's activity, as Lukacs believes 'depicting action is the only way to express the essence of man within the tangible realm'" (Darraj, 1999, p. 32). Therefore, the hero becomes problematic because they live in a degenerate society where the essence they seek

is absent. They search for values and principles they consider true and worthy of defense because they are all that remain in a world driven by money accumulation, stock trading, and goods hoarding. These characters replace such a deteriorating world with one that sees love, freedom, and virtue as a hope for salvation (Abd al-Malik, 2015, p. 21).

Thus, the problematic character finds themselves in a crisis, being out of sync with the actual reality they wish to transform into a possible one, where people can enjoy peace, prosperity, and social justice. The hero remains alienated and disturbed, seeking to change the commodified reality, a search that does not go beyond mere desire for change and critique of reality due to excessive idealism, which often characterizes these characters, and other factors that hinder the hero's ability to face challenges, such as societal resistance to reform and radical change desired by these problematic characters. This results in a conflict among different characters and their varying consciousness patterns.

In the postmodern era, the concept of the fictional character has changed. Previously, characters were understood through their actions and roles in the narrative, as seen with Lukacs. Now, characters carry within them a specific ideology, and language is the only means to understand this ideology. This concept evolved with Bakhtin, who believed that "the characteristics of the word in its entirety – its social existence – are considered an ideological indicator. The word penetrates and pervades all relationships between individuals, cooperative ties, ideological relationships, casual encounters in everyday life, political relationships, and so on" (Bakhtin, 1986, p. 29). Here, Bakhtin rejects the theory of action and replaces it with the theory of language, or dialogism, considering it as a means that carries the ideology employed in the fictional character. According to him, a character is defined by what it says, not by what it does. In this sense, the character becomes the word or the ideological voice. He asserts that "the hero, according to Dostoevsky's plan, is a carrier of the complete, valuable word, not just a silent and mute element of the author's word. The author's plan regarding the hero is also a word about the word, guided by the hero as it is guided by the word, addressing him dialogically" (Bakhtin, *The Poetics of Dostoevsky*, trans., 1986, p. 80). Bakhtin concludes that the author does not narrate a story about the hero but with the hero. Here, the concept of character intertwines with the concept of narrative vision.

The novel has ceased to be merely an imaginative narrative aimed at the reader's enjoyment or entertainment. It has become a life project, weaving its threads as it weaves its words. It seeks to understand the self and the world and aims to interpret it by unleashing ideas, visions, and ideologies to clash. "Hence, we are faced with characters producing ideologies that compete with the writer's ideology, who usually hides behind an ideal image of a hero, tirelessly seeking a 'dignified' life dominated by a singular language and a central vision, reflecting the harmony of the hero – writer – intellectual with society. Therefore, characters deserve presence in the novelistic world in both style (expression) and content (thought). They are no longer marginal, secondary, or circumstantial characters orbiting around a protagonist, blessing or thwarting their efforts, or awaiting salvation at their hands. They have become influential with their speech, impactful with their eloquence, and convincing with their arguments" (Ben\_Malik, 2012, p. 28). These characters delve into history, question it, seek the forbidden, and provoke it, exploring the depths of the self and challenging it. The final decision lies with the reader, who determines their intellectual affiliations and inclinations towards one of the characters that they see as representing their ideological, intellectual, or doctrinal identity through the various characters employed in the novel.

When examining the types of characters employed in the narrative text, we find that "Mohammad Azzam" categorizes characters in the Arabic novel into three types (Azzam,

The Space of the Narrative Text: A Structural-Formative Approach in the Literature of Nabil Suleiman, 1996, pp. 86-87):

1. The "positive hero" who works to change society for the better. This type has recently been considered bankrupt due to local and global collapses. Labeling this concept as bankrupt is a value judgment lacking substantiation, given that historical events impact writers differently, and the same writer may be affected differently over time.
2. The "negative hero" who supports the status quo and exploits the situation to the fullest for personal gain, characterized as the "cunning hero," selfishly trampling on values to achieve their ambitions and desires.
3. The "problematic hero" who believes in positive values in a degraded world but neither confronts like the positive hero nor engages in the corruption of reality like the cunning hero, only desiring reform.

Regardless of their role in the paper life or imaginative expanse, characters must have a real societal reference to fulfill their communicative function. They interact with other characters, relating to them according to certain cultural and social awareness patterns, closely linked to everyday life issues and ideological struggles. Therefore, they have a specific social position from which they draw their effectiveness within the narrative text, and they have the ability to appeal to the reader, as they may represent certain intellectual or life aspects. Although their reference is imaginative, they do not stray from the reality in which individuals and societies live. This ability to influence that reality stems from their representation of a life experience, closely aligned with the actual reality that individuals seek to understand.

From here, we see that the character is the foundation of the novel, acting within the narrative stage and carrying ideologies and interacting, interlocking, and conflicting awareness patterns. Given these social characteristics, we cannot merely imagine them as paper or linguistic beings – though they are – because the writer does not create characters arbitrarily or by chance but develops them according to a vision that aligns with their view of the world. "They produce and build them based on their interaction with their experiential reality, aiming to present a vision of the world they live in by creating this world as they imagine or perceive it, or as they see it according to their stance" (Yaqtin, 2001, p. 141). They imbue these characters with intense ideological awareness, penetrating the reader. Thus, the novelist has a close relationship with their characters, manipulating them like puppets, vocalizing them with their own logic, utilizing their consciousness, and providing each with a cultural model through which they express their worldview. Because "when the character appears before us as visible units within the narrative text, it can only be cultural; cultural in its appearance, cultural in its attire, cultural in its movements, and cultural in the type of relationship it weaves with other characters. In short, it is the result of collective experiences. The collective experience is built on its ability to absorb all individual experiences through refining, generalizing, and transforming them into a sieve through which individual behaviors pass" (Benkrad, 2003, pp. 69-70).

These characters give the reader a sense of their presence, eliciting reactions, empathy, or even hostility because they reflect the reader's own bitter reality, filled with tension and suffering. The reader sees themselves in these characters, as they mirror their psychological and social depths, living with them through every detail of their paper life. From the beginning of their reading, the recipient enters the novel's realm and the world woven by the novelist with great skill, reflecting their awareness of their society's problems and internal and class struggles.

### **Conclusion:**

George Lukacs's theory of the novel, especially his concept of the "problematic consciousness" of fictional characters, makes a substantial contribution to understanding and developing the novel as a literary form. Through his analysis of the evolution of the novel and its influence by social and political changes, we conclude from our study that George Lukacs discussed several points in his theories and ideas, including:

- Lukacs provides a critical framework that helps explain how the novel reflects the internal tensions and conflicts experienced by characters in the face of societal and existential contradictions.
- The problematic consciousness is not just a literary tool but a mirror reflecting the complexities of human reality and individual experiences in different contexts. By exploring the manifestations of this consciousness in fictional works, we can gain a deeper understanding of how the novel contributes to shaping and directing social and cultural awareness.
- Modern novels reflect the fragmentation and alienation resulting from capitalism.
- The novel is the literary form particularly capable of offering a critique of society and exploring the human quest for meaning in a seemingly random and fragmented world.
- Lukacs is a staunch defender of realism in literature, viewing the task of literature as depicting social and historical reality in a way that reflects its complexities and contradictions. He sees the novel as the optimal literary form to achieve this task.
- Lukacs believes in the importance of style in literary works. Style is not merely an external form but a means of expressing the writer's philosophical and aesthetic vision. He considers critical realism as the style most capable of deeply depicting social reality.
- Literary characters: Lukacs emphasizes the importance of literary characters in literary works. He believes that literary characters should be complex and multi-dimensional, reflecting the contradictions and conflicts present in society.
- According to Lukacs, the fictional character is an abnormal entity—"demonic, insane, or criminal"—a problematic figure whose degraded and thus inauthentic quest for authentic values in a world of conformity constitutes the content of the novel.
- History and social class: Lukacs places significant importance on the role of history and social class in shaping human consciousness. He believes that literature should reflect these factors in its depiction of characters and events.
- Despite the challenges faced by fictional characters, Lukacs's analysis offers an optimistic view of literature's ability to provide constructive criticism of reality and encourage readers to engage critically and deeply with contemporary issues.

In conclusion, it can be said that Lukacs's theory of the novel remains a valuable tool for understanding literature and its impact. It highlights the importance of the novel as a means of expressing internal and external conflicts, thereby enhancing our understanding of the world around us.

### **Footnotes**

<sup>1</sup>György Lukacs (1885-1971) was a Hungarian philosopher, writer, critic, and Marxist minister, born in Budapest, the capital of Hungary.

### **References**

- Georg Lukács, *The Theory of the Novel and Its Development*, translated by Nazih Al-Shawaf, Ibn Hani Publishing House, Damascus, 1987.
- Mohammed Ramadan Al-Qadhafi, *Personality: Theories and Measurement Methods*, Modern University Office, Alexandria, Egypt, 2011.

- Mikhail Bakhtin, *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language*, translated by Mohammed Al-Bakri and Yumna Al-Eid, Tubqal Publishing House, Casablanca, 1986.
- Mikhail Bakhtin, *The Poetics of Dostoevsky*, translated by Jamil Nasif Al-Tikriti, Casablanca, Morocco, 1986.
- Hassan Bouhrawi, *The Structure of the Novel Form: Space-Time-Character*, Arab Cultural Center, Casablanca, Morocco, 2009.
- Mohammed Al-Amin Bahri, *Genetic Structuralism: From Philosophical Origins to Methodological Chapters*, Ikhtilaf Publications, Algeria, 2015.
- Abdul Rahman Bseiso, *The Mask Poem in Contemporary Arabic Poetry*, Arab Research Foundation, Beirut, Lebanon, 1999.
- Sidi Mohammed Ben Malek, *Language and Worldview in the Narrative Discourse*, Journal of Al-Athar (Kasdi Merbah University), Special Issue, 2012.
- Said Benkrad, *Semiotics of Narrative Characters*, Majdalawi Publishing and Distribution, Amman, Jordan, 2003.
- Mohammed Bouazza, *Analysis of the Narrative Text: Techniques and Concepts*, Ikhtilaf Publications, Algeria, 2010.
- Jamil Hamdawi, *Semiotics of Narrative Characters*, General Cultural Affairs House, Baghdad, Iraq, 2015.
- Faysal Darraj, *The Theory of the Novel and the Arabic Novel*, Arab Cultural Center, Casablanca, Morocco, 1999.
- Abdul Wahab Shaalan, *The Social Method and Its Transformations: From the Authority of Ideology to the Space of the Text*, Modern Book World, Irbid, Jordan, 2008.
- Aristotle, *Poetics*, translated by Abdul Rahman Badawi, Dar Al-Thaqafa, Beirut, Lebanon, 1973.
- Nader Ahmed Abdul Khaleq, *The Novelistic Character between Ahmed Balkathi and Naguib Al-Kilani: An Objective and Artistic Study*, Dar Al-Ilm wa Al-Iman, 2009.
- Sidi Mohammed Abdul Malik, *The Worldview in the Novels of Abdelhamid Ben Hadouga: A Socio-Poetic Approach*, Ikhtilaf Publications, Algeria, 2015.
- Mohammed Azzam, *The Problematic Hero in Contemporary Arabic Novels*, Al-Ahali Publishing and Distribution, Damascus, 1992.
- Mohammed Azzam, *Analysis of Literary Discourse in Light of Modern Critical Methods: A Study in Criticism of Criticism*, Publications of the Arab Writers Union, Damascus, Syria, 2003.
- Mohammed Azzam, *The Poetics of Narrative Discourse: A Study*, Publications of the Arab Writers Union, Damascus, Syria, 2005.
- Mohammed Azzam, *The Space of the Novelistic Text: A Genetic Structuralist Approach in the Works of Nabil Suleiman*, Dar Al-Hiwar for Publishing and Distribution, Latakia, Syria, 1996.
- Alain Robbe-Grillet, *Towards a New Novel*, translated by Mostafa Ibrahim Mostafa, Dar Al-Maaref, Egypt, n.d.
- Lucien Goldmann, *Introductions to the Sociology of the Novel*, translated by Badr El-Din Arudki, Dar Al-Hiwar for Publishing and Distribution, Latakia, Syria, 1993.
- Hamid Lahmidani, *The Structure of the Narrative Text from the Perspective of Literary Criticism*, Arab Cultural Center, Casablanca, Morocco, 2000.
- Georg Lukács, *The Novel*, translated by Merzak Bagtache, National Publishing and Distribution Organization, Algeria, n.d.
- Georg Lukács, *Studies in Realism*, translated by Naif Bluz, University Institution for Studies, Publishing, and Distribution, Beirut, 1985.
- Georg Lukács, *The Meaning of Contemporary Realism*, translated by George Tarabishi, Dar Al-Maaref, Egypt, 1971.
- Said Yaqtin, *The Openness of the Novelistic Text: Text and Context*, Arab Cultural Center, Casablanca, Morocco, 2001.