
UDC 17.022.1:159.923-057.36(477)**O. L. PRYTULA^{1*}**^{1*}Zaporizhzhia National University (Zaporizhzhia, Ukraine), e-mail prytula1970@ukr.net, ORCID 0000-0001-8800-8207

The Phenomenon of Heroism in the Understanding of Philosophical Anthropology

Purpose. In today's global society, traditional values, including patriotism and heroism, have been called into question. However, the new challenges of hybrid warfare require new manifestations of heroism, and thus a new philosophical understanding of it. The main purpose of this article is to provide a philosophical and anthropological understanding of heroism as the ultimate manifestation of the strength of the spirit, which combines the institutional foundations of the public good and the individual will to achieve it. **Theoretical basis.** The phenomenon of heroism is studied in the classical works of Homer, Plutarch, and Thomas Carlyle. Important contemporary philosophical and anthropological interpretations of this phenomenon are provided by Friedrich Nietzsche, Helmut Plessner and Albert Camus, according to whom every person can become a hero, provided that he or she demonstrates strength of spirit and an unbreakable desire to fight and win. Therefore, the phenomenon of heroism is gaining popularity and, although it can never be total in society, it can become a subject of education and self-education. **Originality.** The strength of a warrior's spirit is reflected in his or her everyday resilience, which has no gender. Its vivid embodiments in modern society can be traced to the heroism, dedication and perseverance of a warrior in a hybrid war. These new incarnations not only confirm the established philosophical and anthropological ideas about heroism, but also give it new features. **Conclusions.** The modern rethinking of heroism on the example of the ultimate manifestation of the strength of spirit in a hybrid war has made it possible to clarify its philosophical and anthropological concept. The exemplary steadfastness and consistency in manifesting democratic values in extremely unfavourable circumstances makes modern heroes not only professional military men, but also all citizens who demonstrate their best social virtues in defence of the social institutions of democracy. Modern hybrid warfare creates a frontier of heroic confrontation with totalitarianism on a global scale. The modern hero appears as an exemplary citizen of his/her nation-state and at the same time demonstrates the virtues of a true representative of the global civil society.

Keywords: man; heroism; warrior; strength of spirit; democratic values; hybrid warfare

Introduction

Heroism is a manifestation of the best moral, social and personal characteristics of a person. However, since ancient times, which gave birth to the culture of heroes, the phenomenon of heroism has undergone significant transformations and corresponding changes in its philosophical interpretations, which have led to its rethinking in general. Today, we should talk about a philosophical and anthropological definition of the phenomenon of heroism, which essentially expresses its main features and influences all other applied studies of heroism. In these special studies – historical, educational, sociological, ethical, political, etc. – each of these special dimensions provides a more complete and convincing coverage of a particular feature of heroism.

In general, the strength of spirit is manifested in the firmness of convictions, their defence and the ability of a person to act consistently and decisively in accordance with the goal. In the Ukrainian reality, the defenders of Ukraine are a model of strength of spirit, many of whom demonstrate such qualities as patriotism, courage, and commitment to national and state interests. The Ukrainian military, as a participant in a defensive war, is a carrier of worldview and value attitudes and norms, needs and interests that are increasingly consistent with the classical concept of a hero. At the same time, the study of this value and normative complex allows us to discover new aspects of the phenomenon of heroism.

Among the recent philosophical publications on the phenomenon of heroism, it is worth highlighting the dissertation research of the American candidate Christopher David Atkinson (2021), who is dedicated to clarifying the role of the moral virtues of the hero in shaping better social values. Researchers from Slovakia, Andrea Blaščíková and Rastislav Nemeč (2023), develop this topic on the example of educational philosophy. Earlier, the American editor David K. Johnson (2009) assembled a research team that, using the example of the TV show "Heroes", analysed the philosophical foundations of why and how ordinary people in extreme conditions "inexplicably develop superhuman abilities", that is, they can develop the abilities of real heroes (p. 5). A team of American researchers edited by Scott T. Allison, James Beggan, and George Goethals publishes a regular encyclopaedia of heroism studies, the latest issue of which, in particular, features an article by Czech cultural critic Igor Prusa (2023), who explores the phenomenon of the extraordinary appeal of the anti-hero in contemporary pop culture.

The American political philosopher Ari Kohen (2013) devoted a special study to the peculiarities of the formation of the classical philosophical concept of heroism. The texts of Homer's (2018) *The Iliad and The Odyssey* and Plutarch's (2018) *Parallel Lives* remain the unsurpassed primary source of all examples of heroes. The classic analysis of the philosophical and historical foundations of the phenomenon of heroism is the work of British researcher Thomas Carlyle (1841) *On Heroes, Hero-Worship, and the Heroic in History*. These works lay the foundations for understanding the phenomenon of heroism as related to certain social and moral virtues no less than to the virtues of personal mastery – physical and spiritual.

Over the past decade, Ukrainian researchers of the phenomenon of heroism have paid special attention to clarifying the specifics of the formation of the worldview and value attitudes of a warrior. For example, a study by Vasyl Baranivskyi and Volodymyr Baranivskyi (2015) identified manifestations of heroism in educational and military practice and in the national socio-cultural space in general, while a special monograph by Viacheslav Blikhar and Vitalii Kurys (2020) is devoted to an in-depth analysis of the value universe of a serviceman. However, Russia's war of aggression in Ukraine has only intensified the manifestation of the trends that Ukrainian researchers have identified in Ukrainian society before. The emphasis was not so much on values in their personal development as on the institutional foundations of heroism. Tetiana Vasylevska (2011) analysed the sources of the phenomenon of heroism in the ways of serving society and the state in the civil service, while Tetiana Tytarenko and Tetiana Larina (2009) identified the social preconditions for the formation of the resilience of the individual, which he or she manifests in extreme circumstances. Oleh Turenko (2010) has carried out a modern reconstruction and reactualisation of the concept of courage as a social virtue inherent in heroes, which is found in Plato's dialogues.

Purpose

The purpose of this article is to provide a philosophical and anthropological understanding of heroism as the ultimate manifestation of the strength of spirit that combines the institutional foundations of the public good and the individual will to achieve it.

The disclosure of the philosophical and anthropological essence of heroism as the ultimate manifestation of the strength of spirit required, first of all, an appeal to the phenomenon of heroism itself, and only then – to its specific embodiment in its national hypostasis.

Contemporary researchers draw attention to the complexity of the phenomenon of heroism, the presence of many of its essential dimensions and the impossibility of reducing the under-

standing of heroism to only one of them. This has led to the prevalence of an interdisciplinary approach to the phenomenon of heroism: "The interdisciplinarity of heroism refers to the process by which heroism is explored from a diverse set of scholarly perspectives using various methods of the natural sciences, the social sciences, and the humanities" (Rusch, 2023, p. 1).

Based on this approach, it is still necessary to generalise and conceptualise the results of its application with the help of philosophy. For us, this is the position of philosophical anthropology. Certain provisions of the philosophy of the prominent 19th-century German thinker Friedrich Nietzsche (2021) are somewhat indicative, in particular, his doctrine of the superman (der Übermensch) as a person of extraordinary strength of mind capable of making his/her own ethical choices beyond the boundaries of established moral ideas. This is also the doctrine of the famous German representative of philosophical anthropology Helmut Plessner (2019), who draws attention to eccentricity as an anthropological characteristic of a person, his or her deep desire to go beyond their everyday existence and assert their essence beyond what nature and society provide. The heroes fully actualise the potential that is inherent in each personality. But if Nietzsche believed that such a disclosure of potential is available to very few, Plessner saw the possibility of accessing this potential also through everyday and non-heroic actions to adapt to current social and natural problems. Instead, it is worthwhile to philosophically substantiate the conditions under which an ordinary person is reborn and becomes a hero. In particular, this will explain yet not total, but still massive heroism of Ukrainian soldiers in the context of the defensive war against the Russian aggressor.

Statement of basic materials

Problematization of the phenomenon of heroism in modern studies

In contemporary scholarly research, there are increasingly frequent opinions about the need to make significant adjustments to the classical idea of heroism and heroes. This is due to two main circumstances: the changing social role of classical heroes and increased attention to the phenomenon of anti-heroes.

The American researcher Ari Kohen (2013) notes that in modern society, the term "heroes" has become overused, has gone far beyond its traditional use, and has therefore become highly pluralistic in its interpretation: "In contemporary society, any behavior that seems distinctly difficult or unusually impressive is classified as heroic: everyone from firefighters to foster fathers to freedom fighters are our heroes" (p. 4).

Jen Webb, an Australian researcher of the phenomenon of heroism, draws attention to the fact that, in addition to the traditional approach to heroes in art, when the subject of research is heroes by status – demigods, victorious generals as saviours of the motherland, that is, universally recognised as victorious, and alongside the similar idea of heroes as ordinary people who behave like real knights in emergency situations, there appears a completely different approach in contemporary art, which exalts ordinary people in ordinary circumstances or even anti-heroes. The criticism of all classical and generally traditional values leads to the fact that art begins "to celebrate power and the status quo as it is to be iconoclastic, puncturing established ways of seeing the world, and representing anti-heroes and ordinary people living ordinary lives" (Webb, 2023, p. 1).

The phenomenon of anti-heroism in mass culture is also studied by the Czech researcher Igor Prusa (2023), who notes that television and the entire mass culture in the last three decades have

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been producing "shows about morally problematic characters to whom the audiences are drawn despite their darkness". In contrast, a well-known contemporary American researcher of the phenomenon of heroism, Scott T. Allison (2016), points out that despite the longstanding interest in the 19th and 20th centuries in the "dark side of human nature" among philosophers, but even more so among psychologists, the end of the 20th century marks not only a return to a humanistic and classical understanding of heroism, but also the establishment of a science of heroism (p. 2).

Excessive public attention to anti-heroes may be the result of a certain crisis in the classical concept of heroism and the loss of a clear image of the hero in public opinion.

The British researcher Mihaela Mihai draws attention to the fact that heroes have not always been and are not always outstanding speakers – on the contrary, heroism often does not require loud words, but consists in silently doing what is right, "gritting the teeth". In her opinion, silence can be no less eloquent, especially in criticising what has traditionally been considered heroic without proper acknowledgement, while silent resistance itself has been "erased from redemptive, idealising national narratives of heroism" (Mihai, 2021, p. 346).

Indeed, in war, heroism requires mainly deeds, and others will most likely sing them later. There is no time for speeches during the battle.

Service to the Motherland as a warrior's vocation

First of all, it is necessary to find out whether the military is still a model for the concept of a hero. Serving one's country is a classic heroic deed that justifies the inherent excessive risk, sacrificial self-denial and willingness to give up even one's own life.

However, in the era of globalism, the traditional values of patriotism are in crisis, as all traditional values are being questioned. This may be one of the sources of the loss of the sacred halo around the heroic figure. However, it is more likely that a significant rethinking of the very phenomenon of heroism is needed. After all, the cult of heroes is aristocratic in origin and was born out of a slave-owning society based on deep social inequality. Whereas modern society is fundamentally democratic – even modern tyrannies masquerade as democracies and do not publicly deny basic liberal values.

The modern hero is not always a military man, but always a warrior of the spirit, a patriot of democracy, a defender of humanism, and therefore a patriot of his/her homeland as the embodiment of democracy and humanism. In the course of professional self-realisation and self-improvement, a modern warrior demonstrates the highest standards of spirituality, a role model, which is important not only for the education of young people but also for the formation of a healthy moral climate in society as a whole. By defending the Motherland, a serviceman enables other citizens to fulfil themselves and implement their own life project. In this context, service to the homeland is the highest value that should be cherished when educating the younger generation. Ukrainian researcher Tetiana Vasylevska (2011) substantiates the pronounced moral meaning of the phenomenon of service: "...service to the people as service to every citizen is a requirement that civil society puts forward to the state" (transl. by O. P.) (p. 333). Therefore, not only the military, but every representative of the state (in its highest moral purpose) should appear as a warrior and defender of the everyday interests of citizens. Contemporary heroism is not so much about serving the state as it is about serving on behalf of the state and other social institutions. The modern hero is the living and best embodiment of institutionality.

The American professor Scott T. Allison (2016) goes even further when he emphasises that, unlike ancient peoples, we treat the acceptance of our fate as a hero's journey not just conscious-

ly but rationally – not as a necessarily fatal sacrifice, but as a certain initiation that we must go through, not just some or a few, but all of us, and not just in relation to the nation-state, but to global civil society: "We are all destined to walk the same hero's journey in our own individually unique way, as global citizens and as global scientists" (p. 5). That is, each person as a citizen is already a representative of the state and must realise this as a certain initiation and accept the path of a warrior – as a champion of the rights of fellow citizens.

Thus, in a modern society, everyone serves first and foremost their own democratic homeland, but also defends the democratic values of modern humanity.

The courage of a warrior

In the context of the Russian-Ukrainian hybrid war, in order to fulfil extremely complex professional tasks, the Ukrainian military constantly demonstrates such an important character trait as courage: it is often necessary to make independent decisions, not just to follow orders, because in a hybrid war, not everything is what it seems (Blikhar & Gryniuk, 2024). This courage is not gendered, but is a manifestation of a spirit that can be displayed by people of all genders: "Our forebears somehow knew that risk and sacrifice were essential for growth, maturity, and enlightenment" (Allison, 2016, p. 5). Thus, the military is not born, nor is it a separate caste of heroes; in modern society, every citizen can become a hero and must become one in extreme circumstances.

From the point of view of Ukrainian psychologists Tetiana Tytarenko and Tetiana Larina (2009), the concept of courage is understood in existential philosophy, where it is often combined with courage and readiness for self-sacrifice. In Nietzsche's works, the warrior knows what fear is, but develops the ability to overcome it. The warrior is the hero who dares to look into the abyss. The warrior does not seek a long life but a dignified one, does not seek peace but honour, and does not show humility but courage. Nietzsche (2021) sharpens his characterisation of the warrior as one who "knows no revenge, neither does he know despair", but instead always achieves his/her goal despite any obstacles (p. 34). However, Tytarenko and Larina point out that Nietzsche does not equate a warrior and a hero: while a hero can "rest on his/her laurels" after the feat, a warrior must take care of his/her combat skills and their development on a daily basis. The warriors devote themselves to "personal activity aimed not at achieving glory, but at hard work for self-development" (transl. by O. P.) (Tytarenko & Larina, 2009, pp. 24-25).

Thus, the warrior no longer resembles the Prometheus-hero, but a tireless fighter-rebel (Camus, 1992) and even a labourer who day after day "splits this rock!", as Ivan Franko (n.d.) once wrote. This understanding of the "warrior" by these authors – both Nietzsche and his Ukrainian interpreters – takes us not only beyond war, but also beyond the "warrior" itself. Nietzsche rather seeks to turn the whole life into a kind of war without compromise or prisoners.

The criticism of the hero here, however, is rather a criticism of the traditional concept of the hero, and the glorification of the warrior of everyday battles is the creation of a new concept of heroism. It should be noted that in Nietzsche's understanding, a warrior is not only a defender of the homeland, but also a person who is able to show courage in everyday life, overcoming difficulties, own complexes and weaknesses. It is necessary to prepare for the vocation of a warrior, including cultivating one's own courage. Therefore, the study of the military profession not only helps to better understand the ultimate manifestations of courage, but also to understand why not everyone becomes a hero.

Therefore, we should not simplify the image of the modern hero by romanticising it, as Scott T. Allison (2016) does, who emphasises that every modern person has the potential to become a hero (p. 5). This position of Allison, however, points more to a potential opportunity that not

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everyone is capable of realising. Thus, writing about heroism is a mission of heroism – and in several senses: social-functional, value-ethical, and rational-scientific. From a social point of view, not every citizen clearly fulfils the mission of a hero – even in times of war: there are plenty of unremarkable, though decent, citizens, as well as renegades and even anti-heroes. From an ethical point of view, not everyone has a clear value, let alone a conscious moral position. From a rational point of view, even fewer people can so scientifically justify their decision – any decision, let alone a heroic one. And yet, we must admit that heroism in times of war does indeed become widespread, which is much less true in peacetime.

Originality

The classical phenomenon of heroism is finding new and vivid embodiments in contemporary Ukrainian society, and above all in the strength of spirit, dedication and perseverance of Ukrainian defenders – both professional military and those who until recently were civilians. These new incarnations not only confirm the established philosophical and anthropological concepts of heroism, but also give it new features – everyday resilience and gender ambivalence. These traits develop and complement such classical characteristics as courage, nobility, patriotism, and other higher manifestations of spiritual and physical virtues. A modern Ukrainian warrior demonstrates courage regardless of his/her gender, acquires noble traits of the best representative of society regardless of his/her previous profession in peacetime, and defends the values of democracy not only for the sake of his/her own homeland, but also for the sake of the victory of world democracy over the international network of new totalitarianism and authoritarianism.

Conclusions

The philosophical and anthropological understanding of heroism as the ultimate manifestation of the strength of spirit has clarified it as the result of the exemplary consistency of the modern hero in the performance of the best social virtues and the protection of the social institutions of democracy. Thus, a true hero is not the author of a single outstanding act in life, but a strong-willed and purposeful person who consciously creates opportunities for the implementation of the institutional foundations of the public good in extremely unfavourable circumstances. The modern warrior, as the best representative of a democratic society, is an example for other citizens, being on the frontier of the war against totalitarianism on a global scale. The activity of modern citizens as national heroes is an example of a moral choice that lays down both the value foundations for the development of nation states and the virtues of a true representative of global civil society.

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Феномен героїзму в осмисленні філософської антропології

Мета. У сучасному глобальному суспільстві під питанням виявилися традиційні цінності, у тому числі патріотизм і героїзм. Однак нові виклики гібридної війни потребують нових виявів героїзму, а отже, і його нового філософського осмислення. Основною метою цієї статті є філософсько-антропологічне осмислення героїзму як граничного вияву сили духу, що поєднує інституційні засади суспільного блага та індивідуальну волю до його досягнення. **Теоретичний базис.** Феномен героїзму досліджено в класичних працях Гомера, Плутарха, Томаса Карлайла. Важливі сучасні філософсько-антропологічні інтерпретації цього феномену надають Фрідріх Ніцше, Гельмут Плеснер та Альбер Камю, згідно з якими героєм може стати кожна людина за умови виявлення нею сили духу та незламного прагнення до боротьби і перемоги. Феномен героїзму тому набуває масовості і, хоча ніколи не може бути тотальним у суспільстві, однак може стати предметом виховання і самовиховання. **Наукова новизна.** Сила духу воїна відображена в його повсякденній стійкості (resilience), яка не має гендерної визначеності. Її яскраві втілення в сучасному суспільстві можна простежити на прикладі героїзму, самовідданості й наполегливості воїна в умовах гібридної війни. Ці нові втілення не лише підтверджують сталі філософсько-антропологічні уявлення про героїзм, але й надають йому нових рис. **Висновки.** Сучасне переосмислення героїзму на прикладі граничного вияву сили духу в умовах гібридної війни дало можливість уточнити його філософсько-антропологічну концепцію. Зразкова непохитність і послідовність у виявленні демократичних цінностей у край несприятливих для цього обставинах робить сучасними героями не лише професійних військових, але й усіх громадян, які демонструють свої найкращі соціальні чесноти в захисті соціальних інститутів демократії. Сучасна гібридна війна створює фронтір героїчного протистояння тоталітаризму в глобальному масштабі. Сучасний герой постає як взірцевий громадянин своєї національної держави і водночас демонструє чесноти справжнього представника світового громадянського суспільства.

Ключові слова: людина; героїзм; воїн; сила духу; демократичні цінності; гібридна війна

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