

Defining and analysing heroism



Heroism consists of actions that must help others, even if it is a possibility and risk of the helper's injury or even death. Some people consider heroism to be very close to altruism, but it is different. Where altruism emphasizes self-denying acts that help others, heroism means a personal sacrifice. The kernel of heroism rotates around of the obligation of the person to a noble goal and readiness to accept a consequence of fighting for this goal. Heroism is old as humanity itself. The human bent for commemorating heroes is a universal quality of human culture. Heroes are honored in ancient paintings, folklore and myth. Societies dispatched such stories in oral traditions and legends, and myths into epic poems and eddas. Modern societies uphold the tradition of honoring heroes not only in literally masterpieces but also in movies and journalism. Some of heroic ideas are becoming lost or changed by general culture. Being a hero is not just being an outstanding figure. We believe it has become needful to revise the historical senses of the word, and to force it to arrive in modern timeframes. Historically, heroism has been closely connected with military service, although social heroism also deserves close research. For instance, Achilles is the archetypal war hero, whose values were so strong, that Socrates willingness to die for it was also a heroic exploit. Heroism that consist a notable idea is usually not so dramatic like heroism that entails direct physical risk. These different ways of exhorting with the heroic ideal mean a deeper, more tangled definition of heroism. Actions considered as heroic are ordinarily made voluntarily in the sense that they are not compelled by external pressures or at least go out the bounds of the behavior ordinarily prompted by external pressures. By understanding of heroism as a universal characteristic of human nature, not as an unusual feature, heroism becomes something that stands in the line of <https://assignbuster.com/defining-and-analysing-heroism/>

possibilities for everyone, possibly inspiring us to answer that call. The thought about the banality of heroism disrobes the myth of the heroic elect . It is a myth that strengthens two fundamental human tendencies: to attribute very rare personal feature to special people who do special feats – to see them as superhuman, comparing to the rest of us and the trap of inertial some people call it as the bystander effect . Investigation has shown that this effect is often motivated by scattering of responsibility.

In their article *The Banality of Heroism* , Zeno Franco and Philip Zimbardo tell that heroism is made up of four autonomous measurements at least (based on authors analysis of many acts that they consider heroic). First, heroism involves some type of quest, which may range from the preservation of life to the preservation of an ideal (Franco, Zimbardo). Second, heroism should have some form of sacrifice (risk). This can be some form of physical danger or a strong social sacrifice. The physical risks in this case are clearly heroic in nature. For instance, Tom Cahill, a researcher from the University of California, called a press conference where defined the EPA s findings that in the after-grass of the September 11 events the air nearby Ground Zero was safe for breathing. With this action he risked his confidence as a scientist. Third, the heroic feat may be active or passive. Often we think of heroism as a courageous activity, something that is clearly perceptible. But some forms of heroism involve passive opposition or reluctance to be moved. And finally, heroism may be an unexpected, one time action, or something that continues over a longer time period. This may have a meaning that heroism may be a nearly immediate reaction to a situation. Or it may be a well considered series of actions endure over days, months, or a lifetime. Franco

and Zimbardo give such an example: in 1940, a Japanese consul official in Lithuania, Chiune Sugihara, signed more than 2, 000 visas for Jews hoping to escape the Nazi invasion, despite his government's direct orders not to do so. Every morning when Sugihara got up and made the same decision to help, every time he signed a visa, he acted heroically and increased the likelihood of dire consequences for himself and his family. At the end of the war he was unceremoniously fired from the Japanese civil service (Franco and Zimbardo). The scientists stress that even people who have led less than remarkable lives can be heroic in a single moment. For instance, during Hurricane Katrina, a man whose name is Jabar Gibson, who was previously arrested in the past, took a bus, freighted it with citizens of his poor New Orleans environs, and delivered them to safety Houston. This feat people of Louisiana considered as heroism, because in that concrete situation Jabar helped desperate people simply to survive. The really interesting investigation which called The heroism of women and men was done by Selwyn W. Becker (University of Chicago) and Alice H. Eagly (Northwestern University). They research heroism of both sexes in dangerous settings. Their study allows examining the ideas that heroism is performed by women as well as men. It is well-known that mostly men were portrayed as heroes in legends, poems and eddas. It is understandable, because of their strength, greater size and physical skills. It is also well-known that since pristine times men considered to be hunters. But we should not forget that women in their turn always considered to be clever, somewhat cunning and undoubtedly, very skilful. The women may find the right decision more often because of their well-known sixth sense, so it is quite probably that they may take a risk with the same responsibility as men. Moreover, the women more often trust

<https://assignbuster.com/defining-and-analysing-heroism/>

their feelings and inner senses, their intuition and sometimes it helps in those situations when it needs to sacrifice. Then, who says that women are more afraid of sacrificing? There are a lot of examples in the world literature when they made such really brave decisions showing in such a way their true feelings. Becker and Eagly write: Women's risk taking is assumed to derive at least in part from their traditional family role as main nurturer (Becker and Eagly). The authors are sure that nonetheless, it is possible that women's psychological answers to stress prime their helpful acts. Besides, many of women's heroic actions are hidden. But we forgot about another important question: What makes a hero? Franco and Zimbardo convinced that actually, the first answer of many people who are called heroes is to disown their originality. They say: I just did what I had to do or I am not a hero! Anyone in the same position would have done what I did (Franco and Zimbardo). Sudden life and death situations are distinct examples of situations that excite people into heroic act. The investigators were convinced that these positions create a bright-line ethical inspection that drives some individuals to act in an attempt to stop the evil. Many people in common positions identify the ethical problems connected with the situation and are deeply upset, but decide to ignore it. Franco and Zimbardo believe that a significant factor that may cheer heroic act is the incentive of heroic kind of imagination. It is the capacity to imagine facing risky situations, to fight the hypothetical problems these situations cause, and to consider one's actions and the results. By this, the individual becomes more prepared to act if a moment that calls for heroism comes. Seeing oneself capable of heroism may be the first step towards a heroic consequence. There are several steps we can take to nurture the heroic type of imagination. We can start by

remaining aware; critically evaluating each situation we meet so that we do not gloss over an emergency demanding our action. We must withstand the impulse to improve inaction and to develop exculpations that recast evil acts. Also we must try to exceed anticipating negative result connected with some forms of heroism, being socially ostracized as an example. We must trust that others will identify the value of our heroic feats. We should try to develop a capacity of things that do not fit, or do not make sense in a current situation. This means that we must ask questions to get the proper information for us to take action. Besides, it is important not to fear conflict, and to develop the personal courage necessary to stand firm for principles we value. Actually, we should not think of hard conflicts but rather as attempts to force the other people to support their own ideology and principles. We should be engaged in the current position, to imagine alternative future scenarios.

But outside of these fundamental points, our society needs to encourage heroic imagination in all of its citizens, especially in young ones. The ancient Greeks and Anglo Saxon tribes revered their poem heroes in Beowulf and Iliad . These stories are antiquated, but their descriptions of the hero still make sense. In these tales, the protagonist often meets a mystical figure who attempts to tempt the hero away from his track. We must also avoid the temptation of evil in our life, and we must recognize that perhaps the temptation will be quite ordinary: for example, an unethical friend, neighbor or coworker. By passing a series of smaller examinations of our stamina, we can refine a personal habit of heroism. Very often epic poems tell about the hero visiting the underworld. This metaphorical facing death depicts

transcendence an acceptance of mortality. Arthur Margon in his work *Urbanization in fiction. Changing models of heroism in popular American novels 1880-1920* writes that in a wide line of popular literature works written between the end of Reconstruction and The First World War, prominent American novelists depicted the decline of usual heroism in an urbanized society. In an urban society, goodness and social responsibility could be guaranteed only through the institutions peculiarity of that society. Individualism did not lead to heroism in the materialistic cities. Urban writers dismissed the individualistic hero to either boundary of the junk heap. Some of the authors replaced him with an institutional structure which nurtured self-identification in the community. But American novelists increasingly reflected, through the demise of the hero, the understanding that in the urban age individualism was incompatible with public welfare (Margon) underlines Margon.

Till this day, some types of heroism demand paying the final price. But we can also realize this as a hero's desire to face any of the results of heroic action - whether the sacrifices are social or physical. The hero often follows a set of rules. It is obviously, that if we will stop imagining ourselves as real heroes, and to realize the real sense of heroism, our society will be more indignant. But if we can rejoin these ancient ideals, refresh them again; we can create a union with the hero in our souls. It is this urgent, internal connection between the modern world and the ancient world that can show to a simple person how to become an everyday hero. As about my opinion. It seems to me, that we often afraid to make such actions, because we live in a world where everyone cares about himself. But if each of us will make one

good feat everyday, our life may change completely. Now to my mind comes a movie that is called Pay it forward where the teacher gave pupils the task to think how to change this world. The slogan was Think of an idea how to change this world and put it into action! . And one boy named Trevor found the way: each person should make three good actions and then those people whom he helped must do the same in their turn. Well, is not is a heroism I would like to ask? In such a special and very remarkable way this boy forced us to believe in goodness. Exactly such kind of actions may teach everyone to become a hero. We just have to learn how to be more patient, kinder, thankful, attentively, and more helpful but what is most important to help others not by words but by real actions. I think everyone must watch this film and think about his actions and thoughts. It would be great if we will find a possibility and place for good feats in our life. And it does not matter what it will be saving a cat from the transport movement or helping our friend with his tasks. All these details draw one colorful portrait of the modern hero!

Work cited

Becker W, Selwyn, Eagly H, Alice The Heroism of Women and Men .

Zero, Franco, Zimbardo, Philip The Banality of Heroism . Greater Good Magazine. 2006-2007.

Margon, Artur Changing models of heroism in popular American novels 1880-1920 .