

Original article

The man's courage and valour in the biblical and contemporary times

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ABSTRACT

The article attempts to analyse and interpret the man's behaviour (actions) in different situations of threat and in different historical epochs. These are behaviours which can be described as heroic, courageous, valorous and dauntless, aimed at defending other people and bringing help at the risk of endangering one's own life and health. The analysis covered the helpful behaviour of the Good Samaritan and David's defensive combat from the Biblical period and, from the contemporary times, a certain priest's behaviour during the black smallpox epidemic in Wroclaw and Antoni Zdrojewski's defensive combat during the Second World War.

KEYWORDS

situation of threat, heroism, courage, bringing help, valour, defensive combat



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Introduction

A shrewd observation of men's behaviours as well as an in-depth analysis of literature urge to ask a question: why it happens that some of us are willing to help others in situations which are difficult for them or in situations of threat? They respond to challenges disinterestedly, ignoring the consequences and endangering their life or health, whereas some other people are passive or indifferent in similar situations, and even if they take action, they are motivated by personal gain.

Bringing help – coming to the aid of other people in the situation of general threat and when they await such help – in the social reception it was and is assessed positively and identified with prosocial behaviours [Aronson et al. 1994, p. 453-455]. Especially bringing help to others whose life or health is at risk, while endangering one's own safety, was and is associated in many communities with heroism, bravery, dauntlessness and courage. Courage implies actions the meaning of which is positive and which are associated with doing the good, disinterestedness, friendliness to others and a high

degree of efficiency. According to Tadeusz Kotarbinski, being “courageous” means being efficient in carrying out good deeds; it is efficiency combined with praiseworthy aspirations [Kotarbinski 1987, p. 161]. Courage is denoted by bringing effective help not only to the close people endangered as a result of accidents, natural disasters or otherwise exposed to danger, but also to everyone who is in a traumatic situation, in the situation of waiting for help.

Valour is a special form of courage. This term is used to characterise overall efficiency and ethical qualities of the man who is able, in situations when someone is facing physical aggression, to counteract such aggression in accordance with the criteria of a defensive combat. It is used to describe the qualities of people standing up for others. For valorous people the basis to engage, that is to enter into defensive combat, is the lack of provocation on their part, an attack delivered first by the aggressor and the use of countermeasures adequate for danger. An inseparable attribute of valour is the readiness both to kill – but only as a last resort – and, in extreme situations, to sacrifice one’s own life. Valour, which should be emphasised, is deeply rooted in universal values and it stems both from the strong conviction that it is necessary to counteract the evil actively, and also from the arduous learning of defensive behaviours [Kalina 1997, p. 29, 35-36].

What determines human behaviour? What makes people react differently to the danger faced by themselves and/or by other people? Numerous theories have been developed suggesting that the social environment in which we live is responsible for our behaviours. Some concepts postulate that a specific behaviour results from interactions between psychological stimulation (i.e. the degree of sensitivity/susceptibility to being driven by emotions) and cognitive processes (i.e. our assessment of a given situation). Other theories claim that our predilection for prosocial or antisocial behaviours is congenital (it represents a part of our genetic inheritance), whereas some other theories assure that we learn prosocial or antisocial behaviours from our parents or other people important for us [Skorny 1989, p. 148-163; Aronson et al. 1994, p. 455-471; Fukuyama 2002; Clarke 2003; Strelau 2006, p. 13-19; Hamer and Copeland 2011].

Empirical research shows that the willingness to help other people is demonstrated more frequently by people distinguished by their height, larger than the average, body weight and preparedness to act in the face of danger. However, when a critical situation is witnessed by one person only, this person, even lacking appropriate competencies, will try to help. However, when there are other people present, witnesses to the accident with poor competencies are less willing to help – they are afraid of being ridiculous or embarrassed. Moreover, the characteristics distinctive for a person with prosocial attitude include the belief in a fair world, feeling of social responsibility, empathic skills and highly valued moral qualities [Clarke 2003]. The group of people distinguished by prosocial inclinations comprises also individuals with altruistic traits. For an altruist helping others is a value in itself [Hajduk and Hajduk 2008]. Also people who have indispensable practical skills to bring help are more frequently willing to do it than others [Welyczko and Kaluzny 2010, p. 407-419].

Are we determined to the same extent to help all people exposed to threat? Well, it turns out that we are not. There are some people whom we perceive as deserving help more than others. We are more ready to come to the aid of our close family members, to whom we are attached, and those for whom we feel responsible [Kaluzny 2012, p. 186-198]. We are more willing to help people who are similar to us in appearance and/or are attractive to us and those who seem to have similar views and beliefs as well as the ones whom we perceive as incapable or in need for help, such as children, the elderly or people with visible disabilities.

Generalising these considerations concerning prosocial and antisocial behaviours it should be emphasised that a given person's prosocial behaviours should not be identified with this person's courage or valour and antisocial behaviours do not exclude performing heroic deeds. However, the man's prosocial predispositions are one of the designations of courage and valour, while inclinations towards antisocial behaviours are their contradiction.

This article presents interpretations of the selected examples of behaviour of people exposed to different kinds of threats – in the situations obligating them to bring help or to defend others. The paper attempts to identify the reasons for such behaviours, i.e. heroic behaviours that characterise courageous and valorous people.

1. Parable of the good samaritan

A man was perambulating from Jerusalem to Jericho. On his way he was assaulted by some thugs, who robbed and beat him and left him hardly alive by the road. Accidentally, a priest was going this way and, seeing him, walked past indifferently and did not help him. Also a Levite¹ went past the man in need for help. Only a certain Samaritan, travelling this way, approached him. The Samaritan stopped and dressed his wounds, pouring olive oil and wine on them. Afterwards, the Samaritan brought the man to the inn and took care of him. On the following day he gave two denarii to the innkeeper and said "Look after him and on my way back I will reimburse you for whatever you spend in excess" [Biblia... 1986, Lk, 10 (30-35)].

The parable of the Good Samaritan is an example of the man's humanity. The protagonist, who helped the wounded man, took care of him and shared his possessions with him, is the symbol of courage for the contemporary society. According to the stereotype commonly held by Jews Samaritans were cruel and merciless people, worse than them. However, the Samaritan's deed shows that he deserves the highest esteem and respect, because his attitude and behaviour denied the commonly-held opinion about Samaritans. In this parable Jesus set the Samaritan's behaviour against the indifference to the beaten Jew's fate manifested by the Jewish priest and his assistant – representatives of the professional groups highly respected by Jews. The parable of the Good Samaritan should be a lesson for all of us, because its leading character is the example

¹ Levite – a representative of one of the priestly groups in ancient Judaism. According to the Bible, the group originated from the generation of Jacob's son, Levi.

of a man who is not indifferent to another man's suffering, regardless of the popular stereotypes.

Each man exposed to danger deserves help, irrespective of whether he is a friend or an enemy. However, good intentions should not be expressed by means of words only, but first of all they should be confirmed by deeds. The parable touches also upon the problem of people fulfilling important social functions or performing church ministrations: a priest and a Levite. These are the people who know God's laws and commandment of love of neighbour, but still they do not help the wounded man. They forgot about mercy and respect for their neighbour. The other man's good was not a superior value for them.

The meaning of this parable is realising that human goodness and love may not be measured by religious services, but by deeds towards the other man. It should be emphasised that the Samaritan turned out to be merciful and courageous, being the representative of the people regarded by Jews as heretics and mixed-blood individuals. The other characters in the parable, the priest and the Levite, are very pious, but they lack empathy. Taking into account the idea of this parable it can be treated as an extension and justification for the commandment of love of neighbour. Jesus wanted to show the Israelites (and lawyers in particular) that one should be a fellow creature for every man and especially for the ones in need for help. The infidel Samaritan, bringing kind help, can also be a fellow creature for others. The man's nationality and religious beliefs are irrelevant, because they are in no way connected to what defines the man's value – merciful deeds resulting from the inner goodness.

2. Men's courage during the smallpox epidemic in Wroclaw

Jerzy Ambroziowicz, in his book entitled "Zaraza" (plague), describes the real events and behaviour of doctors, medical staff and hospitalised patients in the form of a fictionalised reportage [Ambroziowicz 2016]. He writes about the people waging a heroic struggle with the deadly "enemy", the smallpox, disregarding (consciously or unconsciously) their own risk. All people directly involved with struggling the epidemic and the resulting threats deserve to be described as courageous. One selected episode showing the people's behaviour during this struggle is a measurable corroboration of the proposed thesis.

"Doctor Zawada's condition suddenly started to deteriorate. The tests showed that his organism was resistant to all antibiotics [...]. However, the smallpox, which on day 35 is no longer dangerous, caused some complications in Zawada. Doctors Oleksin, Surowcowa and Hawling took turns to man the phone, calling their colleagues in hospitals and asking for advice and guidance and consulting them over the case of Zawada. The answers obtained most frequently did not contribute anything new to the course of treatment. Zawada was the only patient with so severe condition" [Ambroziowicz 2016, p. 203].

"[...], one evening, before midnight, a priest made a phone call to provide spiritual consolation for the staff in Szczodre. Doctor Surowcowa answered the phone. The priest

expressed his genuine admiration for the female doctor's work under such harsh conditions and encouraged her to persevere, look for strength in prayer and confide in God. The doctor knew the priest as he would often visit patients with the last sacrament in the contagious disease hospital in ul. Piwna. She understood his intentions but was too tired to listen to preaching so late at night. The doctor thanked the priest for remembering about them and said goodbye to him. [...] Zawada's health condition was becoming worse and worse every hour. He would become unconscious increasingly often and for longer and longer periods and suffered from respiratory failures. At night, Doctor Zawada's wife, watching at her husband's bedside, asked for a priest's visit. The doctors did not know whether they were allowed to ask a priest for such favour requiring him to cross the boundary between the two worlds, the one free from the smallpox and the other affected by the plague" [Ambroziewicz 2016, p. 205].

„[...] Doctor Surowcowa, having made numerous calls, obtained the consent from the sanitary authorities to a priest's visit to Szczodre – provided that all necessary precautions were taken. Immediately after crossing the park gate the priest was to put on special clothes, wellingtons, a gauze mask and gloves, and after his service he was to undergo the mandatory disinfecting procedures. In the middle of the night Doctor Surowcowa woke up the priest who had made a night call a few days ago with the words of comfort and encouragement to persevere. 'We have a dying person here and the family asks for the last rites,' the doctor said. The priest, woken up abruptly, could not understand at first what was the matter. When she said clearly, 'I am asking you to come to Szczodre as soon as possible,' there was a pause of dead silence at the other end of the line. Then, the priest started to ask whether the patient had already received the last rites perhaps, or whether he was conscious enough to confess or whether there was somebody to make the examination of conscience on behalf of the dying person, [...]. The doctor patiently explained that the dying man's wife was watching at his bedside and waiting for the priest" [Ambroziewicz 2016, p. 205-206].

"'Call Przasnik, please, there is a chaplain designated to perform such services. He already is within the contaminated area,' the priest said after all explanations from Doctor Surowcowa. In this situation Doctor Surowcowa ordered a phone call to Przasnik. A doctor on duty answered the phone from Szczodre and was surprised to hear what the matter was. 'We have no priest here [...].' Apologising for her call in the middle of the night Doctor Surowcowa again woke up the priest who was so eager while comforting her not so long ago. 'They know nothing about an alleged priest in Przasnik. I cannot look any longer for a priest who will come to our hospital for the last rites. I may not tell you what to do. I did my job. I will communicate the outcome of this conversation to the dying man's family. I leave the rest to your conscience as a priest.' 'How will I get there?' the priest asked. 'We will send an ambulance to fetch you. It will be there in a dozen minutes or so.' The priest arrived at 3 o'clock in the morning" [Ambroziewicz 2016, p. 206-207].

"Zawada died at noon [...]. He died on the 39th day of the disease. [...]. In the hospital the atmosphere was gloomy and everybody cried. Not only Doctor Surowcowa, [...]" [Ambroziewicz 2016, p. 208].

3. Battle between biblical David and Goliath

When David faced Goliath, a warrior of the Philistine army, the situation was clear to him – he had to win. He had to, because the fate of all Israeli people and the life of many warriors who were afraid to fight face to face against Goliath depended on his victory. The Philistine wanted to win, but he did not have to in the sense applicable to David. Apparently, it is a subtle psychological difference, but in reality it is a significant one. Goliath was not only gigantic and strong, but, according to the records, he was also an experienced and efficient warrior, victorious in many battles. Seeing David in front of him – in the way David was “seen” in marble by Michael Angel several thousand years later – he was convinced of his victory and reviled his enemy [*Biblia...* 1986, 1 Sm, 17 (9-11)]. He made a fundamental mistake in this situation: overconfident about his size and physical strength he disregarded his opponent. His enemy was naked and almost defenceless. He held a sling in his hand and a shepherd’s bag was hanging on his shoulder with five smooth stones in it. Hence, he had just one kind of weapons, but he was a master in using it. He could not allow a hand-to-hand fight to take place – he would die crushed by muscular Goliath. Also he could not let it happen that Goliath is hit and wounded only, without knocking him down, as the wounded giant was also dangerous.

Therefore, it was necessary to knock him down before he was able to catch David. The height distinguishing Goliath, which in fights hand to hand was the terror of his adversaries and gave him the advantage, now, led to his failure. It is considerably more difficult to hit in the forehead with a sling stone a short and slim man than a tall gigantic warrior. They were standing face to face and David chose the only place which could be hit and which, when hit, could result in knocking down. Apparently, he risked a lot, since it is easier to hit the chest or belly than the forehead. Actually, he had no other way out of the situation, as Goliath had a scale armour and, apart from that, by only wounding Goliath, David would have no time for another slingshot. Even if he was given the time, his opponent, hit in any other place, would not stand in the position exposing his forehead. Besides, the effect of surprise would be gone, as Goliath did not expect such kind of attack [Rudnianski 1989, p. 141-145].

Therefore, David – against all appearances – was by no means in a situation worse than Goliath was, only owing to his careful planning of it. He risked a lot, however, he reduced the level of risk by his mastery of using a sling. He did not allow his opponent to use his strength, or even a part of it, and used Goliath’s notable height to his own advantage. And, finally, when he ran up to the knocked-down enemy, he killed him using Goliath’s own weapon, drawing the sword from the scabbard [Rudnianski 1989, p. 141-145].

The records of the Old Testament extensively inform the reader about David’s physical fitness preparations to act in extreme life-or-death combat situations. Before his fight with Goliath David talked to King Saul “Your servant used to keep his father’s sheep, and when a lion or a bear came and took a lamb out of the flock, I went after it, and struck it, and delivered the lamb from its mouth; and when it arose against me, I caught it by the beard and struck and killed it” [*Biblia...* 1986, 1 Sm, 17 (34-35)].

Considering the possibility of preparing adequately to fight to defend oneself and others (not necessarily armed combat), it is necessary to take account, apart from the means affecting the development of physical fitness and appropriate skills, of methods and means that have a direct influence on the development of the man's spiritual sphere. According to Jaroslaw Rudnianski "neither an individual nor a small team are defenceless when they have to face an adversary many times stronger than them. They are not defenceless even when the enemy's forces seem to be crushing. David won not because, or rather not only because, of his mastery of using a sling. He won mainly because he did not lose his courage and clarity of mind in the face of the stronger enemy. It should also be noted that David's attitude is devoid of emotions or at least he controls them without manifesting them. With his behaviour he exposes only his will to win and the precision in thought and action, which are the bases for any efficiency. Even more so in the case of efficiency in such a difficult action as a life-or-death combat with a stronger enemy. One of the conditions for success in a fight with a stronger enemy is what is commonly called coherence or moral strength (or spiritual power) of a team and of an individual [Rudnianski 1989, p. 144-145].

4. Antoni Zdrojewski's defensive combat²

The defensive combat operations of Antoni Zdrojewski, conducted during the Second World War, were of different nature. First of all, his combat lasted longer – several years – and it was undertaken in the form of underground operations to a large extent. Antoni Zdrojewski was many times in danger because he was betrayed by people from his closer and more distant environment. The elements of his biography and episodes of his actions described by Stanislaw Strumph-Wojtkiewicz suggest that he was well adjusted to cope with different situations of threat [Strumph-Wojtkiewicz 1970]. The events described by Strumph-Wojtkiewicz evidence Antoni Zdrojewski's, Major of the Polish Army, and, after the war, General Antoni Zdrojewski's great courage and valour. "[...] the temperament of Major Zdrojewski, a combat officer and excellent sportsman, was driving him to the right fields of combat". He also had other assets: his knowledge of the German language was excellent and he knew Germans, the Wehrmacht and Berlin style and manners, he completed the Polish staff studies and had a high level of intelligence, characteristic of artillery officers [Strumph-Wojtkiewicz 1970, p. 83-84].

„[...] arrested in Lyon, he managed to get out from the St. Paul's prison. Then, he followed the route of Hancza and his companions; like them, he made use of the <assistance> provided by the consul and, also like them, was placed in the Miranda de Ebro camp. And it was him who escaped, together with several other inmates, through a tunnel dug under the chapel" [Strumph-Wojtkiewicz 1970, p. 100]. "Major Zdrojewski would plunge into treacherous and dangerous abysses. At night 22/23 July 1943, while making a parachute jump onto the French area, Junosza, alias Father, alias Dan-

² Antoni Jozef Zdrojewski, nicknamed "Daniel", "Nestor" (born on 26 March 1900, in Skorzew in Kashubia, died on 13 May 1989 in Paris), officer of the Polish Army of the Second Polish Republic, the Polish Army in France and the Polish Armed Forces. In 1964, appointed Brigadier General by the President (in Exile) of the Polish Republic.

iel, alias Antoni Kalinka consoled himself [...]. [...] he thought he would not be alone: allies existed and had already managed – despite defeats – to organise themselves somehow” [Strumph-Wojtkiewicz 1970, p. 195-196]. In 1940, his character was aptly described by two commanders, the commander of the divisional artillery group and the commander of the 2nd Rifle Division. “[...] the former one emphasised in the formal opinion Major’s idealism and disinterestedness, his openness and splendid behaviour in combat [...]. The latter wrote in his opinion: I know Major Zdrojewski as an officer with a considerable temperament and great personal courage. As a brother-in-arms – sincere, as a subordinate – loyal, and as a commander – always taking care of his soldiers” [Strumph-Wojtkiewicz 1970, p. 223].

Further, Strumph-Wojtkiewicz describes Colonel Zdrojewski’s (year 1944) tremendous courage, composure and also shrewdness in the situation where the Gestapo organised a manhunt in the train in which he was going to Lyon. „[...] he was travelling, this time as Carlos de Costa, a naturalised Spaniard, contracted official of the Spanish embassy in Vichy. [...]. The check of the train – the Colonel guessed – but, after all, his ID documents were proven in practice several times already, so there was nothing to be worried about. [...]. The Gestapo searched the train from both ends at the same time, and it was a rather rough inspection, as at the first stop the Germans escorted a dozen or so people through the platform and placed the detained men in one of the carriages at the end of the express train. Looking at this scene incidentally, Zdrojewski came to the conclusion that all escorted men were more or less of the same height and age as himself. Apart from that, at the second station the ID documents of the passengers leaving the train were checked. Perhaps it was actually a manhunt? Perhaps it was about him” [Strumph-Wojtkiewicz 1970, p. 239-240]?

The Colonel believed, as always, in his lucky stars. Everything has to end well – he inwardly repeated his old maxim. His optimism was supported by a certain theory of his. “Remember – he would say – that between the moment you face your enemy and his intention or resolution there is always this fleeting fraction of a second before the enemy decides to arrest you or use his weapons. This opportunity has to be used instantly. It is a decisive moment when you can draw your gun, kick the enemy in the belly, jump through the window and the like. Generally, try to develop your reflex and keep it alert all the time. It should be an instantaneous reflex. Predators have it and among people: aviators, jockeys, and, first of all, talented boxers and fencers. You should also have this good reflex. In our job we have to be vigilant even when asleep, not to mention the time of action [...]. After all, it is better to die this way than while being tortured” [Strumph-Wojtkiewicz 1970, p. 241].

“Thus reasoning, he returned to his compartment [...]. Other passengers looked frightened and resigned [...]. He could rely on his reflex as a last resort, but meanwhile he lit a cigar and walked down the corridor to the end of the carriage. He stopped at the compartment with a stamped sticker with the information in two languages. Inside, a Wehrmacht officer, a colonel, was sitting alone and reading a newspaper. [...] Zdrojewski took a risk. Opening the door a crack, he used his excellent German: would you mind, Colonel, Sir? [...]. A slight gesture made by the German was reserved but rather

consenting, so the Pole came in, slid the door closed and sat down. [...]. In the adjacent compartment someone was talking, extensively and tearfully and another person was asking short tart questions. A wonderful country – Zdrojewski was talking – Burgundy actually is a vineyard hundreds of kilometres long. [...]. The check in the neighbouring carriage was finished, so it was time to act. [...]. Two Gestapo men appeared behind the glass pane in the door. One was inspecting the compartment and reading the sticker, while the other grasped the handle. Meanwhile, Zdrojewski, roaring with laughter, was familiarly patting the German's knee [...]. At that moment, the Gestapo man stopped in the door and looked with hesitance at his companion, who made a gesture suggesting not to bother them – the door slammed. They were left alone in the compartment and, finally, it was possible to become silent [...]" [Strumph-Wojtkiewicz 1970, p. 241-245].

General Chaban-Delmas, a military national delegate, who was entering into an agreement with Daniel, wrote aptly "We are not to decide about the diplomatic relations linking our countries after the war. But we will be able to recollect with emotions the relations between men, established secretly in the squares and streets guarded by the enemy, perhaps even more durable than they would be if they were started in the embassy rooms" [Strumph-Wojtkiewicz 1970, p. 250].

The hero presented by Strumph-Wojtkiewicz, subjected to many tests in different real life-threatening situations during the war, can be described objectively as earning the highest grade in each of these tests and having a permanent place in the memory of the people fighting with him side by side and cooperating with him, as an efficient and courageous man, valorous and deserving the highest respect.

Discussion

The analysis covered four different situations of threat, varying with respect to the type of threat, the period in which they took place and their effects, for both the people in danger and those bringing help. Two of them are located and described in *Pismo Swiete Starego i Nowego Testamentu*, while the other two take place in the contemporary time. The analysed situations of threat and the behaviours (ways of taking action) of the people involved in these situations evidence that both in the distant past and at present people were and are courageous and valorous. These situations also prove that courage is not manifested through declarations but through deeds which are noble and done without self-interest and which bring help to others. The Samaritan's help, brought without self-interest to the Jew, beaten and robbed by some thugs and accidentally encountered along the road, fits the above description. This deed deserves respect, and even the more so, since Samaritans were perceived by Israelites as cruel, merciless and devoid of any feelings. The Samaritan's behaviour commands the highest respect in the context of the indifference demonstrated by the priest and the Levite passing by the wounded man. These people enjoyed the privilege of performing services in the "God's houses" and were considered in their society to be pious and friendly.

An example of courage in the contemporary time shows the behaviour of the doctors and other people from the medical and assisting staff involved in suppressing the black smallpox epidemic in Wrocław, in 1963. The priest's behaviour is the episode selected from this battlefield, as it deserves a more detailed analysis. In his behaviour, given a slightly wider context, the complexity of human nature can be observed. During his phone call the priest was full of concern, comforted, admired and encouraged Doctor Surowcowa in her fight against the dangerous epidemic. This gesture should be positively assessed, however, it can be assumed that it was made from the position of feeling safe and the priest did not foresee a situation where the wife of the patient dying from the black smallpox would ask the doctors for a priest's visit. In this case the situation was not so unambiguous and obvious. Doctor Surowcowa, remembering the concern shown by the priest during the phone call, chose him to ask for coming to the isolated hospital in Szczodre and performing the last rites for the patient. It seems that the priest's first reaction (referring to another chaplain) could be explained as an instinctive behaviour, a defensive reflex in the face of a threat.

The priest's arrival and his contact with the contaminated person and environment (despite respecting the sanitary regime) was a potentially deadly threat. Therefore, in this respect, this situation may not be compared to the emphatic behaviour of the Samaritan, for whom bringing help did not entail such great personal risk, as in the priest's case. However, taking account of the measure of their humanity, both the Samaritan and the priest are examples of generosity and courage, because they did not have to help in the analysed situations. They would be both excused by their societies. Since the priest and the Levite indifferently passed by the wounded compatriot, he, the Samaritan, perceived as an enemy of Jews, could also behave in the same way, without any needless remorse of conscience. Also the priest, taking care of his own safety, which was a sufficient justification, could refuse to come, however, his moral responsibility prevailed. In the face of the patient's spiritual need – receiving the last sacrament – he managed to overcome the fear resulting from the deadly threat, arrived at the hospital and performed his service.

These two selected situations serve as a measurable example of the behaviour (action) of courageous people. Valour, perceived as a special kind of courage (courage in close combat), is manifested in slightly different situations. The term valour is used to describe the defensive behaviours (actions) of people in situations where somebody is threatened by physical aggression. Undoubtedly, both the Biblical David and Antoni Zdrojewski can be placed among valorous people.

David was not a warrior. He was the youngest of eight sons of Jesse, grazing his sheep and playing the harp, but, according to the Biblical records, he was a very adroit, accommodating and responsible youth. Therefore, he had no experience of warfare at the time when two armies approached each other, the Israeli warriors ready to fight and their bitter enemies, the Philistines. Goliath came forward out of the line and called towards the Israeli regiments "Choose a man for you, and let him come down to me. If he is able to fight with me and kill me, then we will be your slaves. But if I prevail against him and kill him, then you shall be our slaves and serve us" [*Biblia...* 1986,

1 Sm, 17 (8-9)]. With these words he insulted the Israeli warriors and frightened them. David was in the camp of the Israeli soldiers only because he was sent by his father with food for his brothers taking part in warfare. When he was in the camp he heard Goliath's hostile challenge to which none of the Israeli soldiers responded for forty days. David, despite his brothers' protests, appeared before Saul – the king of Israel and his master and declared "Let no man's heart fail because of him. Your servant will go and fight with this Philistine" [*Biblia...* 1986, 1 Sm, 17 (32)].

David defeated the Philistine with one slingshot, whereas for the forty preceding days none of the Israeli warriors, having experience of warfare, was able to vanquish him. The most irritating aspect of the situation was the fact that all of them lost their fighting spirit and none was able to stand up to the insulting challenges. In the case of David's heroic deed not only his fitness and mastery of using a sling played an important role, but also, or perhaps first of all, a great responsibility and confidence in his skills. David did not have to fight, but when he decided to do so, he had to win. There was no other option, because the freedom of the people of Israel depended solely on his victory.

Valour at a different time and in other situations could be observed in the wartime history of Major, and, in the final stage of the Second World War, Colonel Antoni Zdrojewski. His love for freedom, honesty, self-discipline, responsibility for others, fitness, intelligence and reflex are just some of the characteristics that show his courage and valour. Zdrojewski's valour shown in the wartime was noticed and appreciated not only by his companions and subordinates, but also by the authorities of France, Great Britain and the Polish Republic (in exile) after the war.

What is characteristic in the actions taken by the Biblical David and Antoni Zdrojewski is their standing up to defend others, fighting for a fair cause, fighting with the evil and fighting for the freedom of others. They involve in combat the effects of which can be experienced and assessed, also from a historical perspective, as positive.

On the basis of the situations and behaviours of the people involved in them presented in this paper and also by analysing different kinds of common contemporary threats and heroic deeds of some people, it can be stated, to a high level of probability, that people bringing help to others or standing up to defend them behave like this, because such is their nature. There are no particular social determinants that distinguish them from others, apart from the determinants that prevent the desire to help others and stand up for them from being suppressed [Tec 1986]. It seems that the striving for truth and justice, and towards the goodness, which is the best and most beautiful thing in the man, is deeply rooted in them. In situations of threat such people can focus and put into action their inherent ideals, knowledge and skills, and use them effectively for noble purposes.

Conflict of interests

The author declared no conflict of interests.

Author contributions

Author contributed to the interpretation of results and writing of the paper. Author read and approved the final manuscript.

Ethical statement

The research complies with all national and international ethical requirements.

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