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Original Theoretical Research



Philosophical Analysis of the Hero Image in Soviet Memorial Art

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Abstract

Introduction. The relevance of study is dictated by the tense global socio-political situation, which has caused the need for spiritual unity of the citizens of the Russian Federation. The purpose of this study is to conduct a philosophical analysis of the hero image in Soviet memorial art. The author sets and solves the following tasks: to describe the image of the hero in the memorial art of different eras; to identify the characteristic features of the image of the hero in Soviet memorial art; to list the symbols depicted on Soviet monuments to the heroes of the revolution and war; to indicate the reasons for the need to preserve existing memorials and install new ones to foster patriotic feelings in Russian youth.

Materials and Methods. Historical, descriptive, comparative methods are used as methods of scientific research. The works of historians, art historians, cultural figures, prominent Russian and foreign philosophers serve as materials for scientific research.

Results. The main features of the Russian hero's character reflected in iconography and Soviet memorial art are highlighted, as well as the main symbols of Victory depicted on memorials dedicated to the heroes of the Great Patriotic War. The study of the image of the hero, formed in the Soviet memorial art, embodied not only in the monuments installed in the streets and squares of settlements of the Russian Federation, but also numerous monuments located on the territories of Russian pogosts, based on philosophical, art history and historical sources. The results stress the importance of preserving memorials of the past and present, of installing new monuments to the heroes of modern Russia, participants of revolutionary and military events for modern Russian youth.

Discussion and Conclusion. The history of the hero image formation in the consciousness of the ancient Greeks and ancient Romans, as well as medieval man is studied. Emphasis is placed on the description of the image of the hero, developed in the art of the New and Modern times, special attention is paid to the formation of the category of 'courage'. The article presents the thoughts of writers and cultural figures on the further development of memorial art in the post-Soviet space, and emphasises an optimistic view of the education of patriotism through the involvement of Russian youth in memorial art.

Keywords: hero, courage, monument, symbol, art, memorial, youth

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Оригинальное теоретическое исследование

Философский анализ образа героя в советском мемориальном искусстве

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Аннотация

Введение. Актуальность исследования продиктована напряженной мировой социально-политической обстановкой, вызвавшей потребность в духовном сплочении граждан Российской Федерации. Целью данного исследования

является проведение философского анализа образа героя в советском мемориальном искусстве. Автор ставит перед собой и решает следующие задачи: описание образа героя в мемориальном искусстве разных эпох; выявление характерных черт образа героя в советском мемориальном искусстве; перечисление символики, изображаемой на советских памятниках героям революции и военных действий; указание причин необходимости сохранения имеющихся мемориалов и установки новых для воспитания патриотических чувств у российской молодежи.

Материалы и методы. В качестве методов научного исследования применяются исторический, описательный, сравнительный методы. Материалами научного исследования служат работы историков, искусствоведов, деятелей культуры, выдающихся российских и зарубежных философов.

Результаты исследования. Выделяются основные черты характера русского героя, получившие отражение в иконописи, советском мемориальном искусстве, перечисляются основные символы Победы, изображенные на мемориалах, посвященных героям Великой Отечественной войны. Проводится исследование образа героя, сложившегося в советском мемориальном искусстве, получившем воплощение не только в памятниках, установленных на улицах и площадях населенных пунктов Российской Федерации, но и многочисленных памятников, расположенных на территориях российских погостов, основываясь на философских, искусствоведческих и исторических источниках. Определяется целесообразность сохранения мемориалов прошлого и настоящего, обозначается важность установки новых памятников героям современной России, участникам революционных и военных событий для современной российской молодежи.

Обсуждение и заключение. Исследуется история формирования образа героя в сознании древних греков и древних римлян, а также средневекового человека. Делается акцент на описании образа героя, сложившемся в искусстве Нового и Новейшего времени, особое внимание уделяется формированию категории «мужество». Приводятся мысли писателей и деятелей культуры о дальнейшем ходе развития мемориального искусства на постсоветском пространстве, подчеркивается оптимистический взгляд на воспитание патриотизма через приобщение российской молодежи к мемориальному искусству.

Ключевые слова: герой, мужество, памятник, символ, искусство, мемориал, молодежь

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Introduction. The death of a hero and the rite of their burial have played a great role throughout the history of mankind. The details of funeral rites and tombstones differed depending on the historical epoch, belonging to one or another religious denomination and social group. But the heroic death and burial of a hero have acquired a particularly reverent attitude in different peoples of the world over time.

According to modern Russian philosophers N.S. Ishchenko and E.A. Zaslavskaya, ‘comprehension of death and its ritualisation create constants of cultural space formation’ [1, p. 64]. Russian philosophers of the past and present have recognised and continue to recognise the high significance of the burial ceremony in Russian culture. Thus, the Russian philosopher of the late 19th century N.F. Fedorov defined man as a ‘burial creature’, and the modern Russian philosopher A.V. Demichev called tombstones ‘the first signs of culture’, ‘the first measurements of time’ [2, p. 17].

In addition to memorials, the ‘cultural memory’ of heroes and their deeds can be expressed in archiving documents, collecting art objects and antiques. Although, according to the German philosopher J.F. Reemstm, only a small part of society is interested in questions about the purpose of memorials and their fate.

Materials and methods. The research was based on the works of famous Russian historians and art historians D.I. Antonov, I.A. Antonova, L.F. Voloshinova, cultural historians and philosophers O. Matic, Y.B. Borev, N.S. Ischenko, E.A. Zaslavskaya, as well as photographer and traveller A. Kotov. The research applied general scientific methods: descriptive, comparative, deductive and inductive methods, method of analysis and synthesis, as well as historical method.

Results. Given the above, it should be noted that in different nations the image of the hero had similar features, which was associated with the recognition of courage as one of the main moral qualities of men. Since antiquity, the image of the hero has received its expression in memorial art in the form of creation of triumphal arches and statues. The ancient Greeks and Romans erected memorials in honour of rulers and athletes, but the heroic deeds committed in war were the most revered.

The image of the hero was expressed in the fine arts and fiction of the Middle Ages. In Modern times, the theme of heroism became one of the leading themes in sculpture. In Modern times the character traits of the hero were adopted by Soviet art from the art of Ancient Russia, the religious character was replaced by a secular one. Soviet monuments to heroes had common features, among which were simplicity of form, bulkiness, a high pedestal and the presence of civic and patriotic symbols. These features were given to them in order to demonstrate the great importance of feats and merits to the Fatherland. The most common symbols on Soviet memorials to heroes were: military insignia (Order of the Patriotic War) and ideological symbols (red star, sickle and hammer) and military symbols (eternal flame, St George’s ribbon, carnations, military helmet).

However, with the collapse of the Soviet Union, the hero's character traits were partially forgotten, so the image of the hero in modern Russia is in the process of formation. Its revival is promoted by the preservation of existing monuments and the installation of new memorials to our defenders of the Fatherland.

Discussion and conclusion. The first monuments to heroes appeared in Ancient Greece. Ancient Greeks sang about heroes and their deeds in myths, because the manifestation of bravery in ancient Greek culture was recognised as one of the main virtues, and the manifestation of cowardice as the main vice. The most famous ancient myths about heroes are the myths of Aeneas, Theseus, Achilles, and the legends of Spartacus and Paris.

In the culture of ancient Greece there was a difference between the perception of the death of an ordinary Hellene and the perception of the death of a Hellene who committed a heroic deed: '... in the ancient archaic, the death of a prominent citizen (like the death of the ancient Egyptian pharaoh) is articulated with the pathos of heroic immortality, while the death of an ordinary Greek was perceived as an absolute disappearance and, moreover, associated with danger and defilement...' [2, p. 31]. In case of special merits before fellow citizens, the hero's grave was located on the agora.

During the existence of Ancient Rome, the idea of heroism was developed in monumental art, the purpose of creating memorials was to influence the broad masses of citizens. The art of Ancient Rome borrowed the theme of heroism from the art of Ancient Greece: 'the Greeks created really images for all times' [3, p. 137]. Ancient Romans depicted rulers, generals and athletes in the form of statues of gods. Thus, the Roman Emperor Augustus was depicted in the form of the god of war Mars. In addition to sculptural structures, arches were dedicated to the feats of heroes. An example of such a construction is the Arch of Titus, erected in honour of the victory over Jerusalem. According to museologist I.A. Antonova: 'The theme of heroism was little developed in the epoch of republican Rome, but it rose to its full height at the moment when Rome began to turn into an empire' [ibid].

The theme of heroism in the Middle Ages remained as popular in art as it had been in antiquity, as bravery continued to be recognised as the most important moral quality of a man. At this time, a new class, chivalry, appeared in Europe: 'For the hero of the Middle Ages, the world is both wider and narrower than for the Greek. The knight travels more often, more and further than the Greek' [4, p. 319]. The knight demonstrates his bravery not only by fighting in war, but also by taking part in jousting tournaments. Christianity had a great influence on the image of the hero in medieval art. Martyrdom for the faith was perceived as an act of heroism.

In the Renaissance era, a new idea of heroism emerged, which went from a national phenomenon to a global phenomenon. Characterising the image of the hero in the art of the Renaissance, philosopher Yu.B. Borev wrote: 'The world of Hamlet, Othello, Romeo is equal to the real existing and fits all, together with its beauty and imperfections, good and evil in the multifaceted and titanic soul of these heroes' [4, p. 319]. In addition, at this time there is a change of moral and ethical ideas about the ideal man. I.A. Antonova says that the image of the hero was especially demanded in this era. The most striking examples of sculptural depiction of the hero are the works of Donatello 'Saint George' and Michelangelo 'David'. In Modern times the interest in the theme of heroism is as high as in previous epochs, which was connected with the development of weaponry, which caused the growth of military threat. According to the theologian P. Tillich, the art of the New Age embodied the feelings of anxiety of Europeans.

The theme of heroism was one of the traditional themes of Russian art. The image of the hero acquired specific features in Russian iconography. According to the historian D.I. Antonov, the image of the hero on Russian icons had a number of peculiarities: dishevelled hair indicated sinfulness, a fringed cap with down meant a high origin, arms crossed on the chest symbolised death or asceticism. The common character traits of the heroes depicted on Russian icons were: humility, modesty, honesty, selflessness, selflessness and humanity.

The emergence of the young Soviet Republic in the 20th century radically changed the way of life of citizens, but did not change the moral and ethical image of the hero. Despite the Soviet government's longstanding struggle with religion, most of the character traits of the Soviet hero were adopted from the Christian culture of ancient Russia. The main character traits of the heroes depicted on Soviet monuments were: bravery, honesty, respect for the history of their people, nobility, modesty and unselfishness. Soviet memorial art, in addition to the character of the depicted heroes, was characterised by the presence of special symbols. The most common symbols on monuments to the heroes of the Great Patriotic War, propaganda posters, and paintings depicting Soviet soldiers were the following: the red star, the St George's Ribbon, the sickle and hammer, the eternal flame, carnations, and the military helmet; less frequently, military awards, such as the Order of the Patriotic War, were depicted.

War memorials and artworks of the Soviet era were characterised by the synthesis of these elements. These symbols, unlike those painted on icons, had no religious connotation and their content was of a civic and patriotic nature. The image of the hero in the memorials was complemented by a high pedestal erected to demonstrate the progress and greatness of the Soviet people, as well as the significance of the feat. According to the contemporary writer S. Nosov, a pedestal can 'outlive' the monument erected on it, in the sense that the pedestal of one monument can become a pedestal for another monument. For example, from the pedestal of the monument to Alexander III in St. Petersburg after the revolution were

made 3 pedestals: to the composer N.A. Rimsky-Korsakov and two heroes of the Soviet Union. Transfer of a monument from one grave to another is called recirculation. For example, in 1966 in Rostov-on-Don there was a transfer of some monuments from Vsekhsvyatskoye cemetery to Bratskoye cemetery.

In other words, the scale of the memorial depended on the hero's merits to the Soviet people and the world as a whole. Monuments to the heroes of the Great Patriotic War could be tanks, aeroplanes, military vehicles, large-calibre guns and other military equipment, as well as some of its parts, such as the wing of an aeroplane, the wheel or rudder of a military vehicle, and machine gun belts. For ideological and socio-economic reasons, these monuments were not characterised by a variety of artistic solutions. For example, in the city of Rostov-on-Don, the graves of the heroes of the Soviet Union, as well as heroes-pioneers: Sasha Chebanov, Kolya Kizim, Igor Neigof, Vitya Protsenko, Kolya Sidorenko, Vanya Zyatin are currently located in the 'Bratskoye cemetery'. The tombstones have similar features, including simplicity of forms ('accessibility for mass understanding'), and bulkiness. For example, the memorial to Sasha Chebanov is '...a symbolic burial in the form of a rough stone with an inscription' [5]. According to the Belarusian writer M.V. Adamchik, in the period 1930–1950, Soviet art '... became illustrative and straightforward ('understandable'), losing the fullness, complexity and versatility of expressive means. Propaganda could only use realistic sculpture and painting – art forms 'understandable to the masses'. They formed the basis of the method of socialist realism formed under the control of the state' [6, p. 481]. Memorial to Sasha Chebanov is a cenotaph, which were a frequent phenomenon during and after the Great Patriotic War. In addition to memorials dedicated to the heroes of the Great Patriotic War, in Soviet times there are monuments erected in honour of the heroes of the revolution and political leaders, cosmonauts, as well as outstanding figures of science and culture.

According to the culturologist O. Matic, the purpose of memorials is, on the one hand, to reconstruct the lives and exploits of the fallen for future generations, while on the other hand, memorials fulfil the function of preserving the memory of the witnesses of the events in honour of which they were erected. However, one of the most important purposes of erecting memorials is to educate the younger generation, to instill in them those moral qualities that were characteristic of the heroes of Soviet times, namely: bravery, honesty, respect for the history of their people, nobility and modesty. According to the philosopher A.V. Demichev, 'the cemetery for the Soviet man became a way of life: the heroic life of the fathers, which turned into an absolute model for subsequent generations' [7, p. 161]. According to the German historian and theorist of cultural memory A. Assmann, the cultural memory of the people contributes to the emergence of prerequisites for the formation of collective identity and includes the individual memory of specific people.

Another goal of memorial preservation facing Russian politicians, public figures and educators is the formation of civic identity among modern Russian youth. German historian and theorist of cultural memory A. Assmann notes the existence of scholars who do not recognise the existence of memorial culture because of their conviction that there is no phenomenon of collective memory. Another function that memorials fulfil today is the development of critical thinking and the ability for self-analysis in the younger generation.

The collapse of the Soviet Union gave impetus to the further development of monumental art. Changes in people's lives caused the transformation of the idea of the hero, whose image became more blurred. The moral qualities that were attributed to the heroes of the Soviet era have been forgotten. However, domestic scientists tend to an optimistic view of the revival of moral qualities of the Soviet man, taking into account modern realities: 'Honouring heroes has always been everywhere. It is today, and this means that after the period of deheroisation, which we are experiencing now, there will certainly come a time when again in different kinds of art, including painting and sculpture, will appear images of heroic man' [3, p. 186].

A. Kotov, a contemporary Russian traveller, calls the Soviet people 'a nation of heroes'. The author creates a book dedicated to the description of Soviet monuments, including monuments erected in memory of the participants of the Great Patriotic War. According to A. Kotov, 'monuments are not just a reminder of a person, an event, but also form an attitude towards them, moreover, it is a kind of sign of power. It signifies presence and forms identity. The monument declares: this is our land' [8, p. 8].

Today in Russia, the problem of preserving the memory of soldiers who died a heroic death worries not only politicians, but also civilians, comrades-in-arms and relatives of heroes of the past and present, as well as people saved by them.

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