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**IRONY AND HUMOR IN THE LAUGHTER PRACTICES OF JAMES ALFRED WHITE (JAMES HERRIOT)**

**Stoliar Maryna Borysivna**

Doctor of Sciences in Philosophy, Professor of the Department of Philosophy and Cultural Studies  
T. H. Shevchenko National University "Chernihiv Colehium"  
Chernihiv, Ukraine  
stolar61@ukr.net

**Bohun Mykola Oleksandrovych**

PhD in Philosophy, Associate Professor of the Department of Philosophy and Cultural Studies  
T. H. Shevchenko National University "Chernihiv Colehium"  
Chernihiv, Ukraine  
nbogun@dnet.com.ua

**Introduction.** The beginning of the 21st century brought many anxieties, problems and tragedies to the life of Europeans, in particular Ukrainians. First, the Covid pandemic, which forced a large number of people to remain in self-isolation or work remotely, severed direct contacts, which escalated people's sense of loneliness. Social ties have weakened within civil society. Economic problems have increased the feeling of insecurity even more. The widespread results of the impending environmental catastrophe have forced even children to go on the streets and demand decisive action from the leadership of the most developed industrial countries of the world. In the context of the processes of redistribution of spheres of political influence, geopolitical contradictions between states have become extremely heated. In Europe, after 77 years of peace, war broke out again. Thousands of Ukrainians lost their homes, several million became refugees. The war spares neither children, nor the disabled, nor the elderly...

The listed phenomena could not but affect the general psychological atmosphere, which is characterized by an increase in the aggressiveness of people, an increase in the number of socially inadequate personalities, the multiplication of various phobias, the youth's rejection of demographic meaningful life values, the widespread distribution of eschatological quotations and allusions in all spheres of culture, etc.

In this situation, we turn to the analysis of the work of a talented prose writer, an outstanding veterinarian, a courageous and witty man James Alfred Wight, known under the pseudonym of James Herriot. His books, written in far from great times (pre-war poverty and unemployment, the Second World War and serious post-war problems), today, from our point of view, are the source of kindness, love, humor and optimism that we all urgently need.

**The purpose of the work:** to explore the features of classical English humor on the example of the work of James Herriot. Analyze his use of humor and satire as a means of affirming the human spirit in situations of severe physical and psychological stress. Reveal the concept of the meaning of life of James Herriot and try to explain the reasons for his amazing vitality and optimism.

**Materials and methods.** In our study, we use such paradigms for explaining the phenomenon of laughter as the theory of A. Bergson (static thinking as the cause of laughter) [1], the heterogeneous theory of S. Proleev [3], theories of inconsistency (incongruence) and superiority, the methodological tools of which help us to understand the specifics of James Herriot's humor and irony. The empirical material in this case is the dialogues, and more often the author's internal monologues in situations of misunderstanding or even conflict between the main character and the owners of his patients or employer. As for the theory of consolation, it is practically not applicable here, since the author finds consolation in the contemplation of beautiful nature and, above all, in the successful healing of an animal that was at risk of death, but not in laughter.

**Results and discussions.** Speaking of the sense of humor that permeates the books of James Herriot, we must remember that we are dealing with typically English humor in a rather atypical and rare field of application – veterinary medicine. It can be said that James Herriot made a peculiar breakthrough when he opened the veterinary practice to the warm breezes of laughter blowing around it, as opposed to the harsh natural conditions of the Yorkshire hills, in which he had to work all his life. And this can be considered a manifestation of a purely English approach to laughter, as the British are known to love to find the comic in any, even sad and difficult situation [2].

To do this was doubly, and even triply difficult, since the owners of Herriot's patients, for the most part, were completely deprived of a sense of humor, which in a certain way casts doubt on the statement that humor is inherent in all the British without exception. The life of the inhabitants of the Yorkshire hills, filled with hard work, was harsh and sometimes cruel. Obviously, the farmers were, as a rule, not laughing.

On the other hand, the veterinarian in his practice faced a very impressive "negative". In the scope of this concept, it is necessary, first of all, to introduce the rudeness, avarice, spiritual callousness of some farmers. The second component of this negative was exhausting labor in conditions completely unsuitable for providing veterinary care with a corresponding risk to health. And in the case of helping large farm animals, it is a risk to life.

However, it is more correct to consider mentioned factors as ambivalent, and not exclusively negative in relation to the possibility of laughter practices. The lack of a sense of humor among the owners of Herriot's furry patients all the more gives reason to resort to purely British humor or irony, when the communication of two "gentlemen" (in this case, the author and reader) is completely not understood by the farmers of the Yorkshire hills [British humor]. In contrast to the lack of understanding of humor or irony, on the one hand, and the unique sense of humor of the author, who knows how to laugh at himself and look at the situation from the outside, a friendly sympathy between the reader and the author is formed, which largely includes laughter discourse. These friendly relations, which united Herriot and many of his readers around the world, introduced the latter to purely English humor, making it once again the property of global heritage.

Connoisseurs of British laughter culture claim that the whole mode of life of the British is riddled with irony [4]. Irony is a kind of philosophy of the British, which allows them to rise above trifles, bustle, troubles, and fears, brighten up everyday life and constantly develop their intellect. And this statement is perfectly demonstrated on the material of J. Herriot's work. Reliving difficult situations in his practice, the author softens their negativity through warm humor (if we are talking about the qualities of character and behavior of ordinary farmers) or irony (if among them are malicious egoists, heartless people and just very stingy people). In some cases, the author's remarks border on sarcasm if his opponents are impenetrably rude and unpleasant people. But even in such situations, the possibility of "transforming" these characters remains open. And in some cases, they use this opportunity, revealing the hidden positive side of their character.

However, some of Herriot's heroes, as carriers of more primitive, physiological laughter, also contributed to the development of laughter reflections in the young veterinarian. Let them not understand the ironic hints of the latter addressed to them, but they gave vent to their feelings when he fell face down into the manure, received a powerful hoof strike in a causal place, or gained incredible speed, running away from a huge bull. But "the British are very fond of when a person knows how to laugh at himself" [4]. And such a person is doubly respected when he can laugh at himself in those situations when his fear and pain became the subject of laughter for the audience.

Of particular note is the optimism of the author. When we talk about laughter practices, we do not necessarily mean the presence of sound expressions of laughter (ha-ha-ha). Especially when it comes to the English culture of laughter, within which the laughter discourse can be realized while maintaining the full seriousness of its carriers. Feelings of joy, gratitude to God, joyful surprise at the various manifestations of life made by the Creator are also an important aspect of Herriot's laughter practices. Here laughter is present as a phenomenon of a spiritual order, as “laughing about”, that is, as pure joy without the negative addition of “laughing at” specific people.

**Findings.** Thus, the work of J. Herriot can be considered, on the one hand, as a manifestation of typical English humor. On the other hand, the author demonstrates appropriate humor on atypical material of veterinary practice. Conflict situations in this area give him the opportunity to use the tools of irony and even sarcasm. An important aspect of Herriot's laughter practices is the presence of spiritual laughter as an expression of gratitude to God, revealing joy and optimism, despite the extremely difficult life situations that the author finds himself in.

#### Literature:

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