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**ESSAY**

**Emotions and rationalization as cultural components of identities**

Abstract

The emotional component of social and economic behavior is widely discussed in cultural studies nowadays. The classic economic theory is based on the principles of rationality and its specific characteristics: calculability, efficiency, maximization and so on. This project analyses the opposition between emotional and rational models of behavior; but also tries to answer the question in what way they supplement each other.

Introduction

In recent times people became interested in such themes as “The experience society” and emotions as a part of it. An emotional man is opposed to a rational man. The last construct his actions on rational principles that close him with a mechanism. They are based on economic principles like utility maximization and regulated by special rules. Emotions are first of all some kind of inner feeling, experience. That is why it is not so easy for analyzing.

Rational systems (according to George Ritzer) are based on the following principles: efficiency, calculability, predictability – standardized and uniform services, control, cultural hybridization and irrationality of rationality. So one always knows what he or she will get from these McDonalized forms. Emotions, aesthetics appears when we stop solving external problems and move to our internal needs. We have a number of possibilities and make our own choice. The experience we get is unique and in some way extraordinary. What is also should be noted is that it is me and not the standardized systems that value what I got.

At the same time there is a process of speaking about emotions in terms of economy. Everyone can buy emotions. How – is another question. You pay some money for a ticket to a museum or a concert and there you are to get emotions. You know how many you should pay, but you cannot be sure how much and what kind of emotions it will be.

Money invades almost every sphere of our life. One finds it where earlier it was impossible to think about. For example, intimate relationship. Moreover money can become a means of creating or developing social ties.

*McDonaldization* is a reconceptualization of rationalization, or moving from traditional to rational modes of thought, and scientific management.

*Rationality* is a human behavior that is independent of emotions and personal feelings and makes objective, logical and mechanical analysis.

*The experience society (“Erlebnisgesellschaft”)* is a theory by Gerhard Schulze based on the changes in consumer behavior focused on the internal needs.

Rational systems and McDonaldization as a form of rationalization

Rationalization is a process that starts in one point and then spreads on every sphere of human`s life. At certain moment of history traditions, values and emotions become not important and even harmful as a motivation for this type of behavior. Rationalization is a nature of modern Western societies.

Max Weber in his work “The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism” presents this term connecting religion and economics. We live under the rule of rational-legal systems that go far from a real man with his or her feelings and unpredictable behavior.

Rationalization can also be found in the form of the Holocaust. Zygmunt Bauman in his book “Modernity and the Holocaust” writes that the Holocaust took place not accidently when it really did. This means that Modernity creates a figure of a stranger, and these strangers are the Jews. The stranger is outside of society and is an object of fear.

But where we face rationalization today, what refers to us? Maybe consumption is the top practice of this process. Fast-food restaurants deal with high speed and total efficiency in whole, that is in contrast with inefficient home food preparation. This rationalization also spreads on people, fast-food industry control its worker`s actions and even consumers`. You cannot use your imagination or creativity – that is strictly forbidden.

George Ritzer calls the general process of rationalization, McDonaldization. He recognizes five main components in it: efficiency, calculability, predictability, control and irrationality of rationality.

“McDonaldization is the process by which the principles of the fast-food restaurant are coming to dominate more and more sectors of American society, as well as of the rest of the world”[[1]](#footnote-1).

Efficiency is the best possible way to get what one wants. This category is double-sided because employees and customers are regulated by various norms, rules and procedures. Calculability deals with time and the quantity of fast-food portions. A customer, for instance, should spend in a restaurant as little time as possible. And the surroundings help him or her with it: loud music, bright colors, uncomfortable furniture and so on. Predictability means that we know what we will find when we come and we go to McDonalds because we are sure of the result. This society is under a strong control that is made mostly by non-human technologies. Finally, irrationality of rationality is a paradox when these four principles do not work. In the end this is followed by dehumanization.

The process of commercialization is also very important in modern societies. It has its aim of increasing sales. The cultural aspect transforms, the presence of subjective value becomes unnecessary because what really matters is the monetary or objective value.

Rationalization spreads further, for instance, on human body and education. There is an image of an attractive body that is created by exercise, dieting, medicine. From another hand – by clothes, haircut, perfume. In the sphere of education multiple choice testing that measures students with numbers is widely used.

The Experience society theory («Erlebnisgesellschaft»)

The Experience society is opposed to McDonaldization. This means that the 5 basic components of the rationalization process do not work here. In this society a person acts according to his or her inner feelings and emotions. Moreover they are willing to get a new experience that would be unique, interesting and special.

There is an alternative, a person can make his or her own choice. They look for impressions but they are not easy to find. First, because there is no one possible answer, one standard solution. Second, emotions cannot be fully repeated or reproduced – they are something more than just a number of actions before. Experience does not have an objective value and it is not a product that is always the same.

For example, there is a practice of going to live concerts of classical music. This characterizes the experience society. A person has a choice: stay at home and listen to a record with the same concert or pay much more money and listen to a live performance. We chose the second one because we perceive the art being at the same time in a same place, getting real emotions and being a part of a unique event.

Gerhard Schulze says that money is not so important as time and attention.

The role of money in social relationships

Viviana Zelizer in her book “The Social Meaning of Money: “Special Monies” writes that money is not a neutral means of exchange.

First, our attitude to money depends on the way we get them. If it takes us much time and we do hard work, then money will be spent not so fast as it can be. Second, the form of money determines our attitude and readiness to spend them. For instance, paying by credit card is such a way that makes the procedure of buying and selling fast and easy: we do not even have money physically.

In the sphere of money exchange we find some things, human skills, relationships that earlier were sacral but not rational. This happens with the development of Capitalism. So, new forms of money appear with new situations to spend.

V. Zelizer looks at the market as a field of social relationships and cultural values. In her book she writes that almost every social environment has various forms of relationship: from impersonal to intimate, from short to long. So differ symbols, practices and means of exchange. Money in such case can become a constructer of a relationship.

“There is a plurality of different kinds of monies; each special money is shaped by a particular set of cultural and social factors and is thus qualitatively distinct. Market money does not escape extraeconomic influences but is in fact one type of special money, subject to particular social and cultural influences”[[2]](#footnote-2).

V. Zelizer does not agree with the popular opinion that money destroys personal relationships or makes them rational.

Economic and intimate relationships

We find money everywhere, in every sphere of our life. In a book "The Purchase of Intimacy" V. Zelizer analyses the situations when the two fields – economics (impersonal) and close, personal relationships cross. People usually believe that they should be separated, because if not, they impact each other negatively. In result we have inefficient economy and degradation in intimate relationship.

But V. Zelizer focuses an attention of the reader on the fact that they often mingle and moreover sustain and complement each other. “People lead connected lives, and plenty of economic activity goes into creating, defining, and sustaining social ties”[[3]](#footnote-3). So she denies the point of view that market threatens intimate relationship.

What does intimate relationship mean? According to V. Zelizer we find 2 components in them: knowledge (secrets, rituals) and attention (support), which are available only within this relationship. What is also important is the presence of trust. These personal relationships can be between from parent-child, siblings and close friends to lawyer-client, boss-secretary and hairdresser-customer.

We live in a world that is not divided into segregated spheres of economic transactions, from one hand, and intimate relations from another. The barriers between them are variable.

Conclusion

A human being has two sides: rational and emotional. They are very often contradict each other. A pure rational man is a good organizer because he or she works like a watch, nothing irrational can ever disturb them. Logically, a pure emotional man cannot work in a traditional way at all.

But in fact we cannot find the demonstration only one of the sides. In these terms economics with money in the centre (as a rational side) and close, personal, intimate relationships have something in common.

People used to think about the two spheres as being hostile to each other. The four components of rationalization: efficiency, calculability, predictability, control are on the one side. And the presence of emotions can only make harm.

But in real life we mix these parts and they influence each other. Moreover, money is used as a means to create a desired type of relationship, an intimate relationship, if it is desired.

Bibliography

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1. Ritzer G. The McDonaldization thesis, 1996. P. 293. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Zelizer V. “The Social Meaning of Money: “Special Monies”. 1989. P. 351. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Zelizer V. The Purchase of Intimacy. 2005. P. 2. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)