Factors Influencing Psychosocial Communication in the Reason/Emotion Society

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Abstract

It is a fact that, in the course of time, the human mind has altered the evolution of civilization significantly. At the same time, it is also a fact that, in the clash between reason and emotions, the latter will prevail. Hence, society can be perceived in a twofold manner. On one hand, there is the world of reason, and, on the other hand, there is a world governed by emotions, incapable of prompt responses and overcoming limit situations. Often, emotions “shake” existing mechanisms and perceptions and lead to a fragile society, which is incessantly attempting at reshaping, rebuilding, interacting with its social agents, likely to assume more appropriate roles according to their abilities and skills. Nevertheless, communication is essential of human nature, and it is made possible through reason and emotions. It is precisely this balanced blend of reason and emotions that forges a true multicultural diversity. The present paper aims at analyzing the human personality as revealed by reason and emotions and the corresponding external factors prone to sustain and alter the social agents. The identification of psychosocial factors shaping the personality profile of young schoolchildren and students will help them capitalize on the reason/emotion competences to be applied to the social environment.

Keywords: communication, agency, positive/negative emotions

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1. Rationale

With regard to the literature of sociology and philosophy and current researches in the field, the relationship between reason and emotions has brought about a cross-disciplinary approach, including psychology, history of philosophy, metaphysics, social philosophy, politics, philosophy of agency, philosophy of mind, philosophy of religion etc.

It is noteworthy the previous researches in the field that would debate on the reason-emotion relation in the light of Locke’s distinction between reason and faith. He defines reason as the discovery of the certainty and probability of propositions and truths whereas faith is a valid means for acquiring knowledge. On the other hand, they would address Kant’s distinction between knowledge (Wissen), conviction (Mainung) and opinion (Glaube) (cf. http://publicreason.ro/argument.php, viewed on 28.03.2013). To sum up, reason based on knowledge is considered scientific knowledge (since metaphysics has been rejected as obsolete). Apart from these concept frameworks, according to which reason is opposed to faith, the present researches on philosophy have shown a growing interest in studying the reason-emotion relation. As a consequence, by emotion we understand the beliefs, the perceptions of the world, ideologies and moral systems. Likewise, emotions are equated to opinions.

Richard Strawson, Donald Davidson, van Fraassen, Jerry Fodor, W.v.O.Quine, David Papineau have all addressed rationality in the light of various opinions and attitudes that may build upon language and reason. Moreover, the theory of rational choice and economic rationality has been dealt with by Keneth Arow, Robert Axelrod, Brian Barry, Anthony Downs, Jon Elster, James M. Buchanan, Mancur Olson (cf.http://publicreason.ro/argument.php, viewed on 28.03.2013).

Reason and rationality can be defined by means of norms. To be rational implies acting by norms, an approach which is the concern of the following philosophers: John Rawls, Jürgen Habermas, Michael Sandel, Alasdair MacIntayre, Charles Taylor, Richard Rorty, Hillary Putnam, Michael Walzer (cf.http://publicreason.ro/argument.php, viewed on 28.03.2013).

In the light of the Illuminist approach, reason is the springboard for scientific knowledge (coined as a cause-effect type of knowledge) which, further, assists in understanding the laws of nature, fostering social progress.

According to the Postmodern paradigm, reality is a cultural structure based on our perceptions, ideas and agency. We create reality through our experiences and imagination.

All these paradigms and philosophical approaches have laid the bases for several movements, such as the feminist one, directed at “changing existing power relations between women and men in society, power that permeates all areas of life: family, education, politics, work, culture, free time” (Weedon, 1992, pg.1). The so-called power relations, the way society is organized, the roles both genders must assume, all this addresses a social structure likely to be altered and redefined.

Essential to the situationist movement (1957) is the attempt to promote cultural freedom in everyday life. Its primary concern is the progressively increasing tendency towards the expression and mediation of social relations through directly lived experiences, towards the construction of situations and moments of life deliberately constructed for the purpose of pursuing authentic desires, experiencing the feeling of life and adventure and the liberation of everyday life.

Another key observation is the binary structure of the society and latest studies have revealed that 65% of the men represent “reason” and 65 % of women represent “emotion” (cf. http://www.personalitatealfa.com/blog/maturitatea-emotionala-scala-friedmann-un-test-de-inteligenta-emotionala/, viewed on 11.03.2013). How could we explain our first reaction towards a person/object/action which is often rather emotional than rational? The answer may imply that even if it the brain is used, we are often driven to act by heart. Why would we choose to communicate by feelings and less by reason? Maybe, because it is the emotional side of ourselves that triggers the call to action. On the other hand, according to the statistics, emotional competence is twice more important than technical or cognitive abilities. Emotional intelligence is the grasp and management of emotions in view of building congenial relationships with the people around us. Emotional intelligence offers some benefits: high performance, motivation and innovation, boost of self-confidence, efficient management and teamwork. The brain’s left hemisphere controls emotional intelligence in charge of reason whereas the right
hemisphere controls emotions. Every two men are born with the left side of their brain more developed than the right and, through education and culture, they are taught to be strong, not to display their emotions and act by reason. A world is thus formed, in which men cannot understand their own emotions, cannot empathize with the others and women are, nevertheless, compelled to declare that “we do not understand men”. Likewise, every two women have the right side of their brain more developed and, through education, they are taught to display their feelings, to be more communicative and “listen to their heart”. At the same time, men think women are impossible to be understood.

It is noteworthy the fact that a person needs both hemispheres. Where reason prevails, emotions must be step in and the other way round. Obviously, a logical sensible person will face difficulties in understanding and displaying emotions. They may not be able to empathize with the more sensitive ones.

According to Abric (2002), there are psychological, cognitive and social factors that influence emotions: bad and negative behavior, desires and beliefs will trigger bad emotions. Therefore, positive energy creates positive responses and closeness whereas negative energy creates a negative response and rejection.

2. The aim of the study

The aim of the study is to analyze those factors concerned with reason and emotions that highly influence the social agents, young schoolchildren and students. The main objective of the research is the analysis and theoretical interpretation of the both reason and emotions, taking into account the current metamorphoses taken place in the evolution of humanity. Hence, the operational objectives are as follows:

a). to identify and measure the most essential emotions of young schoolchildren and students;
b). to identify and measure positive emotions (PE) and negative emotions (NE);
c). to determine an emotional profile of the target group according to gender.

3. Methodology

The research was based on the following main hypothesis: there are significant differences in both reason and emotions competences based on gender. To reach a balance, if there is more than one reason and expression of it in our society, then, there must be a mutually corresponding emotional reality.

Research hypotheses:

- Women: negative fundamental emotions (NE) are more frequently expressed than the positive emotions (PE).
- There are significant differences in displaying positive emotions between females and males.
- There are significant differences in displaying negative emotions between females and males.

The research has addressed a target group made of 60 students (30 females and 30 males), aged between 20 and 27, studying at the Faculty of Communication Science (The “Ecological University” of Bucharest) and the Faculty of Electronics (“Politehnica” University of Bucharest) and “Victor Babeș” College in Cluj-Napoca.

The validation of hypotheses was based on Edel and Burke’s scale “FEELINGS TOWARDS ADS” that indicates the positive and negative emotions. Emotions are grouped into three categories: “warm”; “negative” and “upbeat” emotions. A five item scale was used and the following question was addressed: “How did the messages expressed make you feel? ”/” Which of the following emotions did you experience?”(as shown in Tabel 1).

| “Upbeat” | “Negative” | “Warm” |
|----------|------------|--------|
| Active   | Angry      | Affectionate |
| Adventurous | Annoyed | Calm |
| Alive    | Bad        | Concerned |
| Amused   | Bored      | Contemplative |
| Attentive| Critical   | Emotional |
Another research instrument used was Holbrook and Batra’s scale “STANDARDIZED EMOTIONAL PROFILE”, that indicates the positive messages. The instrument addressed the participants’ emotions and responses to the messages expressed. The scale breaks down into three as follows:
- **Pleasure** – including to joy, affection, gratitude and pride;
- **Arousal** – including interest, activation, surprise, involvement;
- **Domination** – including helplessness, sadness, distrust, fear.

### 4. Research findings and outcomes

The literature states that emotions influence not only our decision-making process but also our attitude towards the others. While some emotions such as love, joy and hope are pleasant and stimulate positive behavior, fear, fury and sadness bring about stressful situations and inappropriate conduct.

The “negative” emotion has obtained the highest score. Hence, women display “sadness”, “depression”, “regret” and men display “fury”; “irritation” and “offense”. The highest scores recorded for the “warm” emotions are “hope”; “peacefulness” and “kindness”. As far as “upbeat” emotions are concerned, women have opted for: “exaltation”; “inspiration” and “enthusiasm”, whereas men have opted for “independence”; “power” and “pride”.

In conclusion, emotions are experienced by women to a greater extent than by men who are able to control their emotions better.

In addition, the results of the research have illustrated four essential emotions which have recorded the highest scores: fear, fury, joy and pride. As far as fear is concerned, women are more inclined to experience it than men (t(148)= -3,28 for p=.001) whereas men are more bound to experience fury than women (t(148) = 2,4 for p = .016).
Sadness is not statistically different for the two genders, still, there is a difference in the way sad feelings are displayed or communicated. Men do not like to reveal their emotions whereas women do this frequently.

With regard to joy, women are more often prone to display this emotion ($t(148)=1.99$ for $p=.04$). In terms of pride, the results show no significant differences.

All in all, for women, the positive emotions are strongly related to the negative emotions whereas for men, there is a balanced display of positive and negative emotions. For men, there is weak negative/positive correlation between positive and negative emotions and for women, there is a strong positive correlation between positive and negative emotions. One reason could be the cultural difference: women are fragile, have a highly developed maternal instinct and men are strong and have a highly developed hunting instinct. Women are prone to see things dichotomically (either “black” or “white”) whereas men see reality dialectically, as a harmony between the good and the evil. Moreover, the results show that women are more knowledgeable and skillful in managing motions as compared to men.

These feelings and emotions have a great impact on our behavior, leading individuals to either action or reluctance.

5. Conclusions and recommendations

In conclusion, the outcomes of the present research clearly indicate that men are reluctant to display emotions which they control more efficiently and less intensely as opposed to women. Men use logics to explain emotions whereas women justify reality sensitively. Emotions such as fury and frustration are considered typical of men whereas disappointment and sadness are essentially a female’s characteristics.

In conclusion, the target group’s responses to emotional stimuli are not always in accordance with their psychosocial features. One explanation could be that women have the tendency to fall into the trap of emotions which may jeopardize their performance. Thus, there must be a balance.

Furthermore, individuals willing to adapt to standards of thinking, attitudes, values and reason-based norms will prove a better cognitive coherence and agency.

Ideally, each young individual should benefit from a personal counseling plan based on a rational-emotional education. As a consequence, a specialized service program should be set up (carried out by psychologists and experts in interpersonal communication).

By way of conclusion, there is a growing need for a psycho-educational program in view of developing reason-emotional competences.

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