Emotion and social order:

Sociological perspective

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Introduction

When we were reading the texts of Rosaldo and Abu-Lughod I was intrigued by the position of both authors to emotion. There was a specific perspective to the topic of emotions connected with the social order. The idea that emotions and social order are closely accompanied was very interesting to me. It's not that I was surprised that emotions are an excellent tool to manipulate (consciously or unconsciously) individuals or crowds. However, in both texts, I realized that it might not be just conscious emotional manipulation of one person with another person. There also may be unconscious experiencing emotion by structural code.

I would therefore in my essay examine how in two articles of sociologists conceive the topic of emotions and social order. I wondered how sociologists approach to emotion, so I would like to build on authors who published their articles in the book Handbook of the sociology of emotions. I will start with briefly summary of Rosaldo´s text and Abu-Lughod´s text. The purpose is to try to point out a common line that I see in their research. Furthermore, I will characterize other texts which are related to the subject of my essay.

The starting position

Both texts, Rosaldo and Abu-Lughod, open a topic related to emotions and setting of a hierarchical society. These texts are about traditionally managed society and they get to the heart of thing through emotions which are aroused in the weaker members of these societies. The authors on the topic of social order come by the other way.

Rosaldo [2007] studies guilt and shame in primitive society of headhunters. By exploring these feelings and their meanings in particular society she discovers that emotions such as shame or guilt in certain situations (in this case when the ritual of killing is running) used to promote solidarity. Immediate emotions of young men who are paralyzed by the shame of killing ceremony are melted by ritual habit of hair-cut (which symbolizes a kind of purge) in strengthening cohesive consensus of the society.

Abu-Lughod [2007], on the other hand, explores love poetry in Egyptian Bedouin community. Thanks to her research topic, it raises the question of the origin, motivations and meanings of love poetry in this society. Like Rosaldo has the entry point into the world of

emotions and social order in the felling of guilt, Abu-Lughod has this access point in modesty which young people practice and from which they try to escape to love poetry.

As we can see, also Abu-Lughod working with a specific society, both authors point out the context of the situation and circumstances. Though in other ways, both in its own context of research reveal that emotions and feelings are very closely connected not only with upbringing and the environment or biological basis, but also with socio-political setting of roles and positions in a certain society.

Social meaning of jealousy and envy

I found one article in which the author-sociologist Gordon Clanton develops the social meaning of envy and jealousy. He conceived emotions as social constructs (according to the theory of Berger and Luckmann) consisting of social interactions and social forces. The author is aware of various theories of emotions from physiological to psychological, but he wants to focus on "…social aspects of emotions, including the situations that provoke them, the social learning by which they are shaped, their historical and cross-cultural variability, their social usefulness, their contribution to social conflict, and the social arrangements that humans set up to manage them." [Clanton 2006: 410]

Clanton approaches to emotion as the phenomena influenced by individual and group values, attitudes, norms and beliefs that we acquire during socialization. He is convinced that emotions are one of the tools that can reflect these social facts. Author understands emotions and social forces in dialectical relationship - there is a two-way move. Private experience the emotion of jealousy is influenced in part on our beliefs about relationships and marriage and fidelity. Likewise, our private experience emotion of envy dependent on our beliefs about what does it mean to be wealthy, powerful, to have social status and others [Clanton 2006: 410-411]. By examining some of the social aspects of envy and jealousy, author wants to open a discussion about the sociological approach to emotion, which is often overlooked in his opinion.

Clanton chooses jealousy on the grounds that it can show how the concept of jealousy contributes to the social order, and also because it is convenient emotion that can be examined cross-culturally and in time of history [Clanton 2006: 439]. I understand it also in that way, that jealousy for Clanton is representative emotion maintaining order at the level of

interpersonal social order, envy by contrast is emotion maintaining social order at the political level, as we shall see. Meaning emotion of jealousy is understood as "…a protective reaction to a perceived threat to a valued relationship or to its quality." [Clanton and Smith in Clanton 2006: 411] In various cultures jealousy is perceived differently, it depends on different approaches to marriage, gender roles, adultery and other taboos and so on. Clanton conceived emotion of jealousy in that way how through jealousy can be fulfilled maintain social order. Before the emancipation of women since the sixties of last century there was jealousy perceived positively, as an expression of the value and importance one of another [Clanton 2006: 439]. Since this time of social changing in societies "…jealousy came to be viewed by many as a learned emotion, as evidence of some personal defect such as "low self-esteem," and as bad for marriage and other intimate relationships." [Clanton 2006: 416] This change of perception only proves dialectic relationship with both-sides motion between social basis (in this case social change) and emotions.

Envy is an interesting emotion, if we view it through the optic of sociology. This emotion in my opinion Clanton did not choose because of intercultural or historical pertinence as jealousy, but because it illustrates very well the political management with emotion. Clanton conceives envy as something like "…a wish that the superior would lose his advantages." [Clanton 2006: 439] Envy by author was never in any company perceived as a positive quality. Even in societies of hunters and gatherers was the envy rejected and the people were so afraid that they would rather stay poor to save themselves from an envy of their neighbors. [Clanton 2006: 431]

In modern Western society is less fear of envy. While in the past was the envy of undermining social order, in today's world is contrary envy something by what social order is maintained. It is for this reason that in these days is inequality politically justified and perceived by social-political discourse as positive. The possible objects of envy in neoliberal discourse are presented as results of diligence, hard work, "good luck to go across" [Clanton 2006: 440]. Although the envy is considered as negative characteristic by society, it is social useful tool for maintaining social order in today's societies because it provides motivation to achieve the object of envy and therefore what is politically desirable [Clanton 2006: 431].

Very interesting I find the concept of envy, which Clanton presents. Looking at the text of Rosaldo, we'll see some similar points of contact. When the young men of the tribe of headhunters feel at the ceremony of killing guilt, they "freeze by fear". After this follow mentioned act of hair-cut. That means catharsis and also confirmation to the social order, to

promote solidarity, a motivation of all to the necessary. Although emotions and expressions of guilt in that situation could mean undermining the social order and the collapse of the entire ritual, headhunters can use this emotion to attach the order. I can see here a strong resemblance as using the envy of socio-political intent.

A similar thought network, as it handed Clanton with emotion of jealousy, we can follow at Abu-Lughod. She talks about the code of modesty among young people. Sexuality and expressions of romantic love have in the Bedouin community threatening character for the social order. The fact that I suppress my nature feeling (sexuality, own choice of love) leads to keeping a value of relationships in society. The situation is similar to jealousy before emancipation wave, which describes Clanton. On suppression of my nature attitude (jealousy makes me helpless, it is restrictive) depends maintaining of a valuable relationship.

Shame as an element of socio-cultural dynamics

The other article I want to use in this essay is about moral emotions. Authors of this text approach to emotions like to entire complex system as a source of human behavior. It defines itself against classical concept of moral emotions such as shame, guilt, sympathy, empathy, contempt, anger, and disgust [Rozin, Tangney and Dearing in Turner and Sets, 2006]. The authors Jonathan H. Turner and Jan E. Stets in the article served their definition of moral emotions: "...many more emotions have moral effects since capacities for human emotion evolved to increase moral commitments to others, social structures and culture." [Turner and Stets, 2006: 544] Their aim is highlight the social and cultural dynamics fueled by emotions, taking into consideration the morality [Turner and Stets, 2006: 544]. By this perspective emotions with moral content are interconnected network. I will speak about their concept of guilt and shame, which then I am going to compare with the research conducted by Rosaldo and Abu-Lughod.

The authors discuss the guilt and shame as two different emotions, both of which contribute to the maintenance of social order, but by two other ways. They detect shame as destructive emotion for individuals [Tangney and Dearing in Turner and Stets, 2006: 552]. On the basis of psychotherapy research of Lewis they indicate shame as a feeling that attacks the human self in such a way that they feel small, worthless, ridicule, discarded. Shame and its experience are unique in that I perceive myself through the eyes of others who evaluate me. Shame harms man, which leads to the activated defense mechanisms to protect itself [Turner

and Stets, 2006: 551]. "As a result, shame often leads to transmute individuals into their shame and anger direct this anger at others, with droughts anger giving people a sense of efficacy and control." [Lewis in Turner and Stets, 2006: 551]

Guilt authors conceive with the help of other psychological work and research as an emotion that hasn´t the destructive potential for the individual. Guilt is not ugly experience as a shame, but bad experience [Tangney in Turner and Stets, 2006: 551]. Rather than that, we saw our whole self affected by the pain of the experience of shame, there is awareness that we "did a bad thing" [Turner and Stets, 2006: 551]. "As a result, guilt is less painful, leading people to experience emotions such as remorse and regret while motivating them to confess, apologize, and repair. Guilt increases the likelihood that individuals will role-take with others because guilt motivates them to adjust their behaviors in ways that facilitate cooperation with others." [Leith and Baumeister in Turner and Stets, 2006: 551].

Now we can see that shame and guilt caused as a result of their experience of various other emotions that are connected to the initial emotions. Both of these emotions have different social significance. In light of the text of Rosaldo very interested me interpretation of shame that the authors present: „… shame may serve an adaptive purpose. It may be an effective mechanism for social control in order to ensure conformity to normative expectations, shame can encourage normative solidarity-generating behavior." [Turner and Stets, 2006: 551] In the text Rosaldo, we saw that the author uses the concepts of shame and guilt in one context, with the same meaning. According to the article Turner and Stets I think that Rosaldo spoke about shame. Turner and Stets theoretically describe the situation that Rosaldo examines practically: "In the smaller hunting-and-gathering societies ... when shame was experienced, it would operate as an internal control mechanism, keep individuals "in line," and, in turn, sustain commitments to others and produce solidarity." [Turner and Stets, 2006: 553] In this quote we can understand that Rosaldo in her research of shame at headhunters coincides with the interpretation of moral emotions in Turner and Sets.

Regarding article Abu-Lughod, I see a parallel here in the moral meaning of emotions experienced in Bedouin society. Any emotion that in this hierarchical society plays a role for individual, has also value in connected network of morality and socio-political discourse. The network then indicates the behavior of members and their own ideas and own 'self-esteem. Guilt (delimitation towards cultural discourse, which means towards family) results in a self-assessment that "I did the wrong thing".

Conclusion

The reason why I'm talking about emotions in the context of the social order is that I find interesting to ask about the meaning rather than the origin. So what can we say about the emotions and the social order? According to my essay, every emotion has an individual meaning for each of us, but it is also part of a large web of importance for society as we saw in the article of Turner and Sets. Some of these emotions that we perceive individually as negative and reprehensible, is for maintaining social inertia very positive, and in terms of social protection mechanisms even necessary, as it describes Clanton.

I used articles of Abu-Lughod and Rosaldo because they specifically and practically handled mechanisms that are theoretically outlined in articles of Clanton and Turner and Sets. Although it is only about two different perspectives which we can conceive in research of Rosaldo and Abu-Lughod, it was my intention to pass the observation that although most personal feelings have so great and necessary social meaning.

References:

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