

## Historical Choice as the Unity of Rational and Irrational

Gulnaz K. Gizatova, Olga G. Ivanova and Ekaterina V. Snarskaya  
Kazan Federal University, Kremliovskaya Str., 18, 420008 Kazan, Russian Federation

**Abstract:** The issue of choice has always been the core one in the philosophy, at that choice was traditionally considered through the prism of the moral-ethical problematic as choice of an individual enjoying the freedom of will and therefore, being able to choose. In the Western science, this phenomenon is investigated primarily within the frameworks of the theory of social choice, the decision-making theory. In the proposed study, the attempt is made to analyze the social-historical choice, its socio-cultural grounds and the role in the social-historical process. The topicality and relevance of the theoretical reasoning of this issue is determined by the current situation established in the world in general and in particular countries including Russia. Choice is considered as the essential link of design of the individual and social reality as it is the act of choosing through which the latter becomes real from a potential one. The essential aspect of the issue of choice is the correlation between rational and irrational. We believe choice always includes both rational and irrational but in different conditions one or another component prevails that determines the final decision. The issue of the social-historical choice still does not occupy the appropriate position in the social-philosophical studies of both the Western and national researchers, encyclopedias do not contain items dedicated to this phenomenon, no attempts to classify it are taken. We believe that the category ‘social-historical’, ‘historical choice’ features great heuristic potential; it enables the more adequate analysis and cognition of the social reality, allows investigating the mechanism of alternativeness in the history. The theory of social choice also features wide heuristic opportunities of analyzing such a ‘slice’ of the society as the national-ethnic relations.

**Key words:** Social-historical choice, rational and irrational, multivariance, national-ethnic relations, component

### INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, the term ‘choice’ is one of the most frequently found in the studies dedicated to investigation of the social-economic and political processes, however, its content is vague and unclear. Today, the theoretical reasoning of the issue of choice and primarily the social-historical aspect of it gains in topicality. Today, the humankind, separate states and nations feature the problems the solution of which will determine if they will persist and in which way, what the world order will be. The issue of choice is especially, topical to Russia that is solving the question of its civilizational identity, seeking the ways to escape the economic, political and socio-cultural situation established.

Although, the study of this phenomenon counts many years, choice was primarily considered within the context of the moral-ethical problematic. In the Western literature, the theory of social choice the research subject of which are the processes and methods of making collective decisions counts many years of tradition. At the same time, the issue of the nature of choice as a social phenomenon, its role and place in social processes,

i.e., the social-philosophical analysis of choice has not yet found proper representation in the socio-humanitarian sciences.

### MATERIALS AND METHODS

Choice is considered as the essential link of design of the individual and social reality as it is the act of choosing through which the latter becomes real from a potential one. In the scientific literature, they distinguish the individual and collective, social choice; at that different approaches to the issue of correlation between these kinds of choice have been developed. In the opinion, any collective choice is finally made of choices of particular individuals; however, interpretation of collective choice as a sum of individual ones (Golovanov, 2007) is simplified and does not allow revealing the essence of the social choice adequately.

As mentioned above, the issue of correlation between the individual and collective choice is the social choice theory that is based on the assumption that ‘collective choice within any plurality represents aggregation of individual preferences’ (Arrow, 1963)

and attention of researchers is focused on analysis of mechanisms of aggregating individual choice into collective one.

Within the context of this theory, the concepts 'collective choice' and 'social choice' are used as identical ones while within the social-philosophical approach it appears to be reasonable to 'separate' these concepts; in this research, social choice is considered as a wider concept than collective choice, namely: as the activity of social subjects aimed at realization of one of the existing potential opportunities into a real one which results in transformation of the society in whole.

By the sphere of realization one may distinguish: moral, political, economic choice, etc. In the modern world, civilizational choice that has always been the core one for the countries lying at the joint of civilization (Russia, Turkey, etc.) is of special importance.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

There are a lot of definitions of choice in different branches of science: philosophy, psychology, sociology, ethics, economics, etc. The state-of-the-art knowledge states the complexity and ambiguity of this phenomenon, its essence, various aspects relating to it such as the process of choosing as such, making decision, the issue of freedom and responsibility, etc. Thus, within the philosophical approach ontological, axiological, anthropological grounds of choice are distinguished, the contradictory of the process of choosing from the perspective of each of these grounds is revealed.

We define choice as the socio-culturally and emotionally determined activity of the subject representing the unity of rational and irrational aimed at solution of the problematic situation in the conditions of uncertainty. We perform the analysis of choice from the perspective of the pragmatic approach.

The issue of correlation of rational and irrational, conscious and unconscious in choice is complicated and debatable. By investigation of the choice phenomenon in the socio-humanitarian studies the emphasis is traditionally placed on its irrational component. In this regard, it is interesting to consider the interpretation of choice contained in one of the psychological dictionaries: 'The most advanced theory of personal choice (N.F. Naumova) considers it as the most rational (italics added) individual goal-setting strategy under uncertainty'. According to Leontyev and Pilipko (1995), as a rule, the sense of choice consists in determining the optimal method of performance of the activity aimed at achievement of the specified result. In the social choice theory, the researchers of which are considered to be the

French thinkers of the 18th century Borda and Condorcet, like in the decision-making theory, choice is also considered as an act of rational action. A. Sen explains it by the fact that the intellectual climate of the period of creation of the social choice theory 'was formed under the strongest influence of the European, especially French Enlightenment (and the French Revolution) with its concept of the smart social order' (Amartya, 2009).

However, Condorcet was the first one to state the concept of the irrational component of collective choice that was further on developed by many researchers. Thus by analyzing individual choice, Arrow (1963) expresses his opinion that 'then any individual has some supreme values, partially of biological nature, partially peculiar to this culture; all of these values are mostly not recognized'.

The rational and irrational components of choice involve complex dialectic interrelation. We believe the approach according to which they distinguish conscious and unconscious choice to be somewhat simplified. Thus, according to Golovanov (2007), 'social choice is the phenomenon of the social practice acting in its conscious and unconscious form' that 'differ only through the sphere of performance: unconscious choice is more typical to everyday life and conscious choice is more topical for extraordinary creation of situations'. In the opinion, choice always includes both the rational and irrational components. Their ratio is determined not by the sphere of performance, as Golovanov (2007) thinks but by the kind of choice and its subject. These are the factors that determine the ratio of rational and irrational also in the sphere of extraordinary.

It shall be noted that in recent years, the issue of the irrational component of the social choice started attracting attention of the national researchers. Thus, the role of unconscious in the political choice is considered. In her thesis L.A. Efimova notes: 'The studies of S. Freud, C.G. Jung, Money-Kyrle R.E., E. Fromm, W. Reich were a great stride towards understanding of the issue of determination of the political choice by the irrational components of the collective (social) unconscious. Thus, within the frameworks of the social psychoanalysis the role of the 'zone of irrational (unconscious) that mostly determines the political behavioral processes of people which affects their attitude to the surrounding socio-political reality' is emphasized' (Anonymous, 2005).

In our opinion, the social-historical choice is of special interest. We mean by the social-historical choice the activity of a social subject aimed of realization of one of the opportunities contained in the social reality that is determined by economic, sociocultural conditions,

historical experience of a social subject, his mentality, set of values, ideals. At that it shall be emphasized that choice is always both the process and the result.

The issue of the social-historical choice gains in importance by understanding the social reality as multivariate one containing a variety of different, sometimes opposite opportunities. It is the human ability to choose due to which history features probabilistic nature, at the same time one of the opportunities objectively existing in the social reality is realized by means of choice only following which the process of formation of the new reality starts that in its turn, will contain a variety of potential trends. Thus, choice is the essential link of design of the social reality.

The historical choice of the country, nation is to a large extent determined by the personal choice of each individual, is, however performed by the ruling elite that to a greater or lesser degree expresses the will of the people depending on the level of development of democracy in the country. The act of choosing as such is selection of the opportunity that appears to be the optimal one for achievement of the goal set on the basis of theoretical analysis and evaluation of the existing conditions. At the same time, it is to a significant extent determined by the irrational component that involves world perception by a social community, peculiar features of its emotional-psychological make-up, etc. A social subject seeks to realize the opportunity that matches his ideal uniting people for solution of the specific historical tasks, however, the ideals are formed both consciously in the theories of ideologues and spontaneously in the common consciousness of the public as its response to the surrounding reality. There are situations when a country faces an important choice and its people only know how they don't want to live, when faith in previous ideals is lost and the new ones have not been found yet. During such periods, the public moods are characterized, firstly, by confusion, apathy, anomy, seeking to wait out the time of troubles, on the other hand; aggression, denial of the previous and any moral, legal norms. The tired people that are insecure of tomorrow cannot be the conscious creator of the history.

The historical past of the country, its traditions exercise significant influence over its further development, play an important role in choosing evolution trends. Disregard of the prior historical experience or considering it exclusively in negative terms results in solution of continuity. Historical experience of the nation often promoted to formation in it of the panic of the present (Ankersmit), different fears. Thus, the inherited memory of the Russians contains the fear of the war this is why, they are ready to suffer much if only to avoid war.

The social choice theory enjoys wide heuristic opportunities also by analysis of such a 'slice' of the society as the national-ethnic relations. In the modern social sciences, there has already established the concept that the limits of ethnic groups are unstable which is especially to be observed in the modern world. This concept is consistently traced in the modern anthropological and historical theories developing within the frameworks of postmodernism where ethnic groups are considered as 'zone of mystical instability' (Chandra, 2001). In our opinion, dialectics of the efferent and afferent trends in development of an ethnic group may be investigated also by means of understanding of the social choice mechanisms.

Idealization of the rational in the choice can not only simplify the understanding thereof but also interfere identification of the true inwardness of choice. The fact is that the issue of the criteria of rationality of choice still remains unclear. It is thought that by designing of such criteria their cultural and historical dependence as well as the impact of such social institutions as ideology and ethics plays an important role. This may be clearly seen by the examples of the social-historical choice when it is referred to such social communities as nations. Learning the world, design of its conceptual form is always performed within the frameworks of the national discourse. At that, as noted by Craig (2006): "The discourse of nations finds expression mostly in the language of passion and identification". In this regard, the discussion held in the Western Social Literature is of definite academic interest. This discussion is related to correlation of the rational and irrational components of the ethnic-national conflicts. Within the frameworks of such problem statement, in particular, the traditions of the rational choice theory are to be observed that formed already within the classical political economics: with the rationally acting 'economic' person at the heart of it. From this perspective, ethnic nationalism is considered as activity of subjected driven by personal interests the objective of which is control of the resources, power, etc. Such views are peculiar primarily to representatives of the constructivism paradigm of explanation of the nation's origination. On the contrary, many followers of primordialism emphasize the role of irrational layers of consciousness in the genesis and development of ethnic-national conflicts. As H. Smith writes: 'Irrational elements of explosive power and extraordinary strength persist in the structure of nations, ideology and mythology of nationalism... many of these conflicts, especially the severest and long-running ones arise out of these fundamental irrational elements' (Mike and Shannon, 2014). Without elaborating on the peculiarities

of development of this discussion, we'd like to emphasize that in our opinion, disregard of the irrational component in the social choice structure inevitably leads to reductionism.

Choice is an integral element of formation of the national-ethnic identity. This factor is of key importance in a multicultural society in which the multidimensional identity of a human becomes clearer when he realizes his belonging to different national cultures. It is the choice that determined the human identity in the modern world and identity constitutionally always incorporates the emotional-mental component of the national character, national consciousness which in their turn are formed under the influence of collective unconscious containing the ideas of the ancestral memory, etc. This is why, in our opinion, formation of the national-ethnic identity cannot be considered from the perspective of the rational choice only since in this case ethnicity (as the set of natural and social) is assigned a passive role.

**Summary:** Thus, development of the issue of the social-historical choice as a complex social phenomenon in which the rational and irrational are inextricably connected enables more adequate analysis and cognition of the social reality, allows studying the mechanism of historical alternativeness, revealing the role of a human in the historic process. In our opinion, referring to analysis of the historical choice with account for its national component promotes to understanding of its complex nature and identification of its peculiarities and inconsistencies in the modern society.

### CONCLUSION

By analyzing choice within the frameworks of the pragmatic approach, we consider it as the unity of the rational and irrational; it was established that choice is always both the process and the result. Disregard of the unconscious elements in the social choice structure inevitably results in reducing of this phenomenon simplifying thereby its ontological, anthropological and gnoseological nature, therefore, restricting cognition of multidimensionality of the modern world. It has been established that the social choice theory features wide

heuristic opportunities also by analysis of such a 'slice' of the society as the national-ethnic relations. It was defined that being a prerequisite of formation of the national-ethnic identity, choice is of key importance in a multicultural society in which the plurality of the identity sources becomes clearer which actualizes investigation of choice as a multi-aspect phenomenon.

### ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The research is performed according to the Russian Government Program of Competitive Growth of Kazan Federal University.

### REFERENCES

- Arrow, J., 1963. Collective choice and individual values <http://ivan-kod.narod.ru/arrow.htm> (Kenneth Joseph Arrow (Social Choice and Individual Values)).
- Amartya, S., 2009. The Idea of Justice The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press Cambridge, Massachusetts, pp: 87.
- Anonymous, 2005. Abstract of the thesis: Rational and irrational factors of political choice in a modern Russian region. <http://cheloveknauka.com/ratsionalnye-i-irratsionalnye-factory-politicheskogo-vybora-v-sovremennom-rossiyskom-regione#ixzz3c27FeTOF>.
- Chandra, K., 2001. Ethnic Bargains, Group Instability and Social Choice Theory. <http://politics.nyu.edu/docs>.
- Craig, C., 2006. Nationalism/Translated by A.M. Smirnov: Publishing House 'Territory of the Future' (Series 'Universal Library named after Alexander Pogorelsky').
- Golovanov, A.A., 2007. The social choice category within the context of the social-philosophical discourse [http://vestnik.osu.ru/2007\\_7/8.pdf](http://vestnik.osu.ru/2007_7/8.pdf).
- Leontyev, D.A. and N.V. Pilipko, 1995. Choice as activity: personal determinants and formation options. The Issues of Psychology, 1: 97-110.
- Mike, B. and P. Shannon, 2014. The Moral Foundations of Nationalism and Ethnic Conflict. Jun, 10. <http://georgetownsecuritystudiesreview.org/>.